

Art Basel—Feature | Booth D9

Franklin Williams

June 19–22, 2025



PARKER GALLERY



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Parker Gallery is proud to present a curated selection of early work by Northern California artist Franklin Williams (b. 1940). This group of soft sculptures and embroidered paintings and drawings encompass a fertile period in which the handicraft techniques and primal forms that would go on to define the artist's broader practice, first emerged. The work presented here addresses elemental themes of sexuality and desire, fantasy and reality, life and death, all intricately constructed in the artist's signature experimental approach. Fiercely idiosyncratic, Williams has always forged an independent path, while expanding on the legacy of the San Francisco Beat Generation before him.

A key figure in understanding the experimentation of Northern California art practices, Franklin Williams is staunchly situated in the traditions of the American West. Born into a Mormon family in Utah, Williams learned handicraft arts from his prodigious hobbyist relatives. Pursuit of undergraduate and master's degrees at California College of Arts and Crafts, Oakland brought Williams to the San Francisco Bay Area in the early 1960s, where he

still resides today. His professors there encouraged Williams to turn inward, and he began to focus on personal milestones such as the death of his mother and the transformative love he was experiencing with his new wife.

Williams' obsessive devotion to the meticulous building of his work and psychological journeys separated him from the scene in San Francisco at the time. Rather than contemporary visual culture, Williams drew inspiration from poetry, folk art, medical textbooks, and Ancient Egyptian art.

The works selected for this presentation represent a key period in the development of the artist's visual language before figuration entered into his practice. Using beads, sequins, yarn and other tactile adornments, Williams constructs sculpture, works on paper, and paintings which erupt in bold color, line, and form. Bulbous sculptures made from canvas stuffed with cotton batting become almost creature-like with protruding appendages and furry yarn embellishments. Similarly, the works on paper seem to depict a sort of blossoming protozoa, physically growing into the frame itself through embroidery and painting into the glazing. In his paintings, punctilious patterning and stitching erupt into a frenzied sensuality, biomorphic forms merging with exultant ornamentation. Each piece is rooted in the depths of human emotion yet borrows the formality of ancient compositional principles.

Though he was recognized for his contributions to establishing a post-Beat movement in Northern California, Williams was then as now, deeply difficult to categorize. Following his master's degree in 1966, Williams began teaching at the San Francisco Art Institute alongside Jay DeFeo and Bruce Conner. In 1967, Peter Selz included Williams in the infamous *Funk* exhibition at the Berkeley Art Museum, though Williams' practice never quite aligned with the irony, excess, and abject humor of Funk. Similarly, in 1972 Clayton Bailey selected Williams for his *Nut Art* exhibition at Cal State

Hayward despite the fact that Williams wasn't socially engaged with the other artists presented. Williams instead has been steadfast in his reviving of historical ornament styles in a deeply personal manner.

More recently, a renewed interest in Williams' practice has emerged in American art institutions. This past September, a retrospective of Williams' work titled *Franklin Williams: It's About Love* opened at The Bell, Brown University, Providence, RI. Curated by Kate Kraczon, a fully illustrated catalogue will accompany the exhibition.

Recent institutional group exhibitions which included work from the time period of this Art Basel Feature presentation are: *To the Max!*, di Rosa Center for Contemporary Art, Napa, CA (2023-2024); *Nuts and Who's: A Candy Store Sampler*, San Jose Museum of Art, San Jose, CA (2023); *Lover Earth: Art and Sexuality*, Tang Museum, Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, NY (2020); *Pleasure: Pattern & Decoration in American Art 1972-1985* at The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles and the Hessel Museum of Art, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY (2019 and 2021); and *Less is a Bore: Maximalist Art and Design* at ICA Boston (2019).

In 2025, 1960s work by Franklin Williams will be included in *Sixties Surreal* at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY. Work from this early period has also recently been acquired by MOCA, Los Angeles; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Minneapolis Institute of Art; Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts; and Tang Teaching Museum, Saratoga Springs, NY.



Portrait of Franklin Williams in his studio, California College of the Arts, c. 1964

Franklin Williams

*Untitled*, 1965

Acrylic, graphite, beads, glitter, gesso, crochet thread and yarn  
on fabric and canvas stuffed with cotton batting, wooden sup-  
port

12 × 8 × 7 1/2 inches (31 × 20 × 19 cm)

