The Vision of Aubrey Williams (Reprinted from Guyana Dreaming, April 1990)

Wilson Harris
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Abstract
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When I look at a Cezanne, for instance, I sense quite often the mood of sculpture. When I look at an Aubrey Williams something different may happen that I can only describe as an equation with fantastic rhythmic being in startling as well as subtle (indeed muted) tones and values in the life and movement in the canvas. It is in this sense that I speak of ‘sensation akin to music’. All this enhances, I feel, his dialogue with pre-Columbian figures. Whatever omens or portents these possess — whatever caveats they sustain in regard to the dangers of runaway technology or obsessive ritual — there is a haunting measure of innate voice or celebration, a mysterious chorus within a shell of existences that the painting imparts. There is a resonance as well as an illumination, a moving and rich combination.

I find that his paintings convey a fine excitement, a sense of mystery, sprung from enigmatic combinations of legend and from varying characteristics of tone in the absorption of colour in light; sprung also from the filter of his imagination in the way it addresses specificities of landscape. This latter, in my judgement, is important. Aubrey Williams is not a painter of landscapes but his brush dips into landscapes to become a filter of associations into abstract reverie and mood.
Aubrey Williams with his painting ‘El Dorado’ before the hanging of his one-man show at the New Vision Gallery in 1958.

Photo Anne Bolt ©