

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Philemona Williamson  
*Entangled in Truth*

September 11 – October 30, 2021

**Opening Reception:**

Saturday, September 11, 2:00-5:00 PM

**Artist in Conversation**

with Dr. Jacqueline Francis 3:00-4:00 PM

Followed by a book signing of “Lubaya’s Quiet Roar”  
By Marilyn Nelson, Paintings by Philemona Williamson

#entangledintruthexhibition #jenkinsjohnsongallery  
@philemona8 @jenkinsjohnsongallery



Philemona Williamson, *Entangled in Truth*, 2020, oil on canvas, 48 x 60 inches.

Jenkins Johnson Gallery, San Francisco, is pleased to present *Entangled in Truth*, **Philemona Williamson’s** first solo exhibition in San Francisco. The exhibition will be accompanied with an essay by **Dr. Jacqueline Francis**, Writer, Critic, Art Historian and Professor at California College of the Arts. The Opening Reception will be on Saturday, September 11, from 2:00-5:00 PM at Jenkins Johnson Gallery at Minnesota Street Project. During the reception, Williamson will be In Conversation with Dr. Francis from 3:00-4:00 PM at the Atrium bleachers. Immediately following there will be a book signing in the gallery for “Lubaya’s Quiet Roar”, by Marilyn Nelson, Writer and Newbery Honor winner, with Paintings by Philemona Williamson.

Philemona Williamson’s narrative paintings deal with gender, race and adolescence, sourced from her own memories. The work explores the tenuous bridge between adolescence and adulthood, encapsulating the intersection of innocence and experience at its most piercing and poignant moment. The lush color palette and dreamlike positioning of the figures ensures that their vulnerability – of age, of race, of sexual identity – is seen as strength and not as weakness. Williamson explains, “My figures navigate a world of uncertainty as they search for understanding—both internally and in ever-shifting environments. I see the figures as vehicles to explore the existence of the most vulnerable adolescents, those evolving people of color, grappling with what will define and identify them. My paintings give voice and space to invisibility.”

In her exhibition essay, “Disruption Toward Hope” Dr. Jacqueline Francis writes: “The new paintings (included in *Entangled in Truth*) chart the cultural and political landscape of unspecified lands, and the individuals and groups who traverse them. Dismayed by national politics and rhetoric of recent years, Williamson has given the paintings ominous titles that offer advice and warning. With each picture, she seeks to break the static notions of identity formed



*Cautious Play*, 2020, oil on linen, 48 x 60 inches.



*Perilous Exchange*, 2020, oil on canvas, 60 x 48 inches.

around race, gender, sexuality, and other social categories. Williamson insists that people must map their own journeys and fashion identifications and ways of living which suit them. Forging a path means taking risks. Williamson's figures, however vulnerable, seem unbowed by the trials they face. In these compositions, she gives us enigmatic protagonists who, locked in a moment of time in indeterminate locations, often appear in peril. Simply put, things are far from right in these paintings."

Williamson describes herself as a narrative painter. She thinks of her narratives more like poems than linear stories. She hopes, like a poem, everytime you come to her work you discover something new. Her paintings depict several visual narratives at once, shifting in time and theme. Her adolescent figures are placed in strange or awkward positions, reflecting on their feelings or their current state. They exist in their own world, and we are merely happening upon it. Many of her figures touch each other or intertwine. In the piece *Perilous Exchange*, the artist paints her figures piled on each other, reflecting the artist's desire to be able to hold her loved ones during COVID-19. There is an overwhelming sense of physicality. A recurring theme for Williamson is safety, and the desperation found in these figures intimates to the viewer their desire for stability and

connection. Dr. Frances writes: "The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a major shift in her (Williamson) routine. Following shelter-in-place orders during the COVID-19 pandemic, she has worked without models. Shelter-in-place orders meant that she spent more time alone in the studio, where she quietly painted with urgency."

**Philemona Williamson's (b. 1951 New York, NY)**

work is in museum collections including: The Montclair Art Museum; The Kalamazoo Art Institute; Smith College Museum of Art; and the Sheldon Museum of Art. Williamson has exhibited at institutions including: The Queens Museum of Art, NY; John Michael Kohler Arts Center; The Bass Museum, Miami; and Contemporary Art, St. Louis; She is the recipient of numerous awards including: the Joan Mitchell Foundation Award in Painting; Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant; National Endowment For The Arts; and New York Foundation For The Arts. Her public works include: glass murals created for the MTA Arts in Transit Program; Public Art for the MTA Poetry In Motion; and a mosaic mural at Glenwood Campus School. She currently teaches painting at Pratt Institute and Hunter College in New York City.



*Step Lightly*, 2020, oil on linen, 48 x 60 inches.



For more information on this exhibition please contact Assistant Director, Rachel Chaldou, at 415.677.0770 or [sf@jenkinsjohnsongallery.com](mailto:sf@jenkinsjohnsongallery.com). [www.jenkinsjohnsongallery.com](http://www.jenkinsjohnsongallery.com)  
 Gallery Hours: By appointment only, Thursday – Saturday, 11am – 5pm