\$45,000





Franklin Williams

*Untitled*, 1965



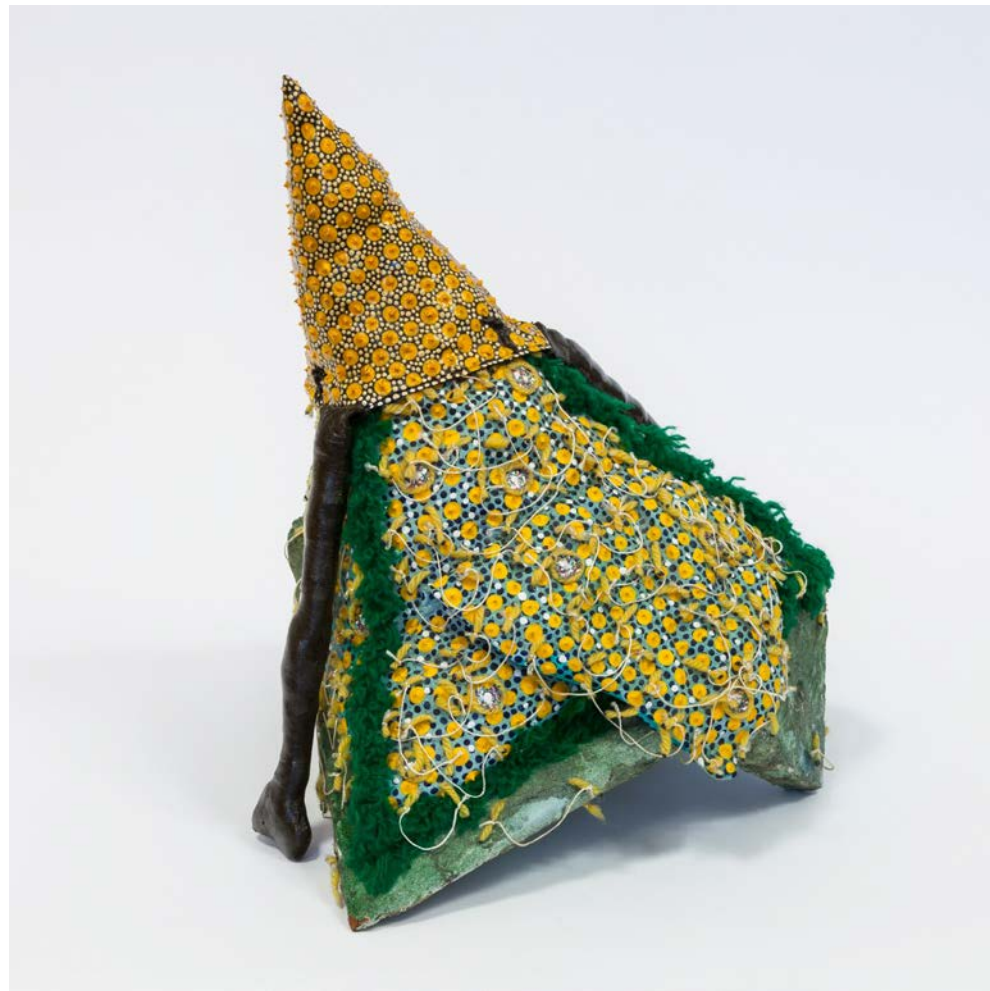
Franklin Williams

*Thorny Crown*, 1966

Acrylic, gesso, glitter, toilet paper, polyurethane, yarn and crocheted thread on canvas stuffed with cotton batting, wood

14 1/2 × 13 1/2 × 9 inches (37 × 34 × 23 cm)

\$45,000



Franklin Williams  
*Thorny Crown*, 1966









Franklin Williams

*Untitled*, 1966

Acrylic, yarn, crochet thread and cotton gauze on canvas  
stuffed with cotton batting, wood

9 x 11 x 10 inches (23 x 28 x 25 cm)

