

David Kordansky Gallery is pleased to present Moving West Again, an exhibition of new paintings by Sam Gilliam in which he continues his six-decade exploration of color and materiality. Moving West Again features a group of new Beveled-edge paintings; Gilliam advances this signature typology—a forum for experimentation since its first appearance in 1967—by incorporating new materials and striking formal advances. The show opens at the gallery on May 15 and will be on view through July 2, 2021.

Sam Gilliam is one of the key figures in postwar and contemporary American art. Emerging from the Washington, D.C. scene in the mid-1960s, he has subsequently pursued a wide-ranging, pioneering course in which innovation has been the only constant. Accordingly, the paintings in Moving West Again are among the most ambitious examples of their type that he has produced to date. They find him pushing the envelope in terms of materiality and scale: among them are immersive, twenty-foot-long, mural-sized paintings, as well as pictures that feature the use of materials like aluminum granules which appear in his work for the first time.

Like the Drape paintings for which Gilliam is also well-known, the Beveled-edge works are sculptural as well as painterly propositions that engage their viewers in fully three-dimensional ways. Their characteristic stretchers give them a dynamic relationship to the wall; as a result, they seem to push forward into the spaces in which they are hung, lending them an active quality that is as psychological and emotional as it is physical. Here, he accentuates these effects further through the use of thick, rich, white impasto. As a multitude of other colors press through the fray, the artist's ability to achieve the sensation of depth through hue, in addition to texture and rhythm, comes into clear focus.

Gilliam brings the full range of his experience and knowledge to each of these singular statements, in which fields of color are combined with a variety of often surprising materials. However, Gilliam has always approached each body of work—and indeed, each work itself—as a unique and evolving set of conditions that elaborate themselves in real time, as

the paintings are made. This improvisatory ethos, which finds echoes in the urgent, elastic forms of jazz and the expansive gestural horizons of abstract expressionism, is more than an engine for making art; it is a way of seeing the world precipitated on the idea that response and participation are always possible, and often required.

In the case of the paintings in Moving West Again, this ethos is given physical expression through complex and varied surfaces built up from a surprising array of materials, many of which are remnants from other studio process and previous works. Sawdust shavings, pure pigment, flocking, perlite, discarded fabric, and cut-up artist's proofs for a print have all found their way into these compositions, in visible and less visible forms. It is also present in the endless number of ways that Gilliam applies and moves his mediums, which he flings, splatters, situates, throws, and rakes; non-traditional additives are used to transform the viscosity of the paint itself. Even the beginning stages of each painting are treated as open quantities, with some starting out unstretched and others beginning on raw, stained, or already-painted canvases.

Followers of Gilliam's work will recognize affiliations between the paintings in Moving West Again with works from several other moments in his career. These include works in the Ahab, White, and Black series from the 1970s, whose dense, kaleidoscopic planes of color share some of the volumetric and optical energy of the newest paintings. In each of these examples, the density of paint application gives the objects a paradoxical feeling of weightlessness and suspension—further testament to the depth of Gilliam's intuitive understanding of what paint can do as an abstract force in relation to both body and eye. They are also reminders that Gilliam's ongoing evolution is cyclical rather than linear, lyrical rather than literal, and always attuned to the demands and inspirations of the eternal present.

Sam Gilliam will be the subject of a major retrospective exhibition in 2022 at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C. In 2021, Dia Art Foundation, New York,

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and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston made the historic joint acquisition of Gilliam's significant early work, the monumental installation Double Merge (1968), which has been on long-term view since 2019 at Dia Beacon in New York. In addition to a 2005 traveling retrospective organized by the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., Gilliam has been the subject of solo exhibitions at the Kunstmuseum Basel, Switzerland (2018); Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C. (2011); J.B. Speed Memorial Museum, Louisville, Kentucky (1996); Whitney Museum of American Art, Philip Morris Branch, New York (1993); The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York (1982); and Museum of Modern Art, New York (1971), among many other institutions. His work is included in over fifty permanent collections, including those of the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris; Tate Modern, London; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; and Art Institute of Chicago. Gilliam lives and works in Washington, D.C.