

# Gerald Williams

## *Screaming at the Sky*



Gerald Williams b. 1941; *Sun Setting Over the Horizon (Screaming at the Sky)*, 2026; Acrylic on canvas; 30 x 30 in.; (76.2 x 76.2 cm)

June 19 – August 15, 2026

Opening Reception June 19, 2026, 5 – 7 pm

Kavi Gupta is pleased to present *Screaming at the Sky*, a landmark solo exhibition by Gerald Williams, co-founder of AfriCOBRA and a pivotal figure in the history of Black American art.

The exhibition presents a new body of paintings that expands Williams' lifelong exploration of what he describes as "mimesis at midpoint." Neither fully representational nor wholly abstract, these works occupy a liminal space between what can be observed and described objectively and what can only be understood through intuition, memory, spirituality, and feeling.

In 1977, AFRICOBRA was invited to represent the United States at FESTAC '77, the Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture in Lagos, Nigeria. The event was attended by more than 15,000 artists of African descent from around the world. Inspired by his participation in the festival, Williams resolved to return to Africa as soon as possible.

Only months later, Williams joined the Peace Corps and relocated to Nairobi, Kenya, where he served as Prevocational Director at the Jacaranda School for the Mentally Handicapped. It was there that his visual

language underwent a dramatic evolution. Influenced by the intensity and clarity of East African light, his mark-making slowed and became increasingly meditative. During this period, Williams began developing the intricate pointillist structures that continue to define his work today dense constellations of dots built through a laborious and contemplative process.

Recalling the pointillist innovations of nineteenth-century French modernism, Williams transforms that visual language entirely. Rather than pursuing the optical concerns of European painting, he reclaims and reorients the dot as a vehicle for exploring interconnect-edness, collective consciousness, spirituality, and the unseen structures that bind all life together. In Williams' hands, a canonical Western artistic strategy becomes a distinctly diasporic mode of seeing, rooted in community, memory, liberation, and belonging.

Created in the wake of a return to the neighborhood he grew up in; Chicago's Woodlawn neighborhood; Williams newest works reflect the complexities of that return. As the ancient philosopher Heraclitus observed, no one steps into the same river twice. Though the

place may remain, both the individual and the world around them have changed. The paintings in *Screaming at the Sky* emerge from this understanding, carrying within them the accumulated wisdom of a life spent moving between continents, communities, histories, and generations of endurance.

The exhibition's title resonates with particular urgency today. Across more than six decades of artistic practice, Williams has witnessed recurring cycles of progress and retrenchment, along with hope and disappointment. "Screaming at the Sky" captures both exasperation and determination a recognition of the challenges of the present moment coupled with an unwavering commitment to justice, dignity, and human possibility.

Opening on Juneteenth and presented during a pivotal moment for Chicago's cultural landscape, *Screaming at the Sky* affirms Williams' enduring belief in art's capacity to illuminate both personal and collective histories. The exhibition stands as a testament to a practice that continues to evolve while remaining rooted in the foundational principles that have guided the artist's work for generations: visibility, dignity, imagination, and freedom.



Gerald Williams b. 1941; Emmett Till, 2026; Acrylic on canvas; 60 x 48 in.; (152.4 x 121.92 cm)