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**NEWCITYART**

## Centering the Marginalized: A Review of David Antonio Cruz at Monique Meloche Gallery

SEPTEMBER 17, 2019 BY CAIRA MOREIRA-BROWN



*David Antonio Cruz, "onedayi'llturnthecornerandi'llbereadyforit, portrait of the texas girls," 2019, Oil and latex on wood, 48 x 48 inches/Courtesy of the artist and Monique Meloche Gallery*

Interdisciplinary artist David Antonio Cruz showcases his signature psychological paintings in his exhibition at Monique Meloche Gallery, "One Day I'll Turn the Corner and I'll Be Ready For It." Not only is this Cruz's first show with Meloche, it's also his first in Chicago.

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“One Day I’ll Turn the Corner and I’ll Be Ready For It” consists of oil paintings that explore the line where queerness and race intersect. The New York-based artist integrates found images from the internet and social media to bring these figures to the forefront of his work. Each figure featured in Cruz’s work speaks to a community or individual who has suffered abuse, such as trans immigrants who have been raped on their journey to the United States and his portrait of De’Janay Stanton, a trans woman killed during a shooting in Bronzeville.

Each image has a baroque floral-patterned background, each flower originating from the subject’s hometown. The artist’s attention to the displacement of figures mimics the displacement that often occurs after immigration or in safe spaces for minorities. Each painting is made using oil and latex on wood.

Cruz reinterprets and brings to life individual histories that are often stigmatized, specifically of queer folks and minorities. The body language of each of his figures provoke extremes of confidence in a moment of weakness or fear in a moment of the unknown. The paintings explore the past, present and future of how trans and minority communities have been exploited, by touching on feelings of survival, resilience and permanence.

Cruz breaks the fourth wall through his detailed layering of paint and the intimate facial expressions of the figures, which allows the viewer to be immersed in each figure as one deconstructs their abstract environment and discerning expressions. He positions his figures purposefully and centrally, in a place of authority, a position that often was not accessible to his subjects.

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*David Antonio Cruz, "today,tomorrow,andyesterday;maybe'llfindawayholdingthesun," 2019. Oil and latex on wood, Each element: 48 x 36 x 3 inches/Courtesy of the artist and Monique Meloche Gallery*

The majority of the images convey Cruz's interpretation of the brutality that results from our country's immigration policies, specifically relating to the United States-Mexico border. His paintings expose the viewer to a narrative that is often suppressed.

The repetition of certain colors and figures in Cruz's work hold significant meaning, like the pigments of green relating to immigration and space helmets that speak to the futurism of African-Americans and Latinx. The helmets play on the concept of how space is often a foreign concept to us on earth and how certain minorities are treated as foreign when they are no different than other individuals in society.

"One Day I'll Turn the Corner and I'll Be Ready For It" speaks to the people who are often overlooked and experiences that are urgent yet unseen. It creates a dialogue between the LGBTQ community and minorities that are and aren't a part of it, and how society treats these individuals. (Caira Moreira-Brown)

*"David Antonio Cruz: One Day I'll Turn the Corner and I'll Be Ready For It," Monique Meloche Gallery, 451 North Paulina, through October 26.*