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Fact Sheet “What’s It All Mean: William T. Wiley in Retrospect”

Exhibition

“What’s It All Mean: William T. Wiley in Retrospect”
Oct. 2, 2009 – Jan. 24, 2010

Location

Smithsonian American Art Museum, Eighth and F streets N.W.

Description

William Wiley (b. 1937) has stood the test of time in the face of changing styles, successive movements, critical theories and passing fashion. His self-deprecating humor and sense of the absurd make his art accessible to even those who do not comprehend his more ambiguous ideas, allusions, narratives, private symbols and layers of meaning. Puns are fun, and they make more palatable his deadly serious commentary on war, pollution, global warming, racial tension and other threats to contemporary civilization. His work pays homage to earlier artists whose art has been important to him with the same good-natured mocking.

“What’s It All Mean: William T. Wiley in Retrospect,” the first full-scale look at Wiley’s career since 1979, will feature approximately 100 works from the late 1960s to the present, borrowed from public and private collections as well as from the artist. It will provide a serious overview of Wiley’s career while exploring important themes and ideas expressed in his work. Joann Moser, senior curator for graphic arts, is the curator of the exhibition.

Publication

A book, co-published by University of California Press, will accompany the exhibition. It will include essays by Moser, John Hanhardt, consulting senior curator for film and media arts at the Smithsonian American Art Museum; and John Yau, poet and critic.

Tour

Following its presentation in Washington, the exhibition will travel through 2010.

Credit

“What’s It All Mean: William T. Wiley in Retrospect” is organized by the Smithsonian American Art Museum. The exhibition is prepared with a generous grant from The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts and with support from The Cowles Charitable Trust, Sakurako and William Fisher, Rita J. Pynoos and Roselyne C. Swig. The exhibition catalog is supported by James and Marsha Mateyka. The C.F. Foundation in Atlanta supports the museum’s traveling exhibition program “Treasures to Go.”

The Smithsonian American Art Museum is located above the Gallery Place/Chinatown Metrorail station. Open daily from 11:30 a.m. to 7 p.m., except Dec. 25. Admission is free. Smithsonian Information: (202) 633-1000; (202) 633-5285 (TTY). Museum information (recorded): (202) 633-7970. Web site: americanart.si.edu.

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