

PRESS RELEASE

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Artspace Announces J. Stacy Utley to Create Public Artwork for the Cottages of Idlewild Development

RALEIGH, N.C. -Artspace is proud to announce that artist [J. Stacy Utley](#) has been selected to create a public artwork for the [Cottages of Idlewild](#), an affordable housing development invested in permanent affordability in the historically African American community of Idlewild. The artwork installation is expected to be completed and unveiled in January 2027.

About the Artist:

J. Stacy Utley is a Charlotte-based interdisciplinary visual artist, public artist, and architectural designer whose work explores cultural memory, identity, and the built environment. Drawing from his background in architecture, he creates sculptural and civic-scale artworks that transform public spaces into sites of storytelling, reflection, and community connection.

His public art commissions include projects with the City of Raleigh, Charlotte City Center Partners, and the Arts & Science Council, and his work has been exhibited nationally and internationally, including the 2021 Venice Architecture Biennale, in collaboration with EVOKE Studio Architects. He writes, "My process is guided by a framework I call the Five I's: Investigation, Inspiration, Interpretation, Implementation, and Integration. This begins with research and direct engagement—listening sessions, site visits, and dialogue with residents—followed by design development that reflects both the physical context and the social history of a site."

A Raleigh native, Utley grew up in the city, graduated from Enloe High School, and maintains family ties within the Idlewild community. This personal connection to the neighborhood, combined with the project's focus on African American homeownership, intergenerational connection, and community legacy, made him a particularly compelling choice for the commission.

"Public art has the power to celebrate community identity and create a sense of belonging," said Carly Jones, President + CEO of Artspace. "We are excited to partner with J. Stacy Utley and the Idlewild community to create a work that reflects the history, resilience, and future of this neighborhood."

About the Project:

The final public artwork is expected to be unveiled in January 2027 in [the Cottages of Idlewild](#) affordable housing development. The development consists of 18 affordable units built on city-owned parcels in the [Idlewild](#) neighborhood. The Cottages of Idlewild offers a range of affordable homeownership and rental opportunities for individuals and families for individuals and families earning between 30% and 80% of Area Median Income (AMI), providing an anchor of affordability in a rapidly gentrifying community.

This project was made possible through a unique public-private partnership formed by the Raleigh Area Land Trust, Raleigh Raised Development, and Haven Design|Build to maximize success and ensure that community interests are prioritized and protected beyond what any single organization could do alone. Artspace serves as the public art administrator and project manager for the commission, overseeing artist selection, project coordination, community engagement support, and implementation of the public artwork. For information, visit <https://www.ralt.org/cottages-of-idlewild>.

About Artspace:

Artspace is a non-profit visual arts center located in Downtown Raleigh. Visit Artspace to explore exhibitions featuring national and community artists, engage with 30 artists working in their studios, and enjoy art classes and community events for all ages and abilities. To learn more about Artspace, visit artspacenc.org.

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