

# THE PENINSULA

CHICAGO

April 6, 2022

THE PENINSULA CHICAGO ANNOUNCES HISTORIC ART EXHIBIT  
FEATURING ARTISTS FROM 1968 CHICAGO ART COALITION:  
*AFRICOBRA: 'I AM SOMEBODY', APRIL 7 THROUGH MID-MAY 2022*

*Curated in collaboration with Kavi Gupta Gallery and presented  
in conjunction with EXPO CHICAGO*



Gerald Williams, b. 1941, Chicago, *I Am Somebody*, 1969, Acrylic on canvas

[The Peninsula Chicago](#) is proud to present '*I Am Somebody*,' an exhibition of works by [AFRICOBRA](#) artists Sherman Beck, Jeff Donaldson, Jae Jarrell, Wadsworth Jarrell and Gerald Williams. AFRICOBRA, or the African Commune of Bad Relevant Artists, is an artist collective that was founded on the south side of Chicago in 1968. Known for creating art to address social and cultural challenges affecting the Black community, AFRICOBRA is one of the most significant arts movements of the second part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The exhibition is presented in partnership with [Kavi Gupta](#) and [EXPO CHICAGO](#) and is the sixth year that The Peninsula Chicago has hosted an art exhibit open to the public. The AFRICOBRA

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exhibition will be on display to the public from April 7 to mid-May 2022 and coincides with EXPO CHICAGO, the International Exposition of Contemporary and Modern Art, at Navy Pier, from April 7 to April 10, 2022.

## **About the Exhibition:**

*I Am Somebody* features 18 artworks, many of which represent work from the coalition's early years. As guests enter the hotel on the ground level, the exhibit is introduced with art created in the group's early years by Jae Jarrell, Wadsworth Jarrell and the exhibit's namesake piece by Gerald Williams, *I Am Somebody*. The main fifth floor Lobby Level features work by Sherman Beck, Jeff Donaldson and the aforementioned artists. Work featured in The Lobby alcove area, features art created in more recent years.

The phrase "I am somebody" embodies the essence of what AFRICOBRA has worked to achieve. Not only is it a powerful expression of individual dignity, but it also calls people to empathize with each other's inherent worth. AFRICOBRA founder Gerald Williams used *I Am Somebody* as the title of one of his paintings in 1969 and wrote the words multiple times across the painting's surface, along with the phrases, "No Being Can Be My Judge," "Maker of All Things," and "My Soul is Clean." Layered, colorful, confident, and full of shine, the painting endures as an emblematic statement of AFRICOBRA's visual and philosophical spirit.

As we continue evaluating the profound impact AFRICOBRA has had, and continues to have, on the evolution of American art and culture, it seems apt for this exhibition to spotlight the enduring relevance of the simple phrase, 'I am somebody.' It is a powerful reminder that the strength, love, dignity, self-respect, and empathy for which AFRICOBRA stands is essential to our future, and to the better part of our human nature.

"Kavi Gupta Gallery are pleased to not only be bringing AFRICOBRA back to Chicago, their city of origin as a collective, but also to present them in a new style which makes the work uniquely visible to the community. In AFRICOBRA's mission, they sought to make art available to the people—finding new means of making the work visible, outside the typical boundaries of galleries, museums, and biennials opens the door to new audiences to experience the work and learn some of AFRICOBRA's incredible story," according to Kavi Gupta Gallery.

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Photo by James Prinz Photography, 2022  
*I Am Somebody; The Chairman of the Board Speaks; Chairman of the Board Speaks;  
Study for Wall of Respect; Cockfight*

## **About AFRICOBRA:**

Founded on the south side of Chicago in 1968 by a group of intellectual artists seeking to establish a new aesthetic and conceptual vocabulary to inspire and empower Black communities. The group began as a meeting of minds, five Chicago creatives – Jeff Donaldson, Jae Jarrell, Wadsworth Jarrell, Barbara Jones-Hogu, and Gerald Williams—coming together to determine how a new Black aesthetic could help to define the past, identify the present, and direct the future.

AFRICOBRA expanded to ten members in the subsequent years, and through their dialogs, outlined several key qualities to highlight in their work: the “expressive awesomeness” of African art and life; symmetry that is free; repetition with change; visual rhythm; positive images; the use of written text directly in the work; and vibrant colors (which became a signature of the group’s output – labeled as “coolade colors” – they were lively and harmonious—these colors often expanded onto the walls of the galleries and museums – as is the case at The Peninsula Chicago in several key areas).

AFRICOBRA’s historical significance has become increasingly appreciated by mainstream arts institutions and scholars in the past decade. Perhaps the collective’s single most notable retrospective has been *AFRICOBRA: Nation Time*, the critically acclaimed, official collateral exhibition of the 58<sup>th</sup> Venice Biennale. AFRICOBRA has also been featured in numerous significant historic group shows, including major representation in *Soul of a Nation: Art In the Age of Black Power*, which debuted at the Tate Modern and traveled to five American venues.

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“We are honored to showcase the important work of the historic 1968 Chicago-founded artist coalition, AFRICOBRA,” said Maria Zec, Regional Vice President and Managing Director for The Peninsula Chicago. “As a hotel brand, we are committed to nurturing and celebrating the art community around the world, through showcasing works that provoke thought, emotion and dialogue. We are indebted to the team at Kavi Gupta Gallery and EXPO CHICAGO for their support in creating an exhibit of this caliber which introduces a wider audience to the impact this collective has had on the art world,” Zec continued.

