

SKARSTEDT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SUE WILLIAMS: PAINTINGS 1997-98

OPENING RECEPTION: FEBRUARY 21 2018, 6-8PM

20 East 79th Street, New York



“I first saw Sue Williams’ works two years ago, and thought, Won, they bite. Her paintings galvanized me: violent cartoonish, explicit, voracious... A chosen few, mostly other artists, were impressed, yet the work seemed to slip by oddly unnoticed. Times change. Political thought returned. Sue Williams has been there all along. And now, we’re ready to see her.” (Nancy Spero, “Sue Williams’ Bomb Magazine no. 43 January 1, 1993).

Skarstedt is pleased to present *Sue Williams: Paintings 1997-98*, an exhibition of the artist’s work spanning two years of her early career. In collaboration with 303 Gallery, New York, this is the first exhibition of Sue Williams’s work to be shown at Skarstedt and will be on view from February 22 – April 21, 2018 at Skarstedt Upper East Side, 20 East 79th Street, New York, NY 10075.

This collection of oil and acrylic works on canvas represent the artist’s interest in the abstraction of human experience, capturing the essence of sexuality, violence, delight, and irony. With vibrant colors on a white ground, one might be inclined to jump to comparisons: Pollock, Gorky, de Kooning, Miró. However, in looking closely, the strokes and swirls create cartoon-like renderings of tongues, shoes, fingers, internal organs, genitalia and more, inspiring art critic Jerry Saltz to call her, “Cy Twombly with a feminist twist.”

Marking a point of transition in the artist’s oeuvre, these paintings illustrate Williams’s use of abstraction as a tool to mask visceral components with elegant shapes and contours. This is shown in *Black and White and Red All Over*. With a striking palette, the painting disguises



SKARSTEDT

provocative imagery, exemplifying Williams's skill in weaving together the language of feminism and abstract expressionism, placing her within a vast art historical index. In using Clement Greenberg's explanation of Pollock's "all-over" style of painting, Williams not only incorporates the aesthetic, but provides this connotation through her title as well.

In the late 1990s, with the idea of feminism in constant motion, Williams' paintings mark her innovative approach to painting and abstraction as a tool against patriarchal notions of art making. "I want to draw attention to issues; I want people to be informed. It's a scary time. Everything gets integrated into the art, not always consciously. [The paintings] become a refuge. If I have visibility, I have the responsibility to try and change things." (Sue Williams in an interview with Carly Gaebe, "The Sum of Its Parts: An Interview with Sue Williams," *Art in America*, January 15, 2014). In looking at the work of her contemporaries in the late 1990s and even today, Williams's paintings, in both concept and form, are ahead of their time and more relevant than ever.

About Sue Williams

Sue Williams was born in Chicago in 1954. She received her B.F.A. in 1976 from the California Institute of the Arts in Valencia. Working predominantly with oil and acrylic on canvas, Williams came to prominence in the early 1980s, exploring themes of postmodern feminism and personal experience. Influenced by the aesthetic of Abstract Expressionism, Williams merges colorful abstraction with feminist sexual imagery, inspiring a dynamism and unconventional theatricality unique to her work. Williams challenges sexuality, gender, violence, and aggression through her signature cartoon-like swirls of abstraction.

Sue Williams has exhibited extensively throughout the United States and Europe. Her works have been shown in exhibitions in major institutions including the Whitney Museum of American Art, Museum of Modern Art, New York, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, MoMA P.S. 1, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, and the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston. Williams lives and works in New York.

About Skarstedt

Skarstedt (20 E. 79th Street, New York, NY) was founded in 1994 by Per Skarstedt to mount historical exhibitions by Contemporary European and American artists. The New York gallery's program focuses on concepts such as representation, authorship, identity, and sexual politics across a wide-range of media. Skarstedt's unique relationship with artists allows it to present museum-quality exhibitions both on the primary and secondary markets, creating a dialogue between the generations.

Located at 8 Bennet Street, Skarstedt's London gallery is situated in the historic district of St James's, on the corner of Arlington Street and Bennet Street, both named after Henry Bennet, Earl of Arlington. Known as 'ministerial street' in the 17th and 18th centuries, the street was previously home to Prime Minister, Sir Robert Walpole and his son Horace Walpole, an esteemed collector and connoisseur. Measuring 5,000 square feet, with the main exhibition space at ground floor level, the three interconnected galleries enable Skarstedt to continue its program, of historically-researched and museum-quality exhibitions.

The gallery works with the following artists and artists' estates: Francis Bacon, Georg Baselitz, Jean-Michel Basquiat, George Condo, Willem de Kooning, Eric Fischl, Peter Fischli



SKARSTEDT

& David Weiss, Lucio Fontana, Keith Haring, Jenny Holzer, KAWS, Mike Kelley, Martin Kippenberger, Yves Klein, Jeff Koons, Barbara Kruger, Juan Muñoz, Cady Noland, Albert Oehlen, Richard Prince, David Salle, Thomas Schütte, Cindy Sherman, Rosemarie Trockel, Cy Twombly, Andy Warhol, Sue Williams, and Christopher Wool.

Image Details: Sue Williams, *Black and White and Red All Over*, 1998, oil and acrylic on canvas, 71 x 92 inches (182.9 x 233.7 cm), Courtesy of the Artist, 303 Gallery and Skarstedt

