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MIXED-MEDIA TEXTILE WORKS BY APRIL BEY ENVISION AN AFROFUTURIST DOMAIN WOVEN FROM CULTURAL MEMORY

*Through various textures and techniques, Bey dares to imagine a world orbiting
Black joy and creative abundance*

Los Angeles, CA – GAVLAK is pleased to present its first solo exhibition by Los Angeles-based artist **April Bey**, on view from **January 15–March 5, 2022**. Featuring new and recent work, ***When You're On Another Planet And They Just Fly*** unveils an immersive, tactile installation that confronts Western modes of representation through the construction of a defiant, speculative future—one in which the very existence and ingenuity of Black folks creates life and sustainability for the planet and its inhabitants. Bey titles this ever-expanding universe “Atlantica.”

Having developed Atlantica over the course of years as a critical endeavor into Afrofuturist texts and speculative fiction (most recently explored in her solo presentation [Atlantica, The Gilda Region](#) at the California African American Museum), Bey’s new body of work continues to broaden her unique vision for an ecosystem of mutual aid and acts of reparation. The artist’s expansive world-building—as an intentional decolonial practice—champions Black subjects as the sole representations of opulence, self-care and pleasure, telegraphed through the harmonization of diverse mediums and materials, including sequins, eco fur, and wax fabric.

Rich in color, texture, and philosophical inquiry, many of the figures and motifs presented within the exhibition—ranging from variegated calathea leaves to the unmodulated pepto bismol pink sometimes layered on vibrant Caribbean homes—are familiar to Bey and viewers, yet take on new meanings in their home of Atlantica. Here, Bey explodes memories of tropical scenery and color, embellishing them with acrylic nails, textiles, and dignified Black figures, to create decadent brocades and exalted portraits. The artist frequently uses her work to spotlight and empower Black creatives, innovators, business owners, and subcultures—in the case of the large-scale mixed-media painted work *When Your Limit is the Sky, I'm on Another Planet You Just Fly*, Bey depicts two towering Black cowwomen to challenge the hypermasculine iconography of the rodeo and reverse whitewashed histories of the American West.

At once dynamic and socially engaged, Bey reconditions the history of textiles in Atlantica to translate an altogether new vision for Black and queer people worldwide. The technicolor universe in which her subjects reside is rooted in abundance and grandeur, suggesting that what Bey has portrayed here is only a sliver of this rich psychological space. In Bey’s careful rendering

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of and stagesetting for Atlantica's subjects, the artist foregrounds self-authorship and the reclamation of power, situating their planet as one where autonomous creative production generates all life.

ABOUT APRIL BEY

April Bey obtained an BFA from Ball State University, Indiana, going on to pursue graduate studies at the California State University (Northridge, California). In her MFA, she majored in drawing, and became fluent in a wide range of other artistic mediums, including ceramics, printmaking, painting, and installation art. Bey has held solo exhibitions at The California African American Museum (CAAM), Los Angeles; UPFOR Gallery, Portland; Fullerton College Art Gallery, CA; Band of Vices Gallery, Los Angeles; and Gavlak, Los Angeles. Her presence in group exhibitions has been widespread, and includes curatorial initiatives at Blum & Poe, Los Angeles; Virginia Museum of Contemporary Art, VA, The Museum of Art and History, CA, New Orleans African American Museum, New Orleans, LA, the Kent State Museum, OH; The National Art Gallery of The Bahamas, in Nassau, and Los Angeles' California African American Museum. Significant public art commissions include For Freedoms, Los Angeles, Fringe Projects Miami, Glendale Library Arts and Culture, and Destination Crenshaw Outdoor Museum, in which Bey was selected as a finalist. In 2020 Bey was a Fullerton College Artist in Residency, and has undertaken residencies in Spain, West Africa, and the Bahamas, amongst other global regions. Her artworks reside in the collections of The Fullerton College Art Gallery, Escalette Permanent Collection of The California African American Museum (CAAM), Art at Chapman University, Museum of Art and History (MOAH Lancaster), The National Art Gallery of The Bahamas, and at the Center for Contemporary Printmaking.