\$45,000





Franklin Williams

*Untitled*, 1966







Franklin Williams

*Posture*, 1966

Acrylic, yarn, twine, stuffed with cotton batting on canvas on  
wooden armature

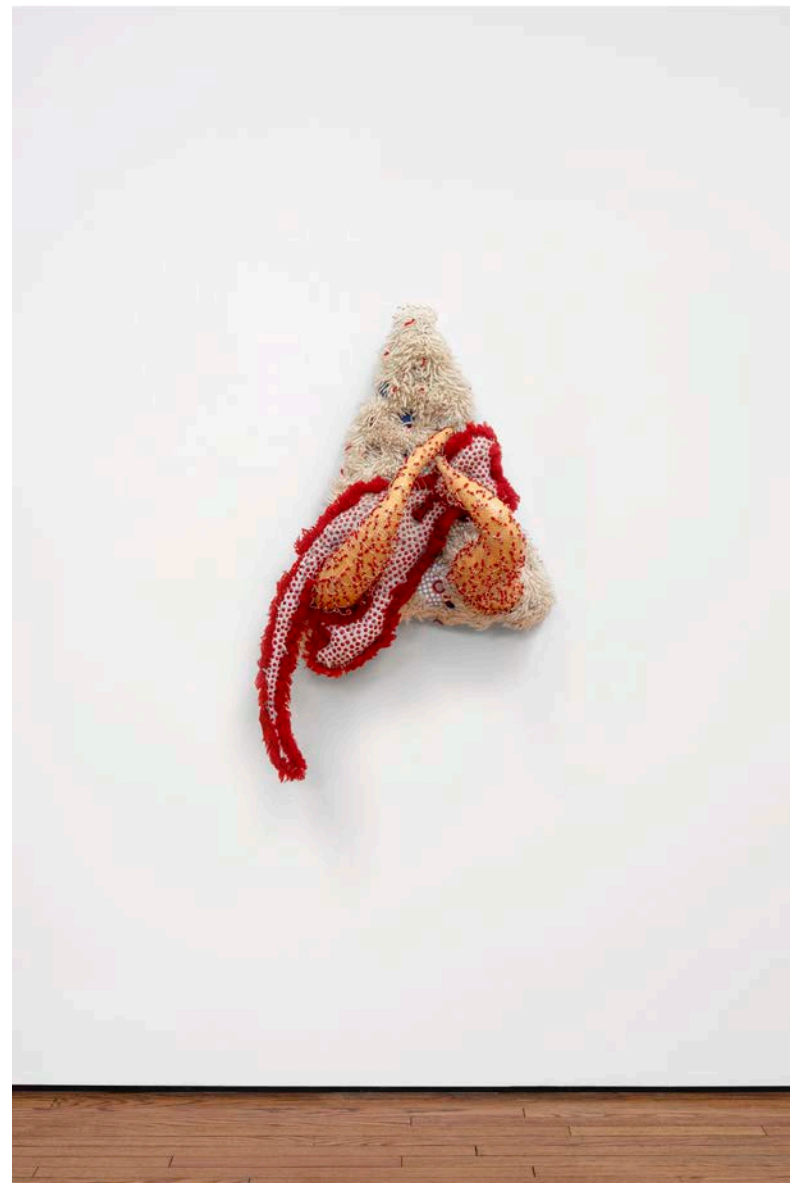
36 × 22 inches (91 × 56 cm)

\$65,000



Franklin Williams

*Posture*, 1966



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Franklin Williams

*Posture*, 1966



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Installation view, *Franklin Williams: It's About Love*, curated by Kate Kraczon,  
The Bell, Brown University, September 16–December 8, 2024



Franklin Williams

*Untitled*, 1966

Acrylic on fabric with cotton batting, beads, crochet thread and string

14 × 17 inches (36 × 43 cm)

\$45,000





Franklin Williams  
*Untitled*, 1966



Franklin Williams

*Untitled*, 1967

Acrylic, yarn and crochet thread on fabric

18 x 24 inches (46 x 61 cm)

