For Immediate Release

Tommy Mitchell
Kinship
8 March – 26 April 2025
Opening Reception: Saturday, March 8th, 5:00 – 8:00pm

Walter Maciel Gallery is pleased to present *Kinship* by Tommy Mitchell who works between studios in Baltimore and Los Angeles. This exhibition will be our first solo presentation of Mitchell's work and will feature new figurative paintings made of ink and acrylic paint on paper and mounted on panels.

The new series features expressive portraits made with ballpoint pen to render the faces and body parts and acrylic paint for the clothing, accessories and background imagery. The subjects alternate between depictions of real people, mostly Mitchell's friends and newly generated AI portraits using descriptive and clever words in his searches. The portraits are often stylized with subjects wearing high fashion clothing like a tailored jacket, bow-tie silk blouse and fur lined coat juxtaposed with others wearing urban streetwear like oversized t-shirts or a bomber jacket. Their facial expressions are straight forward and unposed as if to capture each one in a random moment with a few staring at the viewer and many looking off into the distant. The subjects' personality and character are accentuated by accessories, many wearing hip hats, gold jewelry, colorful hair beads or a light-weight scarf. Each individual is clearly unique in their sense of fashion with different hairstyles, some with boldly painted fingernails and one in square-shaped, large-framed glasses. Most of the figures are presented on backgrounds with specifically chosen monochromatic colors and a side panel containing more active imagery with bold colors, type set lettering and abstract designs. These areas represent different parts of the urban landscape acting as stylized graffiti or wallpaper which further reveals a relationship to each personality being represented. The paintings vary in scale, creating a rhythmic experience while observing each portrait and trying to discern the real subjects and those created virtually by code.

Mitchell's choice of ballpoint pen was inspired by a friendly competition with a classmate as a child and became his primary medium while developing his career as a visual artist. He liked the permanence of the medium and the notion of having to perfect his skills to make fewer mistakes. His use of ink was also influenced by tattoo artists like Jun Cha and Mister Cartoon, admiring their attention to detail and precise execution with each prick of the needle. In past series, he spent significant time in museums in New York and Paris, where he intently studied the meticulous application of paint to create the intense light and graceful postering of Rembrandt as well as the influence of the Dutch Masters to push his craft and technical prowess. His current body of work entitled *Kinship,* delves into the intricate relationship between portraiture and illustration. This exploration spans a wide range from Leonardo da Vinci's signature three-quarter pose to Sargent's efficient brushstrokes, and includes abstract excerpts taken from Erik Jones and Revok.

Born in Biloxi, MS in 1983, Mitchell spent several years in his birth state before relocating to his childhood home in Virginia, eventually moving to Baltimore in 2019. He is a self-taught artist who has gained his skills by observing master artists as well as executing his work in the studio for the past 20 years. Mitchell specializes in ink portraits that celebrate BIPOC individuals and his personal experiences. His artwork is a journey of artistic elevation and mastery, capturing the dynamic beauty of the Black experience through powerful and evocative depictions. Mitchell has shown his work at Band of Vices in Los Angeles, Virginia Museum of Contemporary Art in Virginia Beach and The Baltimore Museum of Art. His works have been written about in the Los Angeles Times, Hyperallergic and Forbes Magazine among others. For several years, Mitchell spent lengths of time in Los Angeles and quickly became attracted to the lifestyle, culture and art community of Southern California. He plans to move full-time to Los Angeles this summer.