



Petrification VIII

Aubrey Williams

On display

Title/Description: Petrification VIII

Artist/Maker: Aubrey Williams

Born: 1972

Materials: Oil paint

Measurements: h. 505 x 655 mm

Accession Number: 50915

Historic Period: 21st century

Production Place: England

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Credit Line: Purchased with Art Fund support, 2024

Petrification VIII explores major themes that appear across Williams' work, including the remarkable landscape, geology, flora and fauna of Guyana, his country of birth. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Williams created abstract paintings informed by landscape geology, science, history and myth. An avid reader of periodicals such as *Scientific American* and *Omni*, Williams was particularly interested in the science of rock and galaxy formation, as well as archaic Amerindian petroglyphs.

In *Petrification VIII*, ancient glyphs from Aztec, Olmec, Inca, Maya and other pre-Columbian motifs are combined with micro and macro forms as if viewed under a microscope; with ancient and future technology informing Williams' investigative approach to abstract painting. Williams, although often compared to the Abstract Expressionists, was never concerned with formalist approaches to abstract painting. Williams' work highlights, rather, a long-standing concern for the environment and ecology, as well as his interest in pre-Columbian heritage associated with Guyana.

Born in Guyana, Williams relocated to London in 1952 where he remained for the rest of his life. Following Williams' first exhibition in London in 1954, he became an increasingly significant figure in the post-war British avant-garde art scene, particularly through his association with Denis Bowen's New Vision Centre Gallery. In 1966, Williams came together with a group of London-based Caribbean artists and intellectuals to found the Caribbean Artists Movement, which served as a dynamic hub of cultural events and activity until its dissolution in 1972. From 1970 onwards, Williams worked in studios in London, Jamaica and Florida. It was only after Williams' death in 1990 that he started to gain more general critical acclaim, with works and his archive being acquired by Tate in 2001.

Calvin Winner, April 2023