\$50,000

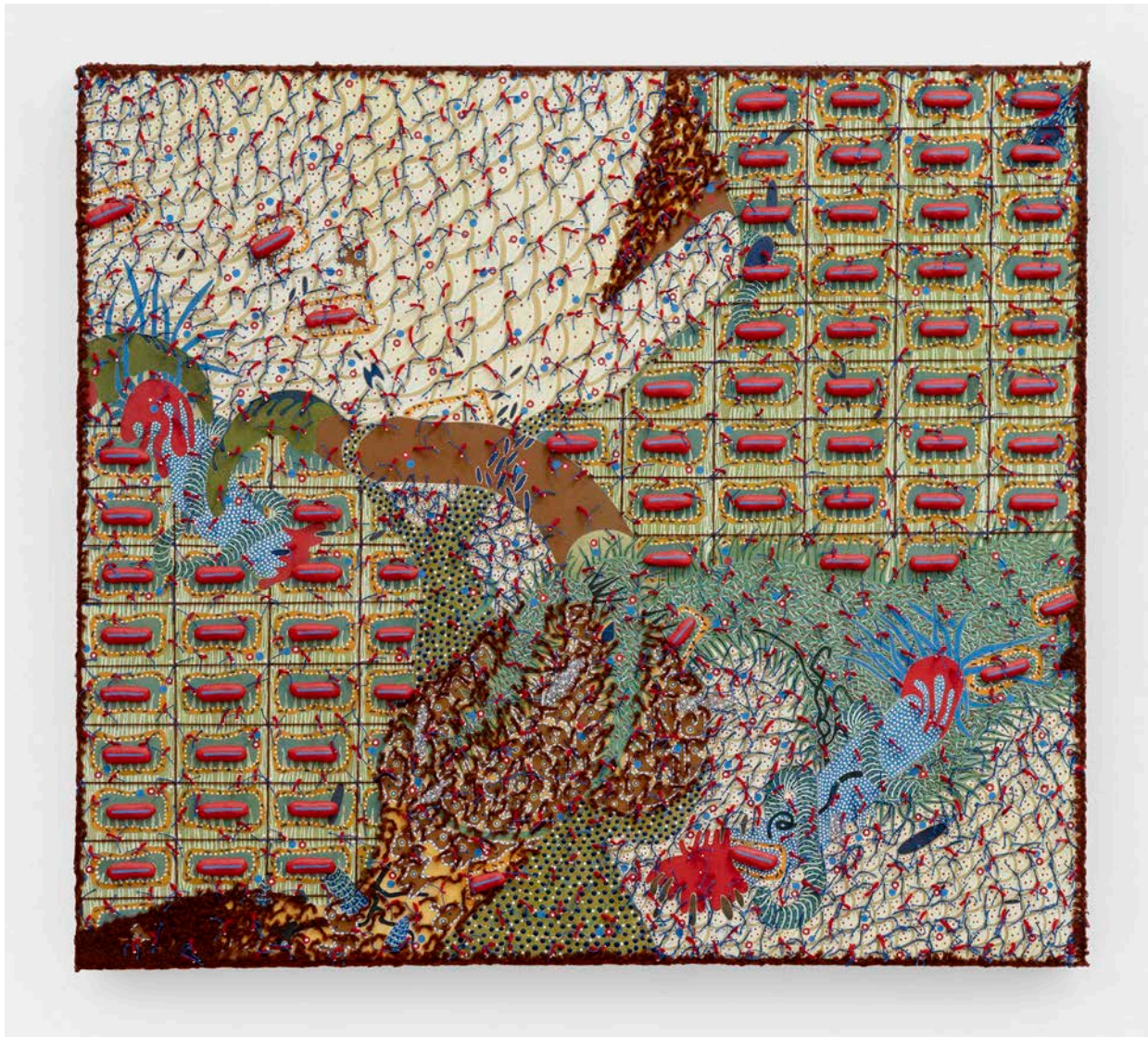
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Franklin Williams

*Untitled*, 1967



Franklin Williams

*Untitled*, 1968

Acrylic, yarn, crochet thread, glitter, cotton batting on canvas

44 × 40 inches (112 × 102 cm)

