

Sept 18 through Dec | 2009

BERNARD WILLIAMS BUFFALO CHART

ABOUT THE ARTIST Bernard Williams was born in Chicago and grew up on the south side of the city. He holds a BFA Degree from the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana, as well as a Master of Fine Arts Degree from Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. Williams taught art at The School of the Art Institute of Chicago from 1991-2003. He has been commissioned to create large outdoor murals around Chicago and abroad by a range of organizations and corporations including AT&T; Kraft Foods; the Snite Museum of Art at the University of Notre Dame, Ind.; Chicago Dept. of Cultural Affairs; and the Jackson Public School District, Jackson, Miss. His work has been shown at the Hyde Park Art Center, Chicago; Ethan Cohen Fine Arts, New York; John Micheal Kohler Arts Center, Sheboygan; Slate Gallery, Brooklyn; Socrates Sculpture Park, Long Island; The National Museum of the American Indian, Washington, DC; Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto; and others.

ABOUT THE WORK According to Williams, "This work grows from my continuing investigation of American and world history. Related interests include archeology, cartography and ethnology. In many of my works, signs and symbols are collected and arranged in order to speak about the complexities of history and human development and movement through the ages. Retrieving and reinterpreting details of history and culture are central to my impulses. Multiple stories and fragments are layered and lined onto my canvases or chosen surface. I attempt to speak about America as a place of conflict, sharing, fragmentation and convergence. America is seen as a place constructed by multiple cultures including Anglos, Hispanics, Blacks, Asians and others."

"Buffalo Chart" is loosely sequential, beginning with early American history and proceeding to the present. It is a kind of American history, told with symbols, including images culled from historical texts or purely from the artist's imagination. "Stories weave in and out of the symbols," Williams explains. Although the work cannot strictly be read like a rebus image puzzle, Williams says the work at times "brushes up against" that way of reading images.

"My works investigate symbolic and associative histories," Williams says. "The interpretations are impulsive and intuitive. They are attempts to manage the overwhelming complexities of constructing histories which evoke radically differing worldviews."

As part of his Legion Arts residency, Bernard created "Cedar Rapids Rising," a large freestanding sculpture representing a birds-eye- or map-view of downtown Cedar Rapids, with the Cedar River as its center. The work was created from several sheets of plywood and mimics the rising of the river.

Also while in Cedar Rapids, Bernard completed sketches for a new project involving the placement of temporary signs on abandoned, flood-damaged buildings.

HOURS This exhibit opened Wednesday, September 18, and continues through December 2009. The galleries at CSPA are open 11 to 6, Weds through Sun. Admission is always free, though donations are accepted and appreciated. Classes and groups are welcome. For further information call (319) 364-1580, write info@legionarts.org or visit our Web site at www.legionarts.org.

THANKS Legion Arts is a partner in the Visual Artists Network (VAN). Bernard Williams' residency is made possible in part through support from the Visual Artists Network Exhibition Residency, a program of the National Performance Network. Major contributors include the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, the Joan Mitchell Foundation, and the Nathan Cummings Foundation. For more information visit www.npnweb.org. Additional support for this project comes from a grant from the Greater Cedar Rapids Community Foundation, and a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency.

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