“We are extremely grateful for our continued extensive partnership with The Peninsula Chicago as both our Official Hotel Sponsor and for their ongoing commitment to presenting meaningful artworks to coincide with our exposition,” said EXPO CHICAGO President & Director Tony Karman.

## **AFRICOBRA on site at EXPO Chicago in /Dialogues:**

Friday April 8, 2022, 12:00 pm to 1:00 pm. Navy Pier. Panelists include: Gerald Williams (SAIC 1966-67, Artist); Jae Jarrell (SAIC 1959-61, Artist); Wadsworth Jarrell (SAIC 1958, Artist) and Sherman Beck (Artist) in conversation with Hans Ulrich Obrist (Curator and Artistic Director / Serpentine Galleries, London).

## **Peninsula Hotels’ Art in Resonance**

The Peninsula Chicago’s desire to provide guests with memorable art experiences aligns with The Peninsula Hotels’ global commitment to promoting the rich and vibrant cultural aspects of the group’s destination cities. This installation is the latest iteration of *Art in Resonance*, The Peninsula Hotels’ global contemporary art program dedicated to being an originator of culture through its engagement with artists who push the boundaries of their mediums, in works that engage the senses.

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## **About The Peninsula Chicago**

The Peninsula Chicago is a Five Star, Five Diamond hotel located on the “Magnificent Mile” at 108 East Superior Street (at Michigan Avenue), within the city’s premier shopping district. The 339-guest room hotel opened in 2001 and features two distinctive restaurants, Z Bar – a rooftop lounge, and a world-class spa. For information on The Peninsula Chicago, please visit [www.peninsula.com/chicago](http://www.peninsula.com/chicago) or call +1 (312) 337 2888 or toll-free at +1 (866) 288 8889.

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## **About Kavi Gupta**

[Kavi Gupta](#) amplifies voices of diverse and underrepresented artists to expand the canon of art history. Through innovative and ambitious exhibitions, multimedia programming, and rigorous publications, the gallery fosters an evolving conversation among international communities about art and ideas. Kavi Gupta's multigenerational, multicultural, multidisciplinary artists include luminaries such as James Little, whose work will be extensively featured in the 2022 Whitney Biennial; Jeffrey Gibson, recipient of a 2019 MacArthur Foundation "genius" grant; and legendary figures of the Chicago arts community including multiple artists of AFRICOBRA, sculptor Richard Hunt, and the estate of Roger Brown.

Kavi Gupta established his namesake gallery in 2000, in the West Loop neighborhood of Chicago. Today, the gallery operates museum-quality exhibition spaces at 835 W. Washington Blvd. and 219 N. Elizabeth St. in Chicago, a satellite project space 219/215 E. Buffalo St. in New Buffalo, Michigan, as well as a large-scale warehouse and conservation center with dedicated space for research and archives. The gallery's publishing imprint, Kavi Gupta Editions, designs and publishes high-quality monographs, exhibition catalogues, artist editions, and academic texts.

In Spring of 2022, following an acclaimed exhibition with Tomokazu Matsuyama, Kavi Gupta will be opening four new solo exhibitions on view in Chicago: Beverly Fishman, Arghavan Khosravi, Devan Shimoyama, and Alisa Sikelianos-Carter."

## **About EXPO CHICAGO**

**EXPO CHICAGO** returns April 7–10 for its ninth edition, featuring 140 leading exhibitors from 65 cities and 25 countries. Celebrating the work of over 3,000 artists, the International Exposition of Contemporary & Modern Art offers an incredible week of dynamic cultural programming. Experience art world leaders in conversation at the /Dialogues program, presented in partnership with the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC); interactive daily panel discussions at Exchange by Northern Trust; a curated selection of contemporary art displayed throughout Chicago's City Digital Network (CDN) via OVERRIDE | A Billboard Project; and immerse in the site-specific large-scale sculpture + video installed within the expansive, vaulted architecture of Navy Pier's Festival Hall for IN/SITU. With an unprecedented commitment to curatorial initiatives during the exposition, EXPO CHICAGO is host to the Curatorial Forum, in partnership with Independent Curators International (ICI), and the Curatorial Exchange, which partners with foreign agencies and consulates to expand the exposition's global reach. EXPO CHICAGO draws upon the city's rich history as a vibrant international cultural destination while highlighting the region's contemporary arts community and inspiring its collector base. For more information on EXPO CHICAGO visit [epochicago.com](http://epochicago.com). April in Chicago. Be Here.

## **About The Hongkong and Shanghai Hotels, Limited (HSH)**

Incorporated in 1866 and listed on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange (00045), The Hongkong and Shanghai Hotels, Limited is the holding company of a Group which is engaged in the ownership, development, and management of prestigious hotels and commercial and residential properties in key locations in Asia, the United States and Europe, as well as the provision of tourism and leisure, club management and other services. The Peninsula Hotels portfolio comprises The Peninsula Hong Kong, The Peninsula Shanghai, The Peninsula Beijing, The Peninsula Tokyo, The Peninsula New York, The Peninsula Chicago, The Peninsula Beverly Hills, The Peninsula Paris, The Peninsula Bangkok, and The Peninsula Manila. Projects under development include The Peninsula London, and The Peninsula Istanbul. The property portfolio of the Group includes The Repulse Bay Complex, The Peak Tower, and St. John's Building in Hong Kong; The Landmark in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam and 21 avenue Kléber in Paris, France. The clubs and services portfolio of the Group includes The Peak Tram in Hong Kong; Quail Lodge & Golf Club in Carmel, California; Peninsula Clubs and Consultancy Services, Peninsula Merchandising, and Tai Pan Laundry in Hong Kong.

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