\$90,000



Franklin Williams  
*Untitled*, 1968

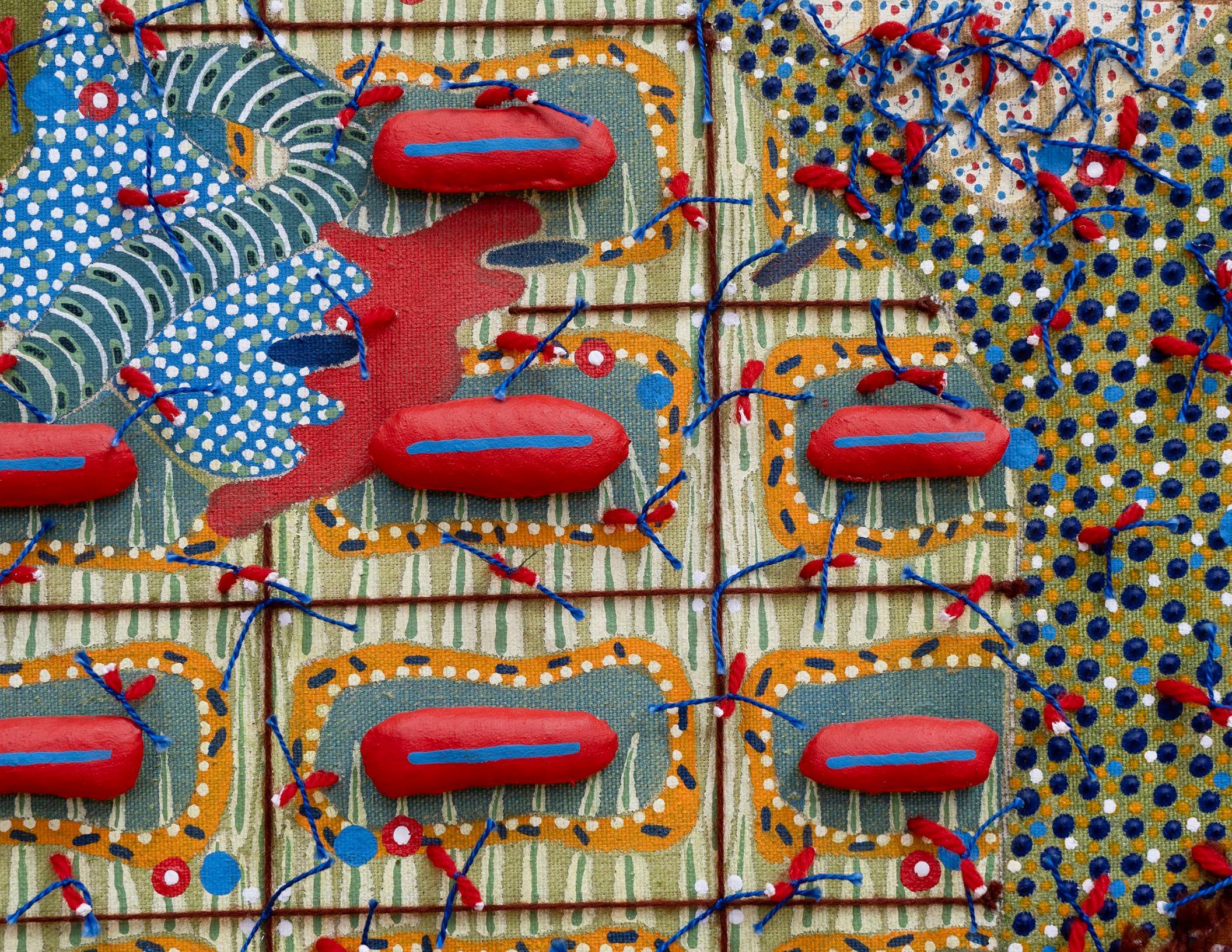




Franklin Williams

*Untitled*, 1968









Installation view, *Franklin Williams: It's About Love*, curated by Kate Kraczon,  
The Bell, Brown University, September 16–December 8, 2024





Franklin Williams

*Untitled*, 1970

Acrylic and crochet thread on paper with back-painted glass

18 x 15 inches (46 x 38 cm)

\$28,000









Franklin Williams

*Untitled*, 1970

Acrylic and crochet thread on paper with back-painted glass

18 x 15 inches (46 x 38 cm)

\$28,000

PARKER GALLERY









Franklin Williams

*Untitled*, 1971

Acrylic and crochet thread on paper with back-painted glass

18 x 15 inches (46x 38 cm)

\$28,000









Franklin Williams

*A Triangular World*, 1971

Acrylic on canvas, with fabric and crochet thread

40 × 48 × 2 inches (102 × 122 × 5 cm)

Sold

Franklin Williams

*A Triangular World*, 1971



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Franklin Williams

*Yellow Apron*, 1971

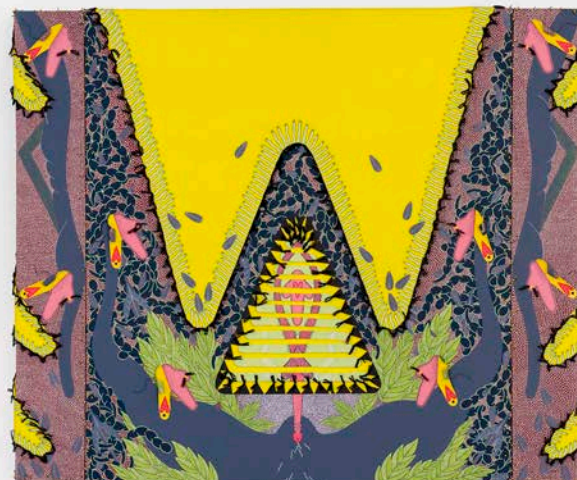
Acrylic on sewn canvas, yarn, crochet thread and painted nails

40 × 48 × 2 inches (101 × 122 × 5 cm)

