

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Willie Little**

***Red, White and Blak: The Black Woman – Key to American Culture***

**20 September – 8 November 2025**

**Opening Reception: Saturday, September 20, 4:00 – 7:00pm**

We are pleased to present our first solo exhibition entitled *Red, White and Blak: The Black Woman – Key to American Culture* by Willie Little whose new work includes multimedia figurative paintings and sculptures that celebrate the resilience, beauty and power of Black women. Little confronts the exploitation of Black identity while honoring the strength and sacrifices of Black women who have shaped America's cultural legacy. Earlier this year, we introduced two of his mixed media sculptures in our political resistance exhibition, *Fuck Off*. Our new installation is both a love letter and an unapologetic statement of resistance, reclaiming narratives long distorted by stereotypes.

Rooted in personal history, Little's inspiration traces back to his upbringing and the influence of two maternal figures who profoundly shaped his life. At the age of 6, he learned the woman who was raising him as his mother was actually his aunt who was older and more equipped at parenting than his young biological mother. Their sacrifices and contrasts inspired his recognition of the many contributions of Black women in connection with America's cultural fabric. In alignment with Malcolm X's 1962 declaration - "The most disrespected person in America is the Black woman" - Little's work directly addresses historical and contemporary injustices while affirming the Black woman as a symbol of endurance, compassion and creativity.

The exhibition includes assemblage sculptures from Little's *Sweeter the Juice* series, where racist pickaninny bobblehead dolls from the mid-20th century are transformed into powerful icons through adornment and reimagined character. Complementing these works are portrait-style paintings of Black archetypes, adorned with West African Adinkra symbols that embody vigilance, bravery and strength. Found objects further contextualize the narrative, elevating the Black woman as an empress who, despite systemic oppression, has upheld families and communities across generations.

Little shifts the conversation from trauma to triumph. The exhibition reclaims caricatured representations and reshapes them into a celebratory affirmation of beauty and resilience. While ultimately created to honor Black women, Little's work also calls on wider audiences to reflect, acknowledge and honor their indispensable role in shaping American culture.

Little was born in rural North Carolina and grew up on a tobacco farm in Pactolus Township. He received a BA in Communications from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and settled in Charlotte where he began his studio practice as a multimedia artist. In 2002, Little was awarded a residency at the Headlands Center for the Arts and soon after moved his art practice to the Bay Area. In 2016, he relocated to Portland, Oregon and expanded his visibility in the Pacific Northwest. Little has had numerous solo exhibitions including the Rosa Parks Museum in Montgomery, California African American Museum in Los Angeles, Diggs Gallery at Winston-Salem State University and Smithsonian Institution, Arts and Industries in Washington DC. He has been included in recent group exhibitions at the Portland Art Museum, Jordan Schnitzer Museum at Portland State University, Clark College in Vancouver, Washington and Oregon Contemporary in Portland. Little is the recipient of two Pollack Krasner Foundation Grants, a Gottlieb Foundation Emergency Grant and a Haven Foundation Grant among others. After the recovery of the pandemic, he moved his studio practice to the Palm Springs area in Southern California.