

HEMPHILL

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William Willis: Keeping It Alive
June 8–July 28, 2012

Washington DC—HEMPHILL opens *William Willis: Keeping It Alive* on Friday, June 8, 2012, with a public reception from 6:00–8:00pm. The exhibition will remain on view through July 28, 2012.

"Painting is about metaphor, it has to do with the creative energy of existence, with soul qualities. It's about joy."
-William Willis

William Willis' paintings address individual and universal experiences, utilizing shapes and forms common across a multitude of cultures. He continually references and interlaces the natural world's most basic elements, such as stones, trees, rivers, and snakes. From one painting to the next he arduously distills and refines the essence of his subject, which may in fact be the subject of the painting itself.

Willis places great value on intuitive or primitive forms and practices and in his work adheres closely to the ritual of the repetition of a shape. A repeated linear form of segmented triangles serves as a regular motif throughout the works in this exhibition. Making a quiet nod to Constantin Brancusi's *Endless Column*, Willis uses the shape to represent a figure in some works and a meandering river or mountain in others. Neither fully abstract nor representational, Willis' paintings call attention to the inherent texture of the materials from which they are composed: canvas, wood, paper. In so doing, Willis is constructing not just paintings, but sculptural objects with reverberating auras and commanding presence.

Born in Alabama in 1943, William Willis studied painting at the University of South Florida. After completing his Master of Fine Arts in 1973, Willis moved to Washington, DC. He is currently the Morris Eminent Scholar in Art at Augusta State University, Augusta, GA. He is the recipient of numerous awards and grants from organizations such as the National Endowment for the Arts, the Pollock-Krasner Foundation, Awards-in-the-Visual-Arts (SECCA), and the Maryland State Arts Council. His work has been widely collected by museums and private collectors, and he is represented in the collections of The Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC, and the Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, CT, among other institutions.

This exhibition is concurrent with *Steven Cushner: Works on Paper*, on view June 8 through July 28, 2012.

GALLERY HOURS

Tuesday–Saturday, 10:00am–5:00pm, and by appointment.

IMAGES ARE AVAILABLE FOR REPRODUCTION.

Image: Tree for Brancusi, 2011, oil on canvas, 18" x 20.75"

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