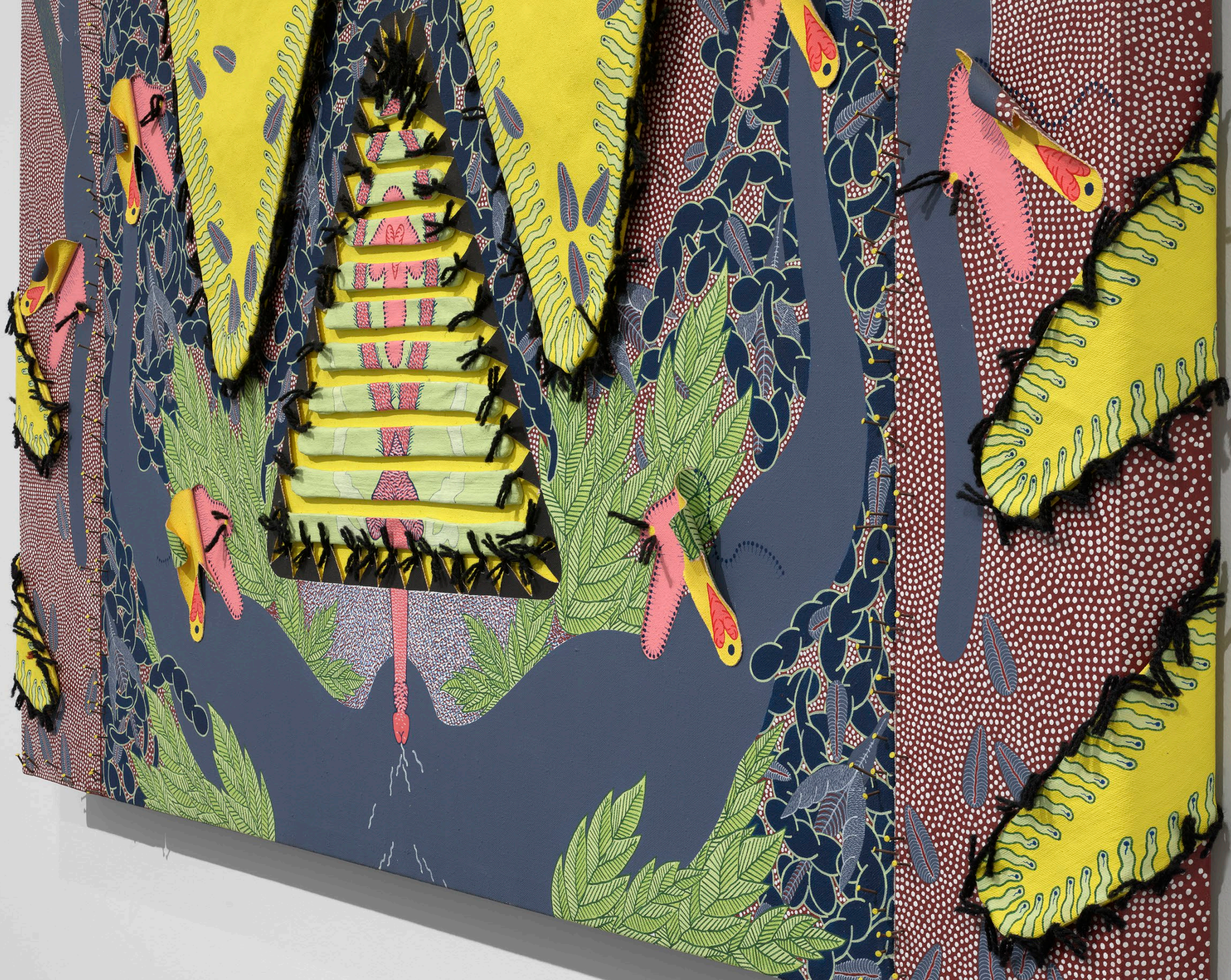
\$90,000



Franklin Williams  
*Yellow Apron*, 1971











Installation view, *Franklin Williams: It's About Love*, curated by Kate Kraczon,  
The Bell, Brown University, September 16–December 8, 2024



Installation view, *Less Is a Bore: Maximalist Art & Design*, curated by Jenelle Porter, The Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, June 26–September 22, 2019.



Franklin Williams

b. 1940 Ogden, UT, lives and works in Petaluma, CA

Education:

- 1966 California College of Arts & Crafts, Oakland, CA MFA  
1964 California College of Arts & Crafts, Oakland, CA BFA

Teaching:

- 1969-2018 California College of Art, San Francisco & Oakland, CA  
1966-1999 San Francisco Art Institute, San Francisco, CA  
1990 Gwent College of Higher Education, Newport, Wales  
1990 Ruskin School of Drawing and Painting, Oxford, England  
1968 University of California, Davis, CA  
1967 California State Hayward, CA

Selected solo exhibitions:

- 2024 *Franklin Williams: It's About Love*, The Bell, Brown University, Providence, RI  
*Franklin Williams: Desire and Obsession*, Garth Greenan Gallery, New York, NY  
2022 *Meditative Spectacle: Paintings 1974–76*, Parker Gallery, Los Angeles, CA  
2019 *The Inimitable Professor Emertius*, Parker Gallery, Los Angeles, CA  
2017 *Franklin Williams: 1963-73*, Parker Gallery, Los Angeles, CA  
*Eye Fruit: The Art of Franklin Williams*, Sonoma County Art Museum, Santa Rosa, CA  
2008 *Obsession*, Lizabeth Oliveria Gallery, Los Angeles, CA  
2007 Taylor & Company, San Francisco, CA  
2005 Crocker Art Museum Acquisition Exhibition, Sacramento, CA  
2003 Lizabeth Oliveria Gallery, San Francisco, CA  
1997 Nora Eccles Harrison Museum of Art, Logan, UT  
1995 L. Noel Harvey Gallery, Santa Fe, NM  
1993 Joseph Chowning Gallery, San Francisco, CA  
1992 University of the Pacific, Stockton, CA  
1984 Arkansas Museum of Art, Little Rock, AR  
Utah Museum of Fine Arts, Salt Lake City, UT  
1977-83 Gallery K, Washington, D.C.

