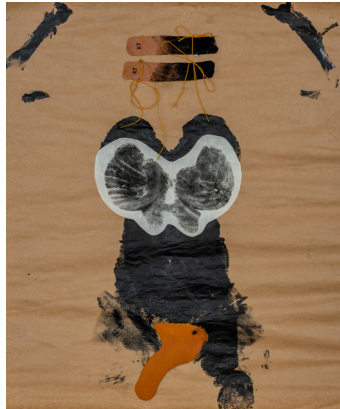


# GAZELLI ART HOUSE



© Khaleb Brooks, *Lift Every Voice*, 2022



© Khaleb Brooks, *Saved*, 2021

## Khaleb Brooks *Can I Get A Witness*

Exhibition: 1 July – 20 August, 2022

Gazelli Art House proudly announces *Can I Get A Witness*, the debut solo exhibition of gallery represented artist Khaleb Brooks. Brooks is an interdisciplinary artist, researcher and writer exploring blackness, transness and collective memory. Rooted in personal experience, *Can I Get A Witness* offers a new range of mixed media, oil paintings, installations and sound-based works that chart the various angles and journeys of the artist's life. An intimate display of medical scans that memorialise the artist's body before undergoing gender-affirming surgery is placed alongside mixed media imagery grappling with the historical policing of black women – exploring empowerment as a tool of survival. Informed by and reflective of Brooks' characteristically multifaceted approach, the exhibition weaves themes such as femininity, girlhood, queerness, family, and the black church through these elements. Underpinned by the artist's experience as an International Development practitioner, *Can I get A Witness* enriches his innovative portfolio, driven by a passion for addressing matters of social justice within the creative sector.

Crucially, the exhibition reflects Brooks' upbringing within a Black, female-led home. Although currently based in London, the artist is originally from Chicago, Illinois. He explains: "Black women, while making up the majority of congregations in Christian churches across the U.S., and rarely serve as spiritual leaders. The women in the ministry are also entrepreneurs, founders, heads of households, breadwinners; and in the case of my mother: the pastor's bodyguard". Informed by memory and personal circumstance, *Can I Get A Witness* elucidates and offers testament to positions of power - beyond tilted leadership - held by black women within American church spaces. More provocatively, where the church is a key pillar of African-American life for many, the exhibition seeks to open dialogue amongst visitors around the impact of religion within Black communities, involving the stigmatisation of sexuality and the erasure of connections to African spiritual

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communities, involving the stigmatisation of sexuality and the erasure of connections to African spiritual practices.

From childhood familial experiences to gender identity and powerful friendships amassed, the previously unseen post-surgery body prints will sit alongside portraits of the artist's great-grandmother, who hugely influenced their practice in recent residency at the International Slavery Museum in Liverpool. Where the exploration of collective and personal history is integral to Brooks' work to date, *Can I Get A Witness*' intimate points of inquiry mark the counting evolution of their portfolio.

### About the Artist

**Khaleb Brooks** is a multi-disciplinary artist and researcher exploring blackness, gender and the differences between memory and history. Brooks is inspired by the perseverance of black families in overcoming poverty, addiction, abuse and gang violence, alongside drawing upon their own experience of being transgender.

Recently, Brooks has been an artist in residence at the Tate Modern, using the museum's collection to lead weekly workshops and create work around the transatlantic slave trade. Their exhibition record also includes a performance at the 2019 Venice Biennale, shows at the Institute of Contemporary Art and Schwules Museum in Berlin, alongside others.

### About Gazelli Art House

Founded in 2010 by Mila Askarova, the Gazelli Art House in London brings a fresh perspective to Mayfair – through championing artists from all corners of the globe. Focusing on artists at the height of their practice, the gallery showcases their work through a diverse programme of exhibitions and events. Along with its sister site in Baku, Gazelli Art House specialises in promoting art from Azerbaijan and its neighbours to introduce a greater understanding of the rich linguistic, religious and historical ties that connect these areas to international audiences. In 2015, the gallery further expanded to support artists working in digital art through its online platform: GAZELL.iO, comprising an online Residency programme, NFT drops and collaborations, a dedicated Project Space holding monthly exhibitions, and a permanently installed VR Library – all in the heart of Mayfair.

For further information, please contact: [press@gazelliarthouse.com](mailto:press@gazelliarthouse.com) | +44 (0) 207 491 8816