

## Alexander and Bonin



Luiza Mahin 2020

### **Dalton Paula** ***a kidnapper of souls***