1983 *Franklin Williams Paintings & Constructions*, San Jose Museum of Art, San Jose, CA

1981 Sonoma State University Gallery, Rohnert Park, CA

1980 Sheppard Fine Arts Gallery, University of Nevada, Reno, NV

1978 Diablo Valley College, Pleasant Hill, CA

1973 Galerie B, Paris, France

1972 Gallery Marc, Washington, D.C.

1971-89 Braunstein Gallery, San Francisco, CA

1970 University of California, Davis, CA

1969 Arleigh Gallery, San Francisco, CA  
Phyllis B. Kind Gallery, Chicago, IL

1968 Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento, CA

1967 California College of Arts & Crafts Gallery, Oakland, CA  
Dilexi Gallery, San Francisco, CA

1966 Richmond Art Center, Richmond, CA  
Motion Gallery, San Jose, CA

1964 New Mission Gallery, San Francisco, CA

1959 Carbon College, Price, UT

Selected group exhibitions:

2025 *Sixties Surreal*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York

2023 *Nuts and Who's: A Candy Store Sampler*, San Jose Museum of Art, San Jose, CA  
*To the Max!*, di Rosa Center for Contemporary Art, Napa, CA

2020 *Lover Earth: Art and Sexuality*, The Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery at Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, NY

2019 *With Pleasure: Pattern & Decoration in American Art 1972–1985*, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA; traveled to the Hessel Museum of Art, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY  
*Less is a Bore: Maximalist Art and Design*, ICA Boston, Boston, MA  
*Downtown Painting*, presented by Alex Katz, Peter Freeman Inc., New York, NY  
*Landscapes Without Boundaries*, Manetti Shrem Museum of Art, Davis, CA

*Building a Different Model*, di Rosa Center for Contemporary Art, Napa, CA

2018 *Be Not Still: Living In Uncertain Times (Part 2)*, di Rosa Center for Contemporary Art, Napa, CA  
*Way Bay*, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley, CA

2017 *Jean Conner, Wally Hedrick, Deborah Remington and Franklin Williams*, Karma, New York, NY  
*Nut Art*, Parker Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

2016 *Curtains*, 47 Canal Gallery, New York, NY

2012 *Williams | Waits*, Smith Anderson North, San Anselmo, CA

2008 *At Home*, curated by Lawrence Rinder, Lincart, San Francisco, CA

2004 San Jose Museum of Art, San Jose, CA

2002 *The Medium is the Message*, San Jose Museum, San Jose, CA

1998 *pFORMative ACTS*, Walter McBean Gallery, San Francisco, CA

1985 Laguna Beach Museum of Art, Laguna Beach, CA  
Palm Springs Desert Museum, Palm Springs, CA

1984 Jacksonville Art Museum, Jacksonville, FL  
Utah Museum of Fine Art, Salt Lake City, UT  
*San Francisco Bay Area Painting*, Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery, Lincoln, NE  
*The Dilexi Years (1958-1970)*, Oakland Museum of California, Oakland, CA

1983 *On & Off the Wall: Shaped and Colored*, Oakland Museum of California, Oakland, CA

1981 *Surface Design/The New Decorative*, San Jose State University, San Jose, CA  
*Abstractions*, San Francisco Art Institute, San Francisco, CA

1979 *Major Works*, Gallery K, Washington, D.C.

1977 *Bay Area Artists*, Oakland Museum of California, CA

1976 *6 from California*, Museum of Art, Washington State University, Pullman, WA

1975 *Tribute to the San Francisco Art Institute*, Hansen Fuller, San Francisco, CA

1974 University of Nevada, Reno, NV

1973 *Statements*, Oakland Museum of California, Oakland, CA

1972 National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.  
*Nut Art*, California State University, Hayward, CA



1970 *DeForest, Schlotzhour, Williams*, Arleigh Gallery, San Francisco, CA  
 Gallery Marc, Washington, D.C.  
 Richmond Art Center, Richmond, CA

1969-75 Phyllis B. Kind Gallery, Chicago, IL

1969 San Francisco Museum of Art, San Francisco, CA

1968 Esther Robles Gallery, Los Angeles, CA  
 Galleria Odyssia, New York, NY  
*Sculpture Annual*, Whitney Museum, New York, NY  
 University of California, Davis, CA

