

First Responders, 2017

Latex paint

Courtesy of the artist

This site-specific painting reproduces the red mark on a building that warns firefighters and other first responders to use caution when entering an unoccupied and structurally unsound building. The painted X above you draws attention to an often overlooked detail of the space, encouraging viewers to think about the museum in relation to its urban context.

On Gold

This exhibition includes four artworks that use gold as a central motif. At once a precious metal, a color, and a symbol of achievement, gold is associated with both material value and more abstract notions of success. In some instances, gold leafing elevates humble materials and objects that might otherwise go unnoticed. The amount of gold Williams uses also introduces questions about gaudiness and excess: What does our desire for symbols of wealth say about our values? And how much is too much?

In My Mind I See a Line, 2017

Gold tape

Courtesy of the artist

It's a Gold Mine/Is the Gold Mine?,
2016-17

Imitation gold leaf on salvaged Chicago
brick and African paduk wood
Courtesy of the artist and McCormick
Gallery

This sculpture is composed of common bricks that are salvaged from the foundations of demolished Chicago homes and then resold by the pallet for much more than the stackers are paid to collect them. The title of the work underlines the stakes of this cycle of materials: when houses are being demolished and the bricks are resold, who can rightfully claim their value?

The sculpture is in the center of the room.

*She's Mighty Mighty, Just Lettin' It
All Hang Out, 2017*

Imitation gold leaf on salvaged
Chicago brick

Courtesy of the artist

Be the Girl with the Turned-On Hair, 2017
Ultra Sheen Conditioner and Hairdress
Courtesy of the artist

Nostalgic for some but unfamiliar to others, the jar of conditioner is embedded in the wall of the gallery, either emerging from it or disappearing into it, depending on your perspective.

Ultra Sheen was developed by Johnson Products, a Chicago company that became one of the largest African American-owned businesses by the 1970s. Amanda Williams used Ultra Sheen to symbolize the value of black consumers long ignored by mainstream businesses.

*Tuxes Next to the Precedent, I'm Present
(or a Return to the Gold Standard),*
2011-12

Oil, imitation gold leaf, and mixed media
on canvas

Courtesy of the artist and McCormick
Gallery

This gilded painting is a precursor to Amanda Williams's large-scale gold installations. The title combines lyrics from Jay-Z and Kanye West's "Murder to Excellence," with a reference to the "gold standard," a monetary system that sets the value of paper currency according to a fixed quantity of gold. The song explores the tension between black mortality in Chicago and black excellence, as defined by conspicuous consumption. The work calls attention to the issue of value as it relates to life, death, and materialism.

There Is a Past Tense (diptych), 2006

Oil on wood panel

Courtesy of the artist and McCormick Gallery

After leaving the field of architecture in 2004, Amanda Williams worked primarily as an abstract painter. Her paintings from this period reveal a deep interest in how colors relate to one another as well as how colors are personally and collectively imbued with meanings.

The shades of blue in this work recall the Ultra Sheen teal of *Be the Girl with the Turned-On Hair* (on view in this gallery) as well as Williams's personal history.

*A Dream or Substance, a Beamer, a
Necklace or Freedom?*, 2017

Imitation gold leaf and plywood
Courtesy of the artist

Gilded by Lorenzo Davis, Tonika Johnson,
Joyce Malcome, Sammiria Malcome,
Tavon Tate, and Candice Washington

A peep into the small crevices reveals a golden room proportionate to the size of a typical Chicago lot. The room was gilded by a group of Englewood residents, according to the artist's instructions. The installation raises questions about the value of vacant lots and the often obscure or invisible rules that govern access to property ownership.

The title refers to "Hip Hop," a song by Dead Prez, which questions the relationship between immaterial desires such as freedom and justice and material possessions. The installation suggests that property ownership looms as a symbol of both forms of desire.

*Reliquary I: To unlearned people this
may seem to be full of nothing and void
of humanity, 2017*

Plywood and paint

Courtesy of the artist and McCormick
Gallery

This structure is a large-scale map of Englewood folded into the shape of a reliquary, a traditional vessel intended to hold sacred remains. It represents the geography of the neighborhood and the transitions occurring there.

