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Sam Gilliam: Existed Existing

November 6 – December 19, 2020
510 & 540 West 25th Street
New York

Pace Gallery is honored to present Sam Gilliam: Existed Existing, the artist’s inaugural exhibition with the gallery since joining it in July 2019. Opening on November 6, 2020 at both 540 and 510 West 25th Street in Chelsea, the exhibition debuts new works and artist-led installations that reflect the culmination of Gilliam’s six-decade-long career with color. The exhibition features three new bodies of work that include large-scale paintings, some titled as tributes to influential Black contemporary and historical figures; a series of geometric color-drenched wood objects; and monochromatic paintings on Japanese washi paper. Accompanying Existed Existing is a fully illustrated monograph that includes a new interview between the artist and curator Hans Ulrich Obrist, as well as commissioned essays by art historian and curator Courtney Martin and scholar and poet Fred Moten.

The new sculptural works take the form of geometric objects—pyramids, parallelograms, and circles made from stacked and stained plywood and aluminum. These new sculptures developed following Gilliam’s extended stay in Basel, Switzerland, for the installation of his exhibition at the Kunstmuseum Basel in 2018, where he noticed that the city’s population had grown more international through an influx of immigrants, primarily from Africa. Inspired by this urban change and African influence, Gilliam returned to his studio and began to revisit the elemental forms of ancient African architecture.

At the center of the exhibition is a series of new large-scale paintings, measuring from six-by-eight feet to eight-by-twenty feet, that further meditate on the physicality of color. Several of these works pay homage to Gilliam’s Black heroes, from singer-songwriter Beyoncé and tennis player Serena Williams to Senator John Lewis, the late civil rights leader who passed away this year. Densely layered and mixed with sawdust and other detritus from the studio,
Sam Gilliam (b. 1933, Tupelo, Mississippi) is one of the great innovators in postwar American painting. He emerged from the Washington, D.C. scene in the mid 1960s with works that elaborated upon and disrupted the ethos of Color School painting.

A series of formal breakthroughs would soon result in his canonical Drape paintings, which expanded upon the tenets...
of Abstract Expressionism in entirely new ways. Suspending stretcherless lengths of painted canvas from the walls or ceilings of exhibition spaces, Gilliam transformed his medium and the contexts in which it was viewed. For an African-American artist in the nation’s capital at the height of the Civil Rights Movement, this was not merely an aesthetic proposition; it was a way of defining art's role in a society undergoing dramatic change. Gilliam has subsequently pursued a pioneering course in which experimentation has been the only constant. Inspired by the improvisatory ethos of jazz, his lyrical abstractions continue to take on an increasing variety of forms, moods, and materials.

In addition to a traveling retrospective organized by the Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. in 2005, Sam Gilliam has been the subject of solo exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art, New York (1971); The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York (1982); Whitney Museum of American Art, Philip Morris Branch, New York (1993); J.B. Speed Memorial Museum, Louisville, Kentucky (1996); Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C. (2011); and Kunstmuseum Basel, Switzerland (2018), among many other institutions. A semi-permanent installation of Gilliam's paintings opened at Dia:Beacon in August 2019. His work is included in over fifty public collections, including those of the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris; Tate Modern, London; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; and the Art Institute of Chicago. He lives and works in Washington, D.C.

**Pace** is a leading contemporary art gallery representing many of the most significant international artists and estates of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Under the leadership of President and CEO Marc Glimcher, Pace is a vital force within the art world and plays a critical role in shaping the history, creation, and engagement with modern and contemporary art. Since its founding by Arne Glimcher in 1960, Pace has developed a distinguished legacy for vibrant and dedicated relationships with renowned artists. As the gallery enters its seventh decade, Pace's mission continues to be inspired by a drive to support the world's most influential and innovative artists and to share their visionary work with people around the world.

Pace advances this mission through its dynamic global program, comprising ambitious exhibitions, artist projects, public installations, institutional collaborations, performances and interdisciplinary projects through Pace Live, and curatorial research and writing. Today, Pace has nine locations worldwide: two galleries in New York—including its newly opened headquarters at 540 West 25th Street, and an adjacent 8,000 sq. ft. exhibition space at 510 West 25th Street—as well as galleries in Palo Alto, London, Geneva, Hong Kong, and Seoul. In July 2020 Pace opened a temporary gallery space in East Hampton, New York that will be programmed through October 2021. Additionally, the gallery’s seasonal exhibition space in Palm Beach will be open from early November 2020 through spring 2021.
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