1967 *Painting Annual*, Whitney Museum, New York, NY  
 Dilexi Gallery, San Francisco, CA  
*Funk Art*, University of California, Berkeley, CA

1966 Portland Art Museum, Portland, OR  
 Seattle Art Museum, Seattle, WA

1964 *Six Painters*, New Mission Gallery, San Francisco, CA  
*A Collection Representing 57 Years*, Oakland Art Museum, Oakland, CA

1963 *Some New Art in the Bay Area*, San Francisco Art Institute, San Francisco, CA

Public collections:

Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, University of California, Berkeley, CA  
 Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.  
 Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento, CA  
 di Rosa Center for Contemporary Art, Napa, CA  
 Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA  
 Manetti Shrem Museum of Art, University of California, Davis, CA  
 Minneapolis Institute of Art, Minneapolis, MN  
 Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA  
 Museum of Northern California Art, Chico, CA  
 Nora Eccles Harrison Museum of Art, Logan, UT  
 Oakland Museum of California, Oakland, CA  
 Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, PA  
 San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA  
 San Jose Museum of Art, San Jose, CA  
 Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery, Lincoln, NE  
 Tang Teaching Museum, Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, NY  
 University of New Mexico, Santa Fe, NM

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- 2019 Halpert, Juliana "The Tender Refuge of Franklin Williams's Woven Self-Portraits." *Frieze*, Jan. 8  
Hudson, Suzanne "Critics' Picks: Franklin Williams" *Artforum*, Dec.
- 2018 Frank, Peter "Parker Gallery - Franklin Williams: 1963-1973" *Fabrik Magazine*, Jan. 22
- 2017 Mellin, Haley "Franklin Williams," *Bomb*, Dec. 14  
Yau, John "Four Bay Area Iconoclasts and Eccentrics," *Hyperallergic*, Dec. 10  
Mendelsohn, John "Painterland: Four from California at Karma," *Artcritical*, Dec. 9  
Campbell, Andy "Franklin Williams," *Artforum*, October 23rd  
Schuster, Clayton "The Intimate Abstractions of Franklin Williams," *Hyperallergic*, August 30, 2017  
Stromberg, Matt "Nut Art at Parker Gallery," *Contemporary Art Review Los Angeles*  
Schuster, Clayton "Revisiting the Witty Work of 1970s Bay Area Nut Artists," *Hyperallergic*, July 14, 2017  
Landauer, Susan "A Room of His Own," Eye Fruit: The Art of Franklin Williams, Museums of Sonoma County, Santa Rosa, CA  
Templeton, David "Sacred Joys of Making Art", *Petaluma Argus Courier*, June 8, 2017.  
Taylor, Dan "Inside The World of Franklin Williams", *The Press Democrat*, June 9, 2017.
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Review of "Curtains," (47 Canal, New York, NY) *Art & Culture*  
Review of "Curtains," (47 Canal, New York, NY) *Artforum*
- 2013 Westabrook, L., Review of "Plush," *SF Bay Guardian*
- 2012 Frank, Peter. "Obsession," at Lizabeth Oliveria, Los Angeles, CA  
Review of "Plush," *San Jose Mercury News*  
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George, Jan "Picasso Meets Frost: Ogdenite Mixes Abstractness with Poetry." *Utah Statesman*, Utah State University, Logan, UT, November 21, 1997.
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Hendricks, Mark "Bay Area Exhibit Paints Diverse Styles, Movements." *Daily Nebraskan*, October 4, 1984.  
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French, Christopher "Looking Back to the Dilexi," *Artweek*, November 3, 1984.
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Atkins, Robert "ATale of Two Coasts." *The Museum of California Magazine*, September/October 1983.  
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Bettelheim, Judith, *On and Off the Wall: Shaped and Colored*, Oakland Art Museum



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Roland Petersen, Wayne Thiebaud, William T. Willey, Franklin Williams."  
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- 1973 Weeks, H. J. "Statements" The Oakland Museum of California Art, 1973.  
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- 1972 Nut Art. Hayward: California State University, Hayward, Art Gallery, 1972.
- 1971 Miller, Del "Creates 'Fuzzy Fairyland'." *Argus-Courier*, Petaluma, CA, April 2, 1971.
- 1970 De Forest, Schlotzhauer, Williams, Arleigh Gallery, San Francisco, CA, 1970.  
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- 1969 French, Palmer D. "Reviews—San Francisco." *Artforum*, November 1969.
- 1968 Lubell, Ellen, Review, *Arts Magazine*, February 1968.
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French, Palmer D. "Reviews—San Francisco." *Artforum*, December 1967.  
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Martin, Fred "New Art Defined," *Artforum*
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