

# ***THE INIMITABLE PROFESSOR EMERITUS*** **FRANKLIN WILLIAMS**

**October 27 – December 21, 2019**

Parker Gallery is proud to present ten recent paintings by Franklin Williams, the artist's second solo exhibition with the gallery. The works on canvas are painted in acrylic and embellished with thick yarn, crochet thread, collage and personal objects.

Franklin Williams, also known in this body of work as Professor Emeritus (the title recently bestowed upon him after fifty-one years teaching at the San Francisco Art Institute and the California College of the Arts), has increasingly turned his attention inward, reflecting on his life and the influences that have remained close at hand. Each work in the exhibition could be described as a self-portrait, featuring a centrally placed head partially deconstructed and overflowing with ornamentation and intricate patterning.

From an early age, Williams quietly absorbed the household craft traditions around him. Inspired by his mother's elaborate handmade quilts, Williams learned to sew before he could ride a bicycle, a skill he continues to employ in his work today. In this recent body of work, the artist includes heirlooms from his childhood environment. The portraits evolved from looking closely at the hot pads that were crocheted by the women in his family. Several paintings incorporate embroidered handkerchiefs sewn by his mother Ruth and his Aunt Gladys. Two works depict a Raggedy Ann doll and teddy bear that were given to Williams before he was born and to this day, sit proudly (if a bit worse for wear) atop a bookcase in the artist's studio.

The artist has also mined material from stockpiles diligently maintained since the 1960s. Burying snippets of drawings and etchings several decades old within the new paintings, Williams effectively breathes new life into archival ephemera and souvenir-like objects dear to the artist. Strewn throughout the works are talismans and amulets representing personal histories: tiny fabric rosettes, even tinier sea shells and an exuberantly decorated Welsh love spoon.

The painted portraits can also suggest masks, evoking the dichotomy of our internal and external selves. Of particular influence to Williams is the poetry of W.B. Yeats and more specifically, the poet's use of the mask as a device to reveal and obscure true identity. In reflecting upon decades of artmaking, Williams has come to embrace the archetypal symbol as a cyclical apparatus for self-determination.

Franklin Williams's work is also on view in *With Pleasure: Pattern & Decoration in American Art 1972-1985*, a major group exhibition curated by Anna Katz at the Museum of Contemporary Art Los Angeles. The exhibition will travel to the Hessel Museum of Art at Bard College in 2020.

**Franklin Williams (b. 1940 in Ogden, UT, lives and works in Petaluma, CA). Select solo exhibitions include *Franklin Williams: 1963-73*, Parker Gallery, Los Angeles, CA (2017; catalog), *Eye Fruit: The Art of Franklin Williams*, Sonoma County Art Museum, Santa Rosa, CA (2017; catalog), Nora Eccles Harrison Museum of Art, Logan, UT (1997), Braunstein Gallery, San Francisco, CA (1971-89), *Franklin Williams Paintings & Constructions*, San Jose Museum of Art, San Jose, CA (1983), Galerie B, Paris, France (1975), Gallery Marc, Washington, D.C. (1972), Phyllis B. Kind Gallery, Chicago, IL (1969), Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento, CA (1968), Dilexi Gallery, San Francisco, CA (1967), Richmond Art Center, Richmond, CA (1966), and New Mission Gallery, San Francisco, CA (1964). His work is held in the permanent collections of the Berkeley Art Museum, the Crocker Art Museum, Nora Eccles Harrison Museum of Art, the Oakland Museum of California, Manetti Shrem Museum of Art, Minneapolis Institute of Art, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and San Jose Museum of Art, among others.**