

CREATIVE **BOOM**

David Antonio Cruz's timely paintings that explore the injustices against LGBTQ and BAME communities

By Katy Cowan



Portrait of the Texas Girls, 2019 © David Antonio Cruz, One Day I'll Turn the Corner and I'll Be Ready for It.
Courtesy of the artist and Monique Meloche Gallery, Chicago

In his new body of work, [David Antonio Cruz](#) explores the intersectionality of queerness and race through painting, sculpture, and performance. Focusing on queer, trans, and gender-fluid BAME communities, he looks at the violence often perpetrated against these people, highlighting an urgent need for change.

Using a vast trove of images mined from the Internet, including the personal social media accounts of his subjects, Cruz brings these characters to life using sensuous compositions inspired by the aspirational aesthetic of luxury and fashion. This creates a "dissonance that critically elevates his BAME subjects while also emphasising the extreme injustice of their plights".

To further enrich his portraits, Cruz uses his own coded visual vocabulary. Baroque background patterns reveal real plant types, whose native regions relate to locales where these victims lived or were found. Certain colours hold certain meanings (green relates to Immigration, for example), a formal code that evokes the charged relationship between skin tone and identity.

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You can see his new paintings at an upcoming exhibition, *One Day I'll Turn the Corner and I'll Be Ready for It*, on show at Chicago's [Monique Meloche Gallery](#) from 7 September.

"Organic, anthropomorphic forms peer out from behind figures, witnesses that break the fourth wall, inviting us into these newly-transparent worlds," says the Gallery. "In this way, Cruz illustrates his subjects' stories through portraiture, positioning them firmly within an art historical canon from which they have been largely excluded. In doing so, he further saves their narratives from the white noise of media coverage whose disregard bars such truths from entering our collective consciousness. Cruz humanely retrieves his subjects from this imposed invisibility."

The new paintings on view present a timely development in Cruz's examination of "this all-too-regular brutality". They include issues related to immigration and displacement at the US-Mexico border. His subjects' stories convey specific ways in which queer and trans folks have suffered in this contested space. Discover more: cruzantoniocruz.com.