AMANDA WILLIAMS

What black is this you say ?

November 6 — December 19, 2020

To ensure the safety of our guests, the gallery will admit a limited number of visitors at one time. Reservations can be made through Tock (exploretock.com/rhonahoffmangallery).

Rhona Hoffman Gallery is pleased to present *What black is this you say?,* an exhibition of new works by Chicago-based artist and architect Amanda Williams. New watercolor, oil and mixed media paintings interrogate the complexities, variations and degrees of difference in black as color and identity.

What black is this you say? is a multi-platform color project conceived on June 2, 2020, otherwise known as Blackout Tuesday, as the artist reconsidered social media protest and the "black out" of communication:

> *I'll be honest. I wasn't feeling the black out. I hate stuff like that, but I caved. Wanted to be in solidarity. But Color is everything to me. You can't just say "black"...which one? So I'm gonna inaugurate a different black each day until I don't feel like it anymore. Why? Cuz I'm black and I can!*

Starting on June 3rd, Williams identified a different "black" each day via her personal Instagram. The ubiquity of the platform was used to imagine black as nuanced and highly variable, and to reject black as monolithic. Funny, poignant and sometimes-site-specific captions accompany each post. The resulting feed is an expanse of black shades, textures and colloquialisms from personal and collective histories.

Williams returns to her first loves—oil painting, color, and color mixing—to translate this body of work from digital gesture into a physical exploration of black abstraction. The captions of the original posts serve as titles of the work. No pre-made black paints are used; instead, a deep range of purples, browns and greens are at play, evoking what she calls "the sensation of blackness." As with color, a range of techniques are used to create distinct surface treatments.

Similar to her breakout painted house series *Color(ed) Theory*, this chromatic and cultural exploration of blackness is both universal and biographical. The viewer is invited on a simultaneous adventure in soul and color, to explore the multitude of 'Black.'

———

Amanda Williams (b. Evanston, 1974) is both a visual artist and trained architect from Cornell University whose practice lives at the intersection between art and architecture. Her projects use color as a lens to highlight the complexities, politics and intersections of race, place and value. She is widely known for her series, *Color(ed) Theory,* where she painted the exterior of condemned houses on Chicago's South Side. The work raises questions about the state of urban space and equity in America and the invisible policies and forces that have misshapen inner cities.

Amanda Williams was selected to represent the United States at the 2018 Venice Architecture Biennale in collaboration with Andres L. Hernandez and Shani Crowe. Amanda has been commissioned to design the forthcoming Shirley Chisholm Monument in Brooklyn along with Olalekan B. Jeyifous. Her work from the *"What black is this you say?"* series is included in the exhibition *The Long Dream* at the MCA Chicago, and in an ongoing collaborative project with the Storefront for Art and Architecture in New York. Past exhibitions include *Chicago Works: Amanda Williams*, a solo exhibition at the MCA Chicago and *A Way, Away (Listen While I Say)*, a public project with the Pulitzer Arts Foundation in St. Louis. She is a United States Artists Fellow, Efroymson Family Contemporary Arts Fellow, and recipient of the 2020 3Arts Next Level/Spare Room award. Amanda also sits on the multidisciplinary Exhibition Design team for the Obama Presidential Center and is the inaugural Artist-In-Residence at Smith College. She lives and works on Chicago's South Side.