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THE
CLOCKTOWER

The Institute for
Art and Urban Resources, Inc
The Clocktower
108 Leonard Street
New York, NY 10013
212 233-1096

Alanna Heiss
President and Executive Director

Oct. 12, 1987

Neal Williams
P.O. Box 114
Sagaponack, NY 11962

Dear Neal:

Just a note to clarify the dates of your Clocktower show:

Exhibition dates: Oct. 30-Nov. 30

Opening: November 7th, 6-8pm

Poetry reading by Creeley: Nov. 7th, 8pm

I am sorry if there was some confusion. These were the original dates. When I told you a different set of dates, they had been momentarily switched-- which is why I was surprised when you said that these were not the dates I had mentioned.... Oh well.

I will be sending you loan forms and arranging for transportation next week.

Yours,

Tom Finkelparl
Clocktower Coordinator

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~~October 18~~ → Dec 13 PS1

Oct 19 - Dec. 14 Fall

Jan. 28 - March 22 Winter
or 25 or 29

Paul Hunter 222-5926 ←

Clocktower

O'D. Sept. 18 - Oct. 19

Oct. 23 - Nov. 23
or 30

E. Brown
202 1771
457

288-9352

call

Neil Williams (516-537-3629) out of order

in.
→ E. Brown ←

Closes Aug. 17th at Met. Mus. Nat. Mus. Art.
Bob Stanton, Registrar (202-357-1381)
pick-up date: Sept 24, 86

Call Brian O'D Tuesday at NEA Design Program

Maxing out
204-683-1985
212-227-2188

Bellamy 545-5107
482-0120

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Since the early 1960s, Neil Williams has rigorously engaged his painting to a constant criticism of form and material. These paintings lend themselves to such keen observation because of the quality of intelligence they evidence. They have become a somewhat ironic celebration of the process and history of their painting, pursuing each other, coherently self-referential.

The earliest shaped work included in this exhibition, Pop Title, 1964 and recently repainted, is among the works with which Williams is most often identified, because of their presence in The Shaped Canvas exhibition at the Guggenheim, 1964, and at the Green Gallery in that year. Whether shaped or not, these early paintings are made up of a system of repeated forms. This repeat of image is clearly a specific choice, and calls on a play between reductive counterpoints of color and form. In Pop Title, Williams adds to the possibilities of this repeat by constructing the support so that the exterior and interior voids of the painting are fully integrated into the run of the image. In his essay for the Guggenheim exhibition Systemic Painting, 1966, which included Williams, Lawrence Alloway theorized the meaning and role of form and image run and the employment of a system in the making of art. Repetition was seen as restoring meaning to the formal object. In Pop Title, although the run and shaping suggest continuous extension, the work remains as an object, a thing in itself.

By 1967, the year in which Williams appeared in the Carnegie International, the artist's production had expanded into the stained field of the monumental, shaped work Presented to the Emperor Chang. The double and reversed reductive chevron invites the eye to travel its surface program of articulated color. The quality and enjoyment of the

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handling of paint emerges in these fields of suffused color as they run through their components and compliments.

In Haiku, 1974, the chevron or delta-wing shape stands on end, a shape characteristic of William's painting for some years. This familiar shape had become a field on which Williams could exercise his mastery and growing enjoyment of the handling of paint. The complex play of brushwork and color is purely painterly, expressive and acutely aware at once.

In the shaped work of 1981, Williams has focused on a system of repeated patterns that intersect with formally abstracted areas or grounds inhabited by other figures or patterns. Each of these repeated figures is constituted of a number of elements that cooperate in establishing the components of the figure, or is composed of a discrete form, line or bar of color. These works are complex arabesques in tension with geometric forms, vivid with color. Other areas record more painterly device, or drawing with paint. Installed together, because of the overall exterior shape of the support, their objectness remains, and the paintings with the shaped voids that separate them recall the earlier objective repeats of 1964.

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In the four most recent works, M.E. #1, M.E. #2, M.E. #3, and M.E. #4, the total vocabulary is in play, as though Williams had assembled an orchestra of specific instruments and in these paintings, presents the composition and gives the command to begin ensemble. They are evidently a sequence of developing ideas, beginning with the establishment of the investigation in M.E. #1. Here, Williams announces a figure/ground, positive/negative, color/ black and white counterpoints.

It could be said that the simple, quatrefoil figures, particularly as they appear in a bar of hotly colored runs, allude in the individual "petals" to the stroke of brush, and as well recall the flowers of Warhol. The individual shapes that constitute the floral figure are also grounds that contain drawing with paint, harmonics. This drawing with paint is in arabesques rather than glyphs. The painting is two-paneled.

