

# GAVLAK

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### **KIM DACRES SCULPTURES CELEBRATE BLACK FEMININITY THROUGH TRANSFORMATIVE WORLD-BUILDING**

*Designed like a game of chess with new rules and roles, Dacres' work explores intergenerational wisdom and protection through monumental busts which engage viewers as players themselves*

**Palm Beach – GAVLAK** is pleased to present *Black Moves First*, a solo exhibition of recent sculpture by Jamaican-American artist **Kim Dacres**, on view from **December 1, 2021 – January 2, 2022**. Often contemplating themes of reclamation, Dacres is an inspired bricoleur who finds expressive potential in materials at hand, including found bicycle, motorcycle, and automobile tires in New York, which are then ceremoniously knotted, twisted, or hewn by the artist. Through careful imbrication and recontextualization, these rugged surfaces recombined *ad infinitum*—whether fashioning icons of family, heritage, Blackness, or belonging—wrestle with the weight of self-representation in a system unjustly stacked against Black women.

In the traditional game of chess, Black moves second, not first. Marked by a strategic disadvantage from the onset, Black involuntarily falls into responsive and defensive play. This extended metaphor becomes inverted with Dacres' exhibition, *Black Moves First*, which unveils a powerful composition of eight new sculptures that proffer a novel twist on the timeless game of chess, which, in this version, is devoid of kings, pawns, or male signifiers. Instead, the eight women of the Crown family move first with *white*, the viewer, to respond.

Reckoning with modes of self-authorship, Dacres models several of her depictions after female figures in her own life—her mother, grandmothers, sisters, aunts, cousins and friends—whose imperial depictions point to Dacres' own admiration for Black matriarchies. *Marie "Kiddo" Crown*, Dacres' sole self-portrait in the show, illustrates a recognition of lineage and responsibility within a descendancy, the child becoming the agent. Womanhood, here, is shown to be a kinetic subjectivity where one moves across archetypes over a lifetime, the proverbial titles earned through lived experience.

In the artist's words: "Instead of capturing the king, winning, and losing, the game repeats itself, and the 'House of Crown' testifies to the permanence of the wisdom accumulated and shared through each of these games."

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What is clear in *Black Moves First* is the embodied knowledge that each piece possesses. For the women represented, this is not their first game, nor will it be the last; each piece will become another and new ones will emerge. Dacres' analysis of Blackness and femininity is sharp, explicit and beautifully sentimental. To exist within Dacres' universe, even in transience, is to be unbolted.

The vibrant Blackness of Dacres' installation, contrasted against a notable absence of white chess pieces, opens a poignant mediation on questions of race, ownership, and narrative. Within Dacres' immersive staging, the exhibition's visitors are to become the white opponents that these figures collide with. Transforming the white cube into an arena for gameplay, the artist prompts her audience to analyze this territory, challenging viewers to locate their own positionality within Dacres' story.

Manifested through an enduring material which will retain its Blackness forever, never fading or deteriorating, Dacres gestures towards the inheritance of both struggle and strength, the resilience of her characters being passed down through generations. These surfaces expose the residue of Western sculptural norms via repetitious materialist interventions, reinventing the rules of whiteness by transforming its very playing field.

## **ABOUT KIM DACRES**

Kim Dacres (b. 1986, Bronx, NY) lives and works in Harlem. An American artist of Jamaican descent, she honors her rich cultural heritage by creating sculptures that speak to the presence of Black bodies and reactions to cultural identifiers in different environments. Her practice questions what it means to exist in a sustainable social environment while presenting an ode to Black identities taking up space, developing resilience built on experience, and forming charisma with style and pride. Dacres received a Bachelor's degree from Williams College as a dual major in Studio Art and Political Science, with a minor in Africana Studies. She holds a Masters degree in Teaching English as a Second Language from Lehman College, City University of New York. In 2018, Dacres mounted her first major public art installation, *Peaceful Perch*, which was held at Harlem's Marcus Garvey Park. In 2019, she completed her first solo exhibition, *Swerve Team Meeting*, at A.I.R. gallery in New York City; the exhibition was concurrent to an emerging artist fellowship. Her work has also been featured in *Parallels and Peripheries: Migration and Mobility*, Vis Arts Center, Rockville, MD, and *Parallels and Peripheries: Fractals and Fragments*, Galleria Anna Marra, Rome, Italy. Currently, Dacres is a fellow of the Bronx Museum's AIM program and included in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art's exhibition *Black American Portraits*.