



Hakeem Olayinka, *Golden Girl*, 2021, acrylic and gold leaf on canvas, 72 x 24 inches

Welancora Gallery is pleased to present *To Heal And Protect*, an exhibition of work by Layo Bright, Lakela Brown and Hakeem Olayinka on view Saturday, March 20 - Saturday, May 22, 2021, by appointment only from 11:00am to 5:00pm, Tuesday through Saturday.

Drawing inspiration from the function of ancient and traditional African art, *To Heal and Protect* looks at the ways in which adornment resonates as cultural modes of protection, healing and soothing in contemporary society, through the divergent use of material in the work of Layo Bright, LaKela Brown and Hakeem Olayinka.

**LaKela Brown** elevates the importance of 1980's and 90's African American inner city youth culture by creating plaster wall relief sculpture of bamboo hoops, door-knocker earrings and heavy rope chains, as if to preserve these objects for future generations of sociologist and archeologists to reflect on their significance. These relief works evoke art forms such as hieroglyphic wall carvings, cuneiform relief tablets and ancient Egyptian amulets, while raising important questions about healing and protection through adornment as a cultural signifier of economic status, belonging and escapism.

LaKela Brown was born and raised in Detroit, MI where she attended the College for Creative Studies. She majored in Fine Arts, and earned a BFA in 2005. In 2019, her work was installed in various locations throughout Rockefeller Center as one iteration of the year-long Art in Focus public art program presented in partnership with the non-profit Art Production Fund. She currently lives and works in Brooklyn, N.Y

In the sculptural work of **Layo Bright** we see a contemporary approach more aligned with traditional African art in her rendering of the facial features of ceramic heads adorned with the Nigerian Gele. Reminiscent of the Bronze Head from Ife, Layo's works are mounted on wooden blocks, painted gold and marked with long parallel lines along the face similar to the incised striations of the Ife Head, while the Gele sits atop as a substitute for a crown. In the context of this exhibition, Bright's work raises questions about healing and protection through adornment as a signifier of spirituality and self-care.

In 2018, Bright received her MFA in Fine Art from the Parsons School of Design. Awards include the Urban Glass Winter Scholarship Award (2020), and the International Sculpture Center's 2018 Outstanding Student Achievement in Contemporary Sculpture Award (2018). She was a Professor at The New School (Department of Integrated Design). Layo was born in Nigeria. She currently lives and works in Brooklyn, New York.

**Hakeem Olayinka** paints portraits of Black figures often using himself as the subject. The figures are often masked or adorned in vibrant colors with the paint itself becoming the object that heals and protects the subject. In this work, we are reminded of the emotional and psychological stress of everyday life.

Hakeem Olayinka is a Nigerian-American artist, born in Washington, D.C. In 2019, he graduated with a BFA from the School of Art & Design at SUNY Purchase. He currently lives and works in Brooklyn, New York.

### **About Welancora Gallery**

Welancora Gallery is located in a townhouse in the Bedford Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn, New York. The focus of the gallery is to represent artists from around the world by placing their work with collectors and museums, holding major exhibitions and publishing scholarly catalogues. From time to time, the gallery creates space in its schedule for guest curators to mount exhibitions.

Gallery hours are Tuesday-Saturday 11am-5pm by appointment only.