

MEDITATIVE SPECTACLE: PAINTINGS 1974–76
FRANKLIN WILLIAMS
November 6–December 23, 2022

Parker Gallery is proud to present its third solo exhibition with Franklin Williams. This special presentation features paintings from the mid-1970s, a rich period of material and conceptual experimentation within the visionary artist's evolving oeuvre. Many of the works included will be exhibited for the very first time.

Since the early 1960s, Williams has maintained an idiosyncratic approach to art-making, creating intricately and obsessively constructed sculptures, paintings, and works on paper using a range of techniques and processes passed down from the matriarchs in his family, including sewing, stitching, and sophisticated pattern-making. Dazzling in their detail and visually complex, the artist's enigmatic works are guided by an intuitive and deeply introspective process approaching meditation, setting him apart from his contemporaries of the Funk and Nut Art movements.

A longtime resident of San Francisco's Bay Area, Williams studied at the California College of Arts & Crafts before embarking on a teaching career at his alma mater and the San Francisco Art Institute that would last over fifty years, all while maintaining a rigorous practice at his home studio in Petaluma from 1970 onwards. Family life, in particular his marriage to his wife Carol, has been a wellspring of inspiration for the artist. She is the model for the figures that appear in these paintings, which he constructed by tracing her body onto a piece of paper, or drawing her shadow, then manipulating the form into myriad organic arrangements. Rendered at human-scale, the body is mirrored or doubled in loose symmetries, before being meticulously filled with painted lines, dots and dashes in vibrant color, heightening their psychological effect.

The writings of 18th century mystic and philosopher Novalis, as well as those of the late Fred Martin—a contemporary of Williams' and an early advocate of his work—remain constant influences in his life and art, informing the creative act itself. For Williams, making work is profoundly personal and private. His presence can be seen and felt across the surface of his paintings, which often contain the artist's handprints and fingerprints. They function as a patterning device, but also as a literal representation of his hands at work. This gesture is one of many treatments and processes that Williams employs in a single canvas, from painting to stitching to burning, then layering multiple materials one on top of the other to create a collage of image and texture. Williams' revelatory images unfold across densely composed canvases evoking the sublime and beguiling condition of being alive.

Franklin Williams (b. 1940 in Ogden, UT) lives and works in Petaluma, CA. Recent solo exhibitions include those held at Parker Gallery, Los Angeles, CA (2017 & 2019) and the Sonoma County Art Museum, Santa Rosa, CA (2017). Recent group exhibitions include *Lover Earth: Art and Sexuality*, The Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, NY (2020), *With Pleasure: Pattern & Decoration in American Art 1972–1985*, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA and Hessel Museum of Art, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY (2019-2021), *Less is a Bore: Maximalist Art and Design*, ICA Boston, Boston, MA (2019), *Downtown Painting*, presented by Alex Katz, Peter Freeman Inc., New York, NY (2019), and *Landscapes Without Boundaries*, Manetti Shrem Museum of Art, Davis, CA (2019). His work is included in the permanent collections of the Berkeley Art Museum, Berkeley, CA; the Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento, CA; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA; Manetti Shrem Museum of Art, University of California, Davis, CA; Minneapolis Institute of Art, Minneapolis, MN; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA; Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, PA and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA, among others.