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PRESS RELEASE



David Willburn *Surface*
September 11 to October 24, 2026
Gallery Hours: Thu to Sat 12:00-5:00PM
and by appointment
Reception: September 19th, 3-7PM Artist Talk 4PM

David Willburn “Plemons Ground” 2026
Braided coiled fabric, acrylic, graphite,
woven canvas on panel 26 x 18 inches

The title *Surface* provides a conceptual framework for David Willburn's practice. More than the visible boundary of an object, a surface is a site where materials, histories, and meanings converge. Throughout this exhibition, Willburn transforms the painted surface into a place of construction, concealment, and revelation. Through an inventive use of unconventional materials and labor-intensive processes, he investigates abstraction, memory, and nostalgia while challenging conventional definitions of painting.

Willburn's practice extends beyond a re-examination of the medium to establish a distinctive visual language rooted in material experimentation. Each work begins with raw canvas, onto which the artist intuitively applies pigment or loose graphite marks across selected areas. The canvas is then cut into strips, rewoven, and adhered to a panel, creating a textured grid that serves as the foundation for the composition. Responding to this reconstructed surface, Willburn layers disparate elements—including fabric, paint, photographs, and paper—into compositions that oscillate between order and improvisation. The resulting works invite viewers into a sustained dialogue with painting as both object and image. Their richly layered surfaces encourage a physical encounter while simultaneously resisting fixed interpretation. Through this interplay of materiality, process, and abstraction, Willburn questions long-held assumptions about the nature of painting itself. The strength of the work lies in its openness: multiple readings coexist, offering neither the artist nor the viewer a singular resolution.

Drawing from the physical and cultural landscapes of his West Texas upbringing, Willburn explores themes of regional identity, queer domesticity, and the histories embedded within everyday materials. His work approaches landscape indirectly, through texture, rhythm, and color rather than representation. Fragments of cloth, woven structures, and layered surfaces become analogues for the ways memory and place are constructed over time.

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The intimate scale of many works reinforces this sense of closeness. Evidence of making remains visible throughout: irregular woven grids, faint graphite marks, frayed fabric edges, and subtle variations in painted surfaces invite viewers to follow the artist's decisions as they unfold. The paintings ask not simply to be viewed, but to be experienced slowly, revealing new relationships with each encounter.

Among the works in the exhibition, *Plemons Ground* exemplifies many of the central concerns of Willburn's practice. Dominating the composition is a large braided fabric form in pink, black, and white that extends beyond the picture plane. The braided element recalls rag rugs historically made from repurposed scraps of fabric, connecting the work to traditions of domestic labor, resourcefulness, and American craft. At once personal and cultural, the form evokes childhood memory while functioning as a powerful abstract shape.

The relationship between the braided form and its woven canvas support generates much of the painting's visual energy. The dense circular mass presses against the underlying grid, creating a dynamic tension between softness and structure. Floating above it, a rectangle of woven pink fabric echoes the braid's color while complicating the composition's spatial relationships. Throughout the work, shifts in color, texture, and material continually redirect the viewer's eye, demonstrating Willburn's ability to create visual complexity through seemingly modest means.

In *Surface*, Willburn expands the language of painting by dissolving conventional boundaries between painting and textile, image and object, abstraction and memory. His works demonstrate that meaning resides not only in representation but in the physical act of making itself. Every woven strand, stitched edge, painted mark, and layered fragment contributes to a visual language that is both deeply personal and broadly resonant.

Rather than treating surface as something merely seen, Willburn reveals it as a place where material, memory, and identity intersect. The works in *Surface* resist definitive interpretation, inviting viewers instead into an open-ended encounter with painting—one in which meaning emerges gradually through the interplay of process, material, and sustained looking.