

In Milan the premiere of the American artist David Antonio Cruz: between fashion, art history, gender and racial issues

by Caroline Belfiore



David Antonio Cruz at Galleria Poggiali

So you are back again, you are here, and we are here with you. The American artist David Antonio Cruz (b. 1974, USA) arrives in Milan. Where? At Galleria Poggiali, in Foro Bonaparte. With his works, David Antonio Cruz explores gender and queerness, racial issues, the conception of public and private spaces and the invisibility of Brown / Black bodies through the use of portraiture and operatic performance.

so you are back again, you are here, and we are here with you, presents an intimate visual conversation of love, support and comfort that binds the artist to Daniel de Jesús, central figure of his poetics and collaborator of him from the start. Personal, biographical and political, Cruz's works engage with the struggles



imposed on queer people and Brown/Black bodies, offering powerful representations of authenticity as a form of resilience. *“so you are back again”* stands as an extension of the 2021 exhibition

icutfromthemiddletogetabetterslice which explored the idea of “chosen family”: the non-biological bonds between queer people based on mutual support and love. Each painting depicts the likeness of the artist's community.

At the same time, the portraits strive to capture much more than the physical representation of the figures: they reverse the overall structure of queer relationships, captured through intimate moments of touch, strength, support and celebration.

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Set in lush and opulent interiors, the paintings are vibrantly colored and reclaim the space for an obstinate celebration of queer life. Cruz's highly chromatic vibe intertwines fashion, pop culture and art historical references, drawing from John Singer Sargent's high society portraits and Francis Bacon paintings, placing them in warped environments. The subjects reinterpret and play with classic poses, intimately cuddled on a transfigured sofa. Covered in tapestries and tapestries, the furniture plays with a sense of decadence and luxury, recalling the romanticism seen through Victorian, Rococo and early American paintings. In contrast to the former, Cruz's subjects are invited to pose in opposition to social norms as a form of resistance and play, challenging the act of posing.

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In contrast to the artist's bright and celebratory paintings, Cruz's monochromatic drawings create an intimate and meditative space that, while almost eerie, is enchanting to behold. Silhouettes of organic forms from specific geographic regions of the United States are combined with delicate wax pencil renderings of the chosen familiar subjects and flora of the Puerto Rico countryside. Cruz incorporates the Ceiba, a tree native to Mexico, the Caribbean and West Africa, as a basic motif to indicate the strong and deep roots of her chosen family and to connect to memories of him. He sees the drawings as a moment of meditation or a slower reading of the lush works, almost as if they were two sides of an LP or record. The works speak the same language but with a different resonance and melody, forcing the viewer to become more deeply involved.

