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## Fables

William T. Wiley

April 26–June 14, 2025

Parker Gallery is proud to present *Fables*, our third solo exhibition with William T. Wiley (1937–2021). Throughout his sixty-year career, the artist addressed some of the most urgent social, political and environmental issues of his time, with a distinctive blend of wit and wisdom. This exhibition brings together a group of rarely seen steel sculptures and related drawings from 1982 to 1985, produced at Lippincott's LLC, a renowned artist-focused fabrication firm established in Connecticut in 1966 to produce large-scale works, among those by Ellsworth Kelly, Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen, Louise Nevelson, Keith Haring and Jean Dubuffet.

Bringing his characteristic storytelling to cut and welded forms, Wiley repurposed and transformed sheets of industry into objects full of symbolic charge. *The Absence of Angel Wings for Crow* and *Mask*, both from 1982, incorporate common motifs and subjects within his oeuvre, like the infinity symbol and question marks, as well as animals and nature, to create narrative arcs whose interpretation is decidedly open-ended—at times opaque—yet simultaneously revealing of the human condition.

The wall sculptures and pedestal works in the exhibition are inspired by Michael Hannon's *Venerations & Fables* (1982), a book of poetry featuring philosophical entries written from the viewpoint of animals and plant life. Wiley often incorporated language into his works, using text variously sourced from the many books or magazines he had read, or from snippets he heard on the radio, and just as often, from his own personal musings.

*What the Mountain Lion Said* (1985) depicts a lamb in profile rendered in steel, with a cotton cushion pad positioned squarely on its back. The lines from Hannon's poem are imprinted on the surface, following the contours of the animal's body. "WHAT THE MOUNTAIN LION SAID / Concerning snow and eternity / I lecture to the lamb." *What the Mole Said* (1985) continues the theme of the animal world, taking the mole as its subject, a creature symbolizing the unknown, but also awareness and the process of looking inwards. In Wiley's interpretation, a craggy opening is carved out of a circle, revealing the dark void within. "WHAT THE MOLE SAID / I hate the sun, / all that commotion. / I want to grind steadily / at the roots of darkness. / Work is my salvation."

Wiley was introduced to Hannon through a mutual friend and they soon formed a relationship based on mutual respect and admiration. They collaborated on many projects over the years, including *Fables* (1989), a limited edition artist's book based on the earlier poems in *Venerations & Fables*. Published by Turkey Press, *Fables* features Hannon's poems opposite drawings by Wiley, several of which are included in the exhibition.

Throughout his diverse practice, Wiley approached his works with a deep sensitivity and awareness to our changing world and the role of human-kind within it. The type of collaboration endeavored by Wiley in these works is testament to the importance he placed on community and the active exchange of ideas.

William T. Wiley (b. 1937 in Bedford, IN, d. 2021 in Greenbrae, CA) lived and worked in Marin County, CA. The artist has been the subject of numerous solo museum exhibitions, including *What's It All Mean: William T. Wiley in Retrospect*, a retrospective at the Smithsonian American Art Museum, which traveled to the Berkeley Art Museum (2009-2010). His work was first exhibited at the San Francisco Museum of Art in 1958 and subsequent venues have included the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Jan Shrem and Maria Manetti Shrem Museum of Art; Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum; Frankfurter Kunstverein; Walker Art Center; The Museum of Modern Art, New York and the Whitney Museum of American Art. His work is held in over forty public collections, including The Art Institute of Chicago; de Young Museum, San Francisco; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Philadelphia Museum of Art; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Stedelijk van Abbemuseum, The Netherlands; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; and the Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven.