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*WILLEM DE LOOPER: Evolution of an Artist*

May 11 – June 27, 2026

Washington, DC - HEMPHILL is pleased to announce the virtual exhibition *WILLEM DE LOOPER: Evolution of an Artist*, beginning on Monday, May 11, 2026. The virtual exhibition will be viewable on [hemphillartworks.com](http://hemphillartworks.com), Artsy & Artnet from May 11 - June 27, 2026.

*Willem de Looper: Evolution of an Artist* traces the unfolding of the artist's career. Willem de Looper is an important contributor to the color-field painting movement, locally known as the Washington Color School. The virtual presentation begins with two pre-Color School works, both approaching his mature style.

The earliest painting is *Untitled*, 1965, the tentative staining of acrylic color strips referencing unfurling foliage. The second *Untitled*, *October*, 1966, is a brightly colored puzzling together of hard-edged leaf-like shapes rendered against a black background. Importantly de Looper applies acrylic paint to raw canvas; the use of acrylic paint and raw canvas is essential to the Washington Color School. Both early paintings give us a sense of the artist searching. Following are *Untitled*, 1967 and 1968, two primary examples of de Looper's fully realized all-over staining technique. These two works exemplify the primary aesthetic achievement of the Washington Color School—the breakthrough of painting without reference or message other than the experience of the painting unto itself.



De Looper's method of pouring paint, wet into wet and wet over dry from all sides, created waves and veils of color, offering a visual experience without a sense of gravity, limited only by the parameters of the stretched canvas. In *Untitled*, *December 1972*, and *Untitled*, *January 1976*, rather than continue to submit to the arbitrary edge of the picture, the artist incorporates the idea of the top and bottom edges of the canvas by repeating horizontal bands, forcefully articulating the right and left sides of the painting. Continuing to work with acrylic stained into unprimed canvas, de Looper employs this banding motif through a variety of palettes, offering a range of related colors, expressing a symphony of emotional effects. In *Untitled*, *June*, 1981 and *May*, 1980, the bands became plunging and pushing forces moving into the picture plane from the sides and the top and bottom. In his later phase de Looper breaks away from his north-south, left-right rectilinear strategy; he creates multiple edges and delineating lines, dynamically accenting shapes by infilled color-field spaces, focusing our eyes on details, intersections of form and color, and on incidents of pure visual drama.

Following the breakthrough of Color Field painting, many of its participants chose to continue painting with only small variations after establishing their significant, identifiable approach to creating art and branding. The force of their success made progressive evolution of the color field movement difficult. De Looper is singularly admirable for his restlessly pushing forward while remaining true to the origins of his inspiration. He did not settle; he continued to expand throughout his career.

Born in Hague, Netherlands, Willem de Looper moved to Washington DC in 1950. After serving in the army, stationed in Germany, de Looper returned to Washington DC in 1959 and began working as a museum guard at the Phillips Collection, pursuing his career as an artist simultaneously. He advanced professionally to become the assistant curator at the Phillips in 1972, which led to his position as chief curator at the museum. In 1966, de Looper had his first solo exhibition at Jefferson Place Gallery, Washington, DC—home to other great artists of the Washington Color School. He continued to show at Jefferson Place Gallery for nearly a decade and has been exhibited and collected by many established museums such as The National Gallery of Art, The Phillips Collection, the Smithsonian American Art Museum, and the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden.

*Willem de Looper: Evolution of an Artist* is the second in an ongoing series of virtual exhibitions presented by Hemphill Artworks.

*As Hemphill enters its thirty-third year, we look back on over 300 exhibitions and cherished relationships with artists, collectors, and art enthusiasts. We feel thankful, yet introspective. We move forward in presenting more effective ways for you to experience art, by beginning a program of events tailored for more personal contact with notable artists and artworks. We aim to bring collectors and art lovers into an enhanced engagement with art.*

Image Information: Willem de Looper, *Untitled*, 1965, acrylic on canvas, 50 x 25 inches

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