In the second of the series, the figure withdraws to the left and then emerging, tumbles in repeats of the figure, activating the surface. Although the work is still composed of two panels, Williams has generated more elements in the panels. IN the right, he gives his attention to specific elements that are implicit or can be located in the first. The upper left section of the right panel may be understood as a concentration on the component of the positive ground of the left panel, a drawing with paint on the ground. The floral figure then tumbles out on a negative ground and floats up to intersect with the introduction of a new element, made up of the material of paint itself.

This area is composed of the skin of dried acrylic paint. In a specific process grown out of the utilization of the hardening, still flexible scum of paint drawn from the can, Williams produces quantities of the material to

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deploy as an extension of the possibilities of the medium. It refers to the materiality of the paint itself, which composes, one way or another, the rest of this painting, or the notion of painting. Subsumed in the painting, this adhered skin of paint becomes a second ground, and by drawing with paint on the manipulated surface, the artist makes a conundrum of the process he employs.

Now Williams has located the elements and marshalls them with greater command in M.E. #3, by separating each of the areas of investigation into discretely supported elements. Their shape is rectilinear, and the notion of shape is in the painting itself. The referential nature of this series is compounded further in the panel of skin painting, as the artist incorporates not only the material of paint but the tools of the painter. Inseparable from the ground of paint skin are brushes of various sizes, tins. Playing on the significance of paint as skin, Williams introduces flesh color to the previously recorded primary and secondary colors. If it is possible to read without forcing issues a reference to Warhol in the quatrefoil figures, then the De Kooning of the other Marilyns is noted here, and perhaps the artists who have notably incorporated "foreign" material in the matrix of paint, from Poons to Schnabel; in the drawing with paint, Pollack; and, not for the first time, the question of Stella.

In M.E. #4, with the realization that both a recollection of all the elements can be brought into play by referring to their essential components in a more finely specific handling, Williams announces each element by utilizing only what is necessary to identify it fully. The quatrefoil, like most physical things, requires three to establish numbering as multiple. They occur in the left panel. As in M.E. #3, the right section is constructed of three panels in a more or less post-and-lintel articulation. But in the quatrefoil-figured left panel, a broken, serpentine ribbon

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of red on a white ground becomes an emblem of, perhaps, the consciousness of line in drawing. The lintel panel to the right embellishes what it is to draw with paint, rehearsed from the previous paintings. The lower right panel positions two commas of blue on a black ground, again emblematic. The final panel of skinned paint has a modeled formal quality announced in a regularity of repeats that in their ridges recall the diagonal runs of the paintings of the early 60s, and containing more incorporated material. These repeats may refer to the figure, the shape of an X, which, in the quatrefoil, is anthropomorphic, bilateral if not symmetrical. This painting records movement, its statement interrupted, regarded. Observe with an unfocused gaze, these painterly elements cohere and conspire to unify all of these interior and exterior "references."

I had intended to discuss all of this with Neil Williams, but he told me that if he could talk about these paintings he wouldn't have to do them, or be able to, or something like that. He was sorry I hadn't been able to use my tape-recorder. I said that was all right. The paintings say it all.

Edward Leffingwell

October 1986

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PRESS RELEASE

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Art and Urban Resources, Inc
The Clocktower
108 Leonard Street
New York, NY 10013
212 233-1096

Alanna Heiss
President and Executive Director

For immediate release

For more information:
Contact Tom Finkelppearl
212-233-1096

NEIL WILLIAMS, JAMES ROSENQUIST, ROBERT CREELEY
AT THE CLOCKTOWER

The Institute for Art and Urban Resources announces the opening of exhibitions of work by Neil Williams and James Rosenquist along with a poetry reading by Robert Creeley and an open studio show by Tim Casey. The exhibitions will run October 30 through November 30, 1986. The artists' reception, with a reading by Robert Creeley, will take place on Friday, November 7, 1986, 6:00 to 8:00 pm. Admission is by voluntary contribution.

Neil Williams whose paintings will fill the lower galleries, is an abstract painter who began showing in the mid-1960's. He participated in important exhibitions such as The Shaped Canvas at the Guggenheim in 1964 and the Carnegie International in 1967, but this will be Williams' first major New York show in many years. Curated by Edward Leffingwell and Richard Bellamy, this exhibition will bring the strength and vitality of Williams' work back to the attention of the New York audience.

James Rosenquist will show a large new painting in the Tower gallery. Rosenquist's pop work, which emerged at the same time as Williams', serves as a clear contrast to the development of Williams' painterly work.

Robert Creeley is a poet whose condensed style has gained him an international reputation. He will read a group of new works at the November 7th reception.

Tim Casey is a first year resident in the Institute's National Studio Program at the Clocktower. Casey's heavily encrusted surfaces represent objects or buildings integrated within a painterly field of subdued color.

The Clocktower's facility is owned by the City of New York and its programs are supported in part by generous contributions from the Department of Cultural Affairs of New York City.

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