

ATLANTA CONTEMPORARY

Changing the way you see art.

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release



Atlanta Contemporary announces *The Life and Death of Charles Williams*

On View: January 23, 2020 – April 19, 2020

Public Opening: Thursday, January 23, 2020, 6 to 9pm

ATLANTA —September 17, 2019 —Atlanta Contemporary Art Center (Atlanta Contemporary) is pleased to announce the first major solo exhibition of Charles Williams featuring over 100 works of art made between the early 1960s – 1998.

Tue–Sat 11am–5pm
Thu open late until 8pm
Sun 12pm–4pm
Mon Closed

535 Means St. NW
Atlanta, GA 30318
404-688-1970
info@atlantacontemporary.org
atlantacontemporary.org

The Life and Death of Charles Williams, curated by Phillip March Jones, examines over three decades of Williams' work highlighting the paintings, drawings, assemblages, sculptures, and furniture he made until his untimely death in 1998, the result of AIDS-related complications.

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Charles Williams (b. Blue Diamond, Kentucky, 1942 – 1998), described the place he grew up as a “little old country hick town in coal mining territory.” He taught himself to draw by copying comic book figures and though he never finished high school, learned practical job skills at the Breckinridge Job Corps Center. There, Williams honed his writing proficiency, made photographs, and even developed his first regular comic strip titled *JC of the Job Corps*, which appeared weekly on the back page of the Breckinridge Bugle—the camp newspaper.

After graduating from the program in 1967, Williams was unable to find the kind of employment he wanted and ended up in the cleaning services of IBM in Lexington. While working as a full-time janitor, Williams created comic narratives including the *Amazing Spectacular Captain Soul Superstar* and an entire mini-series called the *Cosmic Giggles*. Beyond comics, Williams maintained an elaborate yard show in addition to making hundreds of pencil holders, in varying sizes and forms, mostly gleaned from the desk drawers of IBM employees after they had gone home for the day.

“With *The Life and Death of Charles Williams*, Atlanta Contemporary announces our new curatorial direction,” says executive director, Veronica Kessenich. “Over the course of the next 18 to 24 months, we will work solely with independent curators. We intend to uphold the highest standards of artistic and programmatic excellence while providing a community-focused environment that fosters inclusivity. By working with Phillip March Jones for our first exhibition in 2020, our audience and members experience exhibitions and programs relevant to contemporary culture in concert with our motto, Changing the Way We All See Art. A subsequent announcement will be forthcoming with the 2020-2021 curators.”

The Life and Death of Charles Williams honors Charles Williams’ legacy as well as affords new audiences an opportunity to see his work firsthand. In death, Williams became a catalyst for the kind of change he advocated for in his comics, drawings, and sculptures though much of his work remains almost completely unknown. A corresponding publication will be released in April 2020.

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Phillip March Jones is an artist, writer, and curator based in New York City. In 2009, he founded Institute 193, a non-profit contemporary art space and publisher in Lexington, Kentucky. Jones later served as the inaugural director of Atlanta's Souls Grown Deep Foundation and currently Curator-at-Large at Institute 193, Lexington.

About Atlanta Contemporary

Atlanta Contemporary engages the public through the creation, presentation and advancement of contemporary art. Founded in 1973 as Nexus, a grassroots artists' cooperative, Atlanta Contemporary has since become one of the southeast's leading contemporary art centers. We play a vital role in Atlanta's cultural landscape by presenting over 100 consequential artists from the local, national, and international art scenes through our various exhibition and project spaces each year. We are one of the few local art organizations that commission new works, paying attention to artists of note who have not had a significant exhibition in the Southeast. We organize over 100 diverse educational programs annually including Contemporary Kids, Contemporary Cocktails, Contemporary Talks, Movement Love and more! Atlanta Contemporary provides on-site subsidized studio space to working artists through the Studio Artist Program, removing cost as a barrier to the creative process. Visit atlantacontemporary.org to learn more.

All press inquiries, contact:

Veronica Kessenich, Executive Director
veronica@atlantacontemporary.org

IMAGE CAPTIONS:

Charles Williams
Untitled (Pencil Holder), mid-1990s
Mixed media, 12 x 10 x 7.5 inches
Collection of the Kentucky Folk Art Center at Morehead State University

Charles Williams
I Think We Better Keep on Pushing (Cosmic Giggles Series), n.d.
Pen and graphite on paper, 11 x 8.5 inches

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Collection of the Kentucky Folk Art Center at Morehead State
University

Charles Williams

Captain Soul (1st Issue), 1973

Xerox, 11 x 8.5 inches

Collection of the Kentucky Folk Art Center at Morehead State
University

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