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**MADISON MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART PRESENTS
RECOLLECT: SAM GILLIAM, EXPLORING THE ARTIST'S IMPACT
ON MADISON'S CULTURAL SCENE**

MADISON, WI—The Madison Museum of Contemporary Art (MMoCA) will present *RECOLLECT: Sam Gilliam*, an exhibition reflecting on the innovative work of the internationally recognized artist and his impact on the development of Madison, Wisconsin's creative culture. The exhibition will be on view August 10-March 3, 2024. Admission to MMoCA's galleries is always free.

**RECOLLECT
*Sam Gilliam***

On View
August 10, 2023–
March 3, 2024

Free Admission

>

Tandem Press founder Bill
Weege, left, and Sam Gilliam,
in rural Wisconsin, c. 1978.
Photo courtesy of
Sue Steinmann.

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The Mississippi-born Gilliam was an abstract artist originally associated with the Washington Color School of the late 1950s and 1960s. Artists aligned with this movement were known for staining their canvases with color so as to emphasize a painting's two-dimensionality. Later, Gilliam was recognized as the first artist to

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remove the wooden stretcher bars that determined the shape of his paintings, thereby allowing his vivid, color-stained canvases to hang, billow, and swing through space.

One of Gilliam's early works, *Carousel* (1970), a colorful sixty-seven-foot-long draped canvas that hangs suspended from the ceiling, received its first museum show in 1971 at the Madison Art Center, the precursor of MMoCA. The show was inspired by the then-small but relevant collection of Don Eiler, who had moved to Madison from Washington, D.C., where he first saw a Gilliam artwork.

Gilliam's association with Madison-based artists and cultural institutions continued from 1972 until his death, at age 88, in 2022. The artist traveled to Madison every summer for over 40 years, serving as an artist-in-residence at UW-Madison and working often with Tandem Press.



^ Installation view of *RECOLLECT: Sam Gilliam*, Madison Museum of Contemporary Art, 2023.

Rather than a traditional survey of an artist's work, *RECOLLECT: Sam Gilliam* invites visitors to celebrate the connections found in his art and through his art. Guided by stories shared by those who knew Gilliam, the exhibition is a meditation on individual and extremely personal ties to the artist and his works.

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Among those sharing recollections about Gilliam are master printer Bruce Crownover and Don Eiler, an anesthesiologist; both of Madison, Wisconsin; Susan J. Goldman, artist and founder of Lily Press, Rockville, Maryland; Leslie Smith III, Professor of Art at the University of Wisconsin-Madison; Sue Steinmann, a horticulturist in Arena, Wisconsin, whose husband, Bill Weege, founded Madison's Tandem Press and was a longtime collaborator with Gilliam; and Freida High Wasikhongo Tesfagiorgis, artist, art historian, and Professor Emerita of African and African American Art History and Visual Culture, University of Wisconsin-Madison.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Sam Gilliam was born in Tupelo, Mississippi, in 1933. He grew up in Louisville, Kentucky and attended the University of Louisville in the 1950s. After serving in the U.S. Army, Gilliam earned a Master of Arts degree in 1961 from the University of Louisville.

The artist taught in Louisville for four years, then moved to Washington D.C. Gilliam experimented with larger canvases, culminating in his first draped painting in 1969. Between 1965 and 1973, he had seven, one-person exhibitions. In 1967, Gilliam received the first of two individual artist's grants from the National Endowment for the Arts. He later received a Guggenheim Fellowship. He taught at the Corcoran School of Art in Washington, D.C., the Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore, Maryland, and Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and the Washington, D.C. public school system.

ABOUT MMOCA

The Madison Museum of Contemporary Art is always admission free. Its vision is to be an organization that fosters the exchange of ideas and creates experiences that will inspire a wide audience; be a nexus for the work of emerging and established regional, national, and international artists; serve as a catalyst for the continued development of a vigorous community of artists; and provide a forum that will encourage people to be challenged by, reflect on, and make connections between art and the world around them. The Museum includes four galleries and The Shop, a space to provide interactive contemporary art experiences and educational workshops to the community.

The Rooftop Sculpture Garden provides an urban oasis with an incredible view which serves as a lovely venue for weddings, art openings, and cinema. The adjacent Rooftop lounge is used for community and collaborative art pop-ups, as well as a reception area for Museum events. Please visit mmoca.org to learn more.