



Elder Sun Benjamin, 2018, acrylic and mixed media on collaged canvas, 119.29h x 203.54w in (303h x 517w cm)

Frank Bowling: *Make It New* September 6 – October 13, 2018

Alexander Gray Associates presents its first exhibition of work by **Frank Bowling** OBE, RA (b.1934), *Make It New*. Born in British Guiana, Bowling maintains studios in London and New York. For over five decades, his practice has been defined by its integration of autobiography and postcolonial geopolitics into abstraction. Featuring a selection of recent work, the presentation celebrates Bowling's contributions to the field of painting.

Bowling first came to prominence in the early 1960s while still a student at the Royal College of Art in London. Graduating at the height of the British Pop movement, his early work combined representation with gestural applications of paint. After moving to New York in 1966, he immersed himself in post-war American art, producing his semi-figurative *Map Paintings* (1967–71) before fully embracing abstraction with his series of *Poured Paintings* (1973–78). A talented and incisive writer, he became a contributing editor to *Arts Magazine*, drafting insightful texts on artistic production and race. Friends with artists like Melvin Edwards and Jack Whitten, Bowling was also mentored by the art critic Clement Greenberg, and the formal innovation of his practice builds on the legacy of Abstract Expressionism and Color Field Painting.

In recent work, Bowling plays with color and texture, continuing to hone his unique approach to abstraction. Adapting the dynamic swaths of acrylic of his 1970s *Poured Paintings*, these intricate compositions juxtapose drips and slides of pigment against collaged surfaces that refine the accreted roughness of the artist's 1980s reliefs. Through the use of printed canvas, fabric, and seams, Bowling recalls his mother—a dress designer, embroiderer, and general store owner—incorporating autobiography into the formalist rigor of abstraction. At the same time, in these paintings, the artist is pushing the limits of his practice. As Bowling says, "Make it new." Informed by his tireless need to "make it new"—to innovate—these works represent the painter's complete mastery over his medium. Featuring diverse compositional elements and materials, the canvases are a culmination of more than a half-century of painterly techniques, synthesizing and improvising on decades of Bowling's abstract experimentation.

In paintings like *Elder Sun Benjamin* (2018), which features stacked planes of color, Bowling evokes the presence of both horizons and borders. Inviting comparisons to the Romantic landscapes of Turner and the striped compositions of Barnett Newman and Jasper Johns, these works imbue abstraction with allusions to observed reality, inviting discourses on the natural world and the complex intertwining of geography and territory. However, Bowling insists, "I do not want to illustrate anything, but to make the paint dance. ... The paint does its own thing, spreads and bleeds and then suggests images." Reveling in color and geometry, *Make It New* reveals Bowling's ability to "make the paint dance" as he continues to question the nature of abstraction and the possibilities of painting.

A major retrospective of Bowling's work organized by Tate Britain, London, United Kingdom will open in 2019. His paintings have been the subject of numerous one-person exhibitions, including *Mappa Mundi*, curated by Okwui Enwezor, Haus der Kunst, Munich, Germany (2017), traveled to Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin, Ireland (2018) and Sharjah Art Foundation, United Arab Emirates (2018); Dallas Museum of Art, TX (2015); *Drop, Roll, Slide, Drip...*

Frank Bowling's Poured Paintings 1973–8, Tate Britain, London, United Kingdom (2012); *Frank Bowling Works on Paper*, Royal Academy of Arts, London (2011); Serpentine Gallery, London (1986); and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (1971). His work has been included in countless group exhibitions, including *Soul of a Nation: Art in the Age of Black Power*, Tate Modern, London, United Kingdom (2017), traveled to Crystal Bridges, Bentonville, AR (2018) and Brooklyn Museum, New York (2018); *Postwar-Art between the Pacific and Atlantic 1945–65*, Haus der Kunst, Munich (2016); *Caribbean: Crossroads of the World*, Perez Art Museum, Miami (2014); and *Witness: Art and Civil Rights in the Sixties*, Brooklyn Museum, New York (2014). He has been the recipient of many grants and awards, including an OBE: Order of the British Empire (2008); Membership to the Royal Academy of Art, United Kingdom (2005); two Pollock Krasner Awards (1998, 1992); Arts Council of Great Britain Award (1977); and two John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Fellowships (1973, 1967). His work is included in innumerable private and public collections, including the Arts Council of Great Britain; Dallas Museum of Art, TX; Guyana National Collection, Castellani House, Georgetown, Guyana; Herbert F. Johnson Museum, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY; Menil Foundation, Houston, TX; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA; National Gallery of Jamaica, Kingston, Jamaica; National Museum Wales, Cardiff, United Kingdom; Royal Academy of Arts, London, United Kingdom; Tate Gallery, London; Victoria and Albert Museum, London; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.