

Andrew Kreps
Gallery

22 Cortlandt Alley,
New York, NY 10013

Tue–Sat, 10 am–6 pm
andrewkreps.com

Tel. (212)741-8849
Fax. (212)741-8163

Kenneth Victor Young

394 Broadway

September 18 – October 31, 2026

Opening reception: Friday, September 18, from 6-8pm

Andrew Kreps Gallery is pleased to announce an exhibition of paintings by Kenneth Victor Young (b. 1933, Louisville, Kentucky, d. 2017, Washington, D.C.), organized in collaboration with Edward Tyler Nahem Fine Art. Focusing on works from the early 1970s, the exhibition highlights Young's "orb" paintings, a pivotal body of work that expanded the language of Color Field painting.

While studying physics and chemical engineering at the University of Louisville, Young befriended Sam Gilliam, Bob Thompson, and Robert Douglas, and later joined Gallery Enterprise, a collective formed to create exhibition opportunities and community for emerging Black artists. Young's involvement with the collective, together with conversations with the local artist community, ultimately drew him away from the sciences and towards a lifelong practice of painting.

In 1964, Young moved to Washington, D.C., where he became acquainted with artists associated with the Washington Color School, including Gene Davis, Morris Louis, and Kenneth Noland, who were experimenting with staining and poured-acrylic methods. Like many of these artists, Young worked on unstretched, unprimed canvas placed on the floor or slanted surfaces, allowing diluted acrylic pigment poured directly on the surface to soak directly into the fibers, a practice that became known as "stain-painting." However while Young, along with Sam Gilliam and Alma Thomas, worked alongside these artists, they were overlooked from early accounts of the movement owing to the Civil Rights politics of the period and, in Young's and Gilliam's case, their later arrival in Washington.

By the late 1960s, Young was developing his distinctive "orb" paintings, where soft-edged organic forms appear suspended in fields of color. Varying in opacity, scale, and density, the orbs' sense of movement and spatial depth reflects Young's lifelong love of jazz, the music that regularly filled his studio. The repetition and improvisational nature of his techniques, together with the energetic compositions, mimicked the construction of jazz solos. At the same time, their molecular appearance recalls Young's early studies in physics and chemical engineering, suggesting both microscopic and celestial worlds. He would continue to innovate with new tools and techniques throughout his career, including sponges, spray

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bottles, airbrushes, and traditional paintbrushes, to produce haloed objects, plume-like forms, and fusions of colors. Balancing chance with control, these early paintings embody what Young described as a desire to find “unity in this chaotic existence, of which I am a part.”

Alongside his studio practice, Young worked for more than three decades as an exhibition designer at the Smithsonian Institution while also designing exhibitions internationally for the United States Information Agency, a job that took him to many countries. From 1973 to 1985, Young taught art at the Corcoran School of Art, and later taught exhibition design at the Duke Ellington School of the Arts. In 1974, Young was recognized with a solo exhibition at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., solidifying his place as a significant Washington Color School painter. His work was included in important group exhibitions including *Contemporary Black American Artists* at the Smithsonian Institution (1969), *Black Artists / South* at the Huntsville Museum of Art (1979), and *African American Art: Harlem Renaissance, Civil Rights Era, and Beyond* at the Smithsonian American Art Museum (2015). In September, Young will be the subject of a solo exhibition at Samek Art Museum at Bucknell University, Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, curated by Sarah Battle. His paintings are held in the collections of the Pérez Art Museum, Miami; the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C., the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, the Columbus Museum, Columbus, Georgia, The Birmingham Museum of Art, Birmingham, Alabama; The Stanley Museum of Art, Iowa City, Iowa; and The Delaware Art Museum, Wilmington, DE.