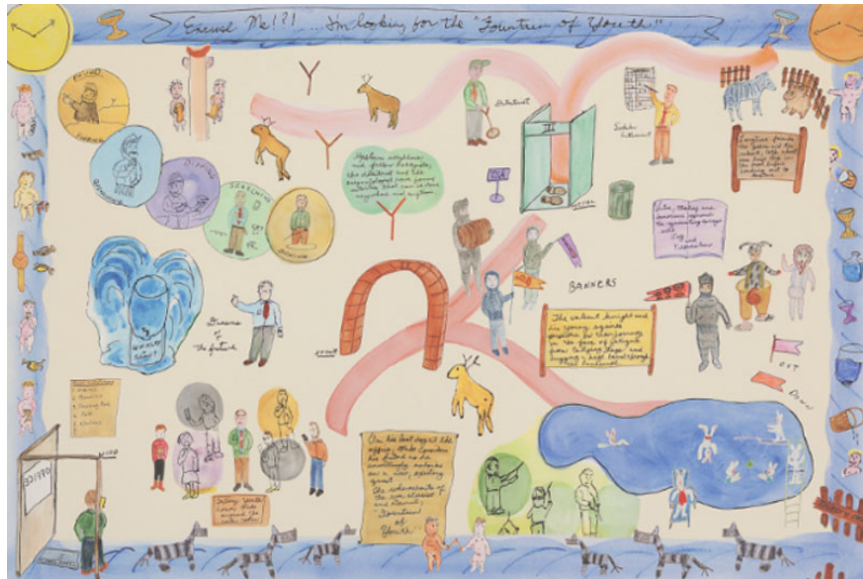


ARTFORUM

Critic's Pick
 Michael Smith
 LORA REYNOLDS GALLERY
 September 12 - November 7, 2015

The fulcrum of Michael Smith's newest body of work is an intriguing twenty-minute video that, like the larger project it is part of, is titled *Excuse Me?! . . . I'm Looking for the "Fountain of Youth."* Produced with collaborators and subtitled *A Ballet in Three Acts, 2015*, it contains a telling moment in which the artist, dressed as a knight yet wearing the sneakers and grin of the Everyman he has performed for decades, finds an elixir amid a circle of young dancers. Smith drinks and turns first into a court jester and then Baby Ikki, his diaper-wearing persona. The reversion—from knight to fool to infant—proposes that the titular search is futile. Yet Smith's project as a whole, first presented last summer in New York at Greene Naftali, overflows with drawings, videos, photographs, a woven tapestry, and more that implies the artist has already found his way.



The Austin show is modest, featuring the video on a flat screen flanked by six ink-and-watercolor drawings and a captivating pigment print (all works 2015). Subtitled *The Legend* and containing pastel-hued imagery, the print is anchored at the center by a rendering of a threshold over a forked road. Cartoonish line drawings personifying varying stages of wisdom (knights, babies, animals) float directionless, as do bits of evocative prose ("Texting youth honor Mike," "Mike considers his future") written in looping cursive script, proposing that neither old nor new holds the answer. *The Legend* is a blueprint for the project's tapestry, but it is also a master key. It epitomizes Smith's decades of imaginative play with time across various media and suggests that this is what makes his work absorbing, and ageless.

— Kate Green