At the same time, the oversized reliquary encourages a consideration of the value of a neighborhood, despite the factors that have led to empty homes and vacant lots.

Amanda Williams and NJ Williams

*Reliquary II: LOT 49 IN THE
SUBDIVISION OF BLOCK 1 IN WRIGHT,
EMBREE AND AYRE'S, A SUBDIVISION
OF BLOCK 33 IN SCHOOL TRUSTEES'
SUBDIVISION OF SECTION 16,
TOWNSHIP 36 NORTH, RANGE 14
EAST OF THE THIRD PRINCIPAL
MERIDIAN, IN COOK COUNTY,
ILLINOIS. C/K/A: NJ's Toybox, 2017*
Salvaged wood and railroad ties
Courtesy of the artists and McCormick
Gallery

Amanda Williams painted houses that were slated for demolition as a part of her *Color(ed) Theory* project. After they were razed, Williams often salvaged the materials. She created this small sculpture with a child whose family members still reside on the block where the *Crown Royal* house formerly stood. The boy had grown attached to the purple house and imagined that it was his toy box. This collaboration thus responded to his disappointment and offered him an optimistic conclusion to his experience with the house.

Greener Grasses, 2015–17

Salvaged wood lattice, branches,
and latex paint

Courtesy of the artist

Painted in the Flamin' Red Hot color that Amanda Williams developed for *Color(ed) Theory*, this lattice functions as both an abstract painting and a relic of a demolished house. The work serves as a record of Williams's engagement with the house: she transformed it into a work of art and then witnessed its destruction. Like the reliquaries on view nearby, *Greener Grasses* explores new possibilities for materials in the wake of demolition.

Amanda Williams and Spirit of Space

Color Shift, 2017

Two-channel video (color, sound)

5 minutes, 10 seconds

Courtesy of the artist and Spirit of Space

Color(ed) Theory

In 2014 Williams began covertly painting empty houses in Englewood that were slated for demolition. She painted eight using a vivid color palette based on hues found in consumer products and the commercial environment of Chicago's South Side. The project emphasizes how colors have socially constructed associations with race and class. Williams then photographed each house, calling attention to the architectural details as well as the empty lots around them. Elements of each of the three houses shown here appear in the new installations that Williams created for this exhibition.

Color(ed) Theory: Flāmin' Red Hots,
2014-16

Archival color photograph

Courtesy of the artist and McCormick
Gallery

Color(ed) Theory: Crown Royal Bag,
2014-16

Archival color photograph

Courtesy of the artist and McCormick
Gallery

Color(ed) Theory: Ultrasheen, 2014-16
Archival color photograph
Courtesy of the artist and McCormick
Gallery

Beyond Reach, 2017

Latex paint

Courtesy of the artist

Chicago Is Iraq?

This series of works visually represent the term *Chiraq* by layering laser-cut maps of Iraq over eight Chicago neighborhoods. *Chiraq*, a neologism coined by young Chicagoans at the height of the Iraq War, was popularized in Chicago's hip-hop community around 2012.

The term circulated nationally in popular culture through music, television, and films, and became a shorthand description for gang-related gun violence, despite the condemnation of the moniker deemed by many as inappropriate and offensive. The maps' neutral tones belie the heated debates that the term instigated.

Austin Is Irāq?, 2017

Lāwndāle Is Irāq?, 2017

Gārfield Pārḱ Is Irāq?, 2017

Each:

Cut paper in wood frame

Edition of 15, aside from

one artist's proof

Courtesy of the artist and

McCormick Gallery

Englewood Is Irāq?, 2017

Auburn Gresham Is Irāq?, 2017

Woodlawn Is Irāq?, 2017

Roseland Is Irāq?, 2017

Washington Park Is Irāq?, 2017

Each:

Cut paper in wood frame

Edition of 15, aside from

one artist's proof

Courtesy of the artist and

McCormick Gallery

Requiem for a Friend (Value Series), 2012
Gesso, rose petals, and mixed media
Courtesy of the artist and McCormick
Gallery