

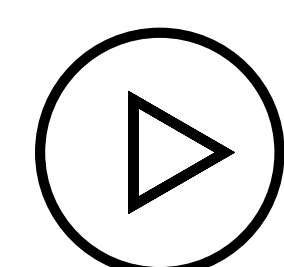
Harry Smith (1923–1991) was a painter, filmmaker, folklorist, musicologist, and collector as well as a radical nonconformist whose work defies categorization. Although his creative output includes paintings, films, poetry, music, and sound recordings, it also consists of extensive collections of overlooked yet revealing objects, such as string figures and found paper airplanes. His best-known work, a compilation of recordings from the 1920s and 1930s titled the *Anthology of American Folk Music*, achieved cultlike status among many musicians and listeners since it was first published in 1952.

*Fragments of a Faith Forgotten: The Art of Harry Smith* puts the artist's life on display alongside his art and collections. It follows him from an isolated Depression-era childhood in the Pacific Northwest—a time when he was immersed in ecstatic religious philosophies and Native American ceremony—to his bohemian youth of marijuana, peyote, and intellectualism in postwar Berkeley, California. The exhibition also traces his path through the milieus of bebop and experimental cinema in San Francisco to his decades in New York, where he was an essential part of the city's avant-garde fringe.

Keenly attuned to changing technology, Smith embraced innovation and used whatever was new and of the moment. At the same time, his lifelong interest in abstract art, ancient traditions, metaphysics, spiritualism, folk art, and world music came to the fore even as he devised ingenious ways of collecting sounds and creating films. These concerns make Smith's work feel increasingly prescient as collecting and sharing come into view as creative acts that are necessary for drawing meaning from the glut of images and juxtaposition of cultures we encounter every day.



Learn about selected works in this exhibition and find access resources at [whitney.org/Guide](https://whitney.org/Guide)



550 Introduction

*Fragments of a Faith Forgotten: The Art of Harry Smith* is organized by the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, and the Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

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*Andy Warhol*

The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts