

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Phillips Collection Announces Art–Play–Practice: An Immersive Art Experience at Phillips@THEARC

Inaugural installation celebrates Sam Gilliam’s groundbreaking drape paintings, inviting guests to explore color, motion, and creativity.



WASHINGTON, DC—The Phillips Collection announces **Art–Play–Practice**, a new initiative at Phillips@THEARC, the museum’s satellite location in Southeast DC. Launching June 2026, the program is designed to be a fully immersive space for play, creativity, and artistic exploration, complemented by artist-led workshops and learning materials. The inaugural installation celebrates the groundbreaking drape paintings of DC artist Sam Gilliam (1933–2022) and will be on view for one year, inviting guests of all ages to experience art in a hands-on, imaginative way.

“We envisioned Art–Play–Practice to invite guests into an immersive environment where they can engage with art through making, movement, and play,” says **Ashley Whitfield, Director of Public Programs and Phillips@THEARC**. “At its heart, the program encourages guests to explore Sam Gilliam’s work, create alongside his ideas, and experience a sense of wonder and possibility in art.”

“Since opening Phillips@THEARC in 2018, we’ve built partnerships that connect our galleries in Dupont Circle and our neighbors in Southeast DC, presenting dynamic and thoughtful programs and exhibitions,” says **Tiffany McGettigan, Chief of Education and Responsive Learning at The Phillips Collection**. “Art–

Play–Practice reflects our commitment to expanding how audiences interact with art through active participation and creative discovery.”

The installation draws inspiration from Gilliam’s [Broad Cape](#) (1972). Revered for his drape paintings, Gilliam experimented with color, fabric, and scale in ways that redefined the possibilities of painting. His innovative approach continues to inspire generations of artists and audiences and reflects a deep connection to Washington, DC, where he lived and worked. The Phillips Collection held the first museum exhibition dedicated to Gilliam in 1967, and was the first museum to acquire one of the artist’s works that same year.

To bring the interactive experience to life, the museum commissioned [To Be Done Studio](#), a DC-based architecture and design team known for large-scale, community-focused installations. The project interprets Gilliam’s sense of motion, scale, and color, inviting guests to take part in the artistic process firsthand. In addition to the installation, Phillips@THEARC will present a teaching cohort of cross-disciplinary artists to lead hands-on, all-ages workshops. Guests will also be welcome to take home learning materials with activities for creative exploration.

“This Phillips@THEARC immersive installation puts the power of arts and creativity front and center. When you co-locate nonprofits and bring world-class partners to Ward 8, you create space for imagination to thrive—and that’s where real connection and opportunity begin,” says **Scott Kratz, President & CEO, Building Bridges Across the River**. The nonprofit is the developer and steward of THEARC campus, home to Phillips@THEARC, expanding access to arts, education, and community resources for residents east of the Anacostia River.

Paint & Sip Evening, May 6

As part of the initiative, Phillips@THEARC will host a **Paint & Sip Evening on Wednesday, May 6, from 6:30–8:30 pm**. This invitation-only event will bring past participants of Phillips@THEARC programs together to experiment with abstract painting alongside the studio team, using the same materials that inspired Gilliam’s drape paintings. Contributions from this collaborative session will directly inform elements of the installation, offering participants a unique opportunity to shape the work from the ground up. Press interested in attending should RSVP to lcantrell@phillipscollection.org.

Programming Highlights at Phillips@THEARC

Phillips@THEARC will continue to offer inclusive, artist-led programs alongside Art–Play–Practice, including:

- Crochet Circle – Ongoing community program led by Dwayne Lawson-Brown (also known as the Crochet Kingpin). Each session invites participants to connect through creative textile work, inspired by artworks in The Phillips Collection’s holdings of 18 Sam Gilliam paintings and prints.
- Cross Disciplinary Workshops – Artist-led sessions for all ages inspired by Sam Gilliam’s artistic practice.
- After School Programming – Hands-on learning opportunities for middle school-age students to explore Sam Gilliam’s practice in depth.

IMAGES: Phillips@THEARC Creative Workshop, Photo courtesy of The Phillips Collection; Sam Gilliam, *Broad Cape*, 1972, Dye pigments, acrylic on canvas, 118 x 50 in., The Phillips Collection, Gift of Harry and Monika Holmgren, 2023.

IMAGE GALLERY

High-resolution press images are available upon request. Please contact lcantrell@phillipscollection.org.

ABOUT PHILLIPS@THEARC

Phillips@THEARC, located at 1801 Mississippi Ave, SE, Washington, DC, presents exhibitions and programs designed to engage the Southeast DC community through contemporary art experiences. Phillips@THEARC offers free and accessible programming, including workshops and intergenerational learning opportunities. The space fosters dialogue, creativity, and exploration for artists and audiences of all ages.

ABOUT THE PHILLIPS COLLECTION

Founded in 1921, The Phillips Collection is a welcoming home for all where the vision and spirit of artists thrive in intimate settings. As the first museum of modern art in the United States, the Phillips houses one of the world's most celebrated Impressionist, Post-Impressionist, and modern art collections, and continues to grow its permanent collection with the work of important living artists. Its distinctive domestically scaled architecture combines three structures built over more than 125 years, among them the former home of the founders, Duncan and Marjorie Phillips. The Phillips's impact extends nationally and internationally through its diverse, scholarly exhibitions; award-winning education programs for educators, students, and adults; and renowned Phillips Music series. Popular and impactful programs include those focused on art and wellness, its festive monthly Phillips after 5 events, and intimate Living Room talks. Through authentic programs and partnerships at Phillips@THEARC, the museum's satellite location in Southeast DC, the Phillips extends its reach into Wards 7 and 8 and Prince George's County, Maryland. The Phillips Collection is a private, non-government museum, supported primarily by donations.

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