

**June 23, 2022**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

***Promising the Sky***

**Sandy Williams IV**

July 1 – August 14, 2022

Opening Reception: Friday, July 1, 5 – 9 pm



RICHMOND — 1708 Gallery is excited to announce *Promising the Sky*, an exhibition of new and recent works by Sandy Williams IV. *Promising the Sky* looks at how collective memories, aspirations, and actions—shared from past generations and envisioned by those to come—can manifest a more equitable economic, social, and political landscape in the United States. This exhibition is a constellation of photographs, bronze sculptures, research, text-based works, documentation from previous performances, and discursive programs; it centers around a cinematic restaging of their recent skywriting performance *40 ACRES: Chimborazo Park*.

On May 21, 2022 Williams worked with a skywriting crew to trace the dimensions of a 40-acre plot over what is now known as Chimborazo Park in Richmond, Virginia. The skywriting performance was a public acknowledgment that was briefly visible for miles and a physical metaphor for the ways in which the legend of reparations, “40 Acres and a Mule,” still holds an invisible presence in our atmosphere.

Through *Promising the Sky*, the presentation of artworks, printed broadsides and other forms of research, interviews, and open questions visible throughout the exhibition, Williams is establishing a living archive—one that unfolds, uncovers, and recovers histories in the present moment. While this exhibition focuses on the work at Chimborazo Park, and other significant sites in Richmond, it also ushers in the cultivation of an archive that is not beholden to a conventional format or site and extends from the following premise. *The 40 Acres Archive* focuses on the post Civil War Reconstruction era, and the structural decisions made during this period. The project looks specifically at the history of Freedmen communities, where newly emancipated people congregated and began to build communities at the end of the Civil War. The success of these new communities would have been vital to rebuild in a way that supported equality, after centuries of slavery and displacement. Therefore, understanding the instrumentalized destruction of these communities, the federal failures of Reconstruction, and the unfulfilled promises of reparations is essential if trying to understand many of today’s inequalities. *The 40 Acres Archive* is building language and imagery around these conversations in order to plot a more positive way forward.

Williams will also have a concurrent exhibition at Reynolds Gallery, opening on August 5th in Richmond, VA.

**Sandy Williams IV** is an artist and educator whose work problematizes the temporal legacy of public monuments by investigating concepts of time, memory, and agency. Williams' work strikes a balance in tension—interplaying the untouchable and the malleable, the passage of time and the infallible memory, the transparent and the concealed. The work maps the invisible tactics of colonial, contemporary, and conceptual occupation, and invites the viewer to participate in the emancipation of public space through participatory and communal efforts. Williams is an interdisciplinary artist trained in sculpture and film, whose practice has expanded to include photography, painting, bookmaking, archiving, photography, and public performance. The work is often research-based, site specific, collaborative, and interactive.

Williams is an Assistant Professor of Art at the University of Richmond. Recipient of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts Artist Fellowship, the New York Community Trust Van Lier Fellowship. Solo shows at Reynolds Gallery (Richmond), Second Street Gallery (Charlottesville) and the Visual Arts Centre of Clarington (Ontario). Selected Exhibitions and Performances: the Virginia Museum of Contemporary Art, The Harnett Museum at the University of Richmond, the Institute of Contemporary Art at VCU, Socrates Sculpture Park (NYC), New Release (NYC), De Boer Gallery (LA), Springsteen (Baltimore), NADA House (NYC). Artist in Residence at the Atlantic Center for the Arts (FL), SOMA (CDMX), ACRE (Chicago), Mildred's Lane (NY) and the University of Cumbria (UK).

Special thanks to Ryan Doherty!

This project is supported by Reynolds Gallery; Oakwood Arts, where Sandy is an artist in residence through support from CultureWorks; Afrikana Film Festival; Arts & Letters Creative Co; the Elizabeth Firestone Graham Foundation; Trilobite Arts; and the Foundation for Contemporary Arts Emergency Grant.

Image: Sandy Williams IV, *Dreams I*, 2022; digital photograph; courtesy of the artist.

For more information, please visit [1708GALLERY.ORG](http://1708GALLERY.ORG).

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1708 Gallery's 2021-2022 exhibition season is generously supported in part by the Allan and Margot Blank Foundation, the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, National Endowment for the Arts, Virginia Commission for the Arts, and our 2021 Raise Your Paddle supporters: Nupa Agarwal and Amit Acharye, Shelley and Richard Birnbaum, Sarah Burgess, Patty Devlin, Molly Dodge, Sarah and Josh Eckhardt, Jennifer Ford, John Freeman, Jolene Giandomenico, Peter Gilbert, Ashley Hawkins, Susan and John Jamieson, Karen and Pat Kelly, John and Susan Spain, Sarah Kim, Matt King, James Klaus and Brent Morris, Michael Lease and Kim Wolfe, Alice Livingston, Tyler Long, Vera Magdeeva, Kathleen Markowitz, Nina and Kevin McDonough, Haley and Matt McLaren, Kerry Mills and Pippin Barnett, Paul and Sara Monroe, Julia and Reilly Monroe, Rita and Christopher Myers, Amie Oliver and Harry Kollatz, Michael Pierce and Ron Lee, Michael-Birch Pierce, Pam Royall, John Ryan and Wesley Chenault, Janet Scagnelli, Michael Schewel and Priscilla Burbank, Jayne and Brian Shaw, Yogi Singh and Valerie Molnar, Jenny Smith, Gordon Stettinius, Marcia and Harry Thalheimer, Francis Thompson, Maggi Tinsley, Kendra Wadsworth, Julie and Paul Weissend, Erin White and Courtnie Wolfgang, Caroline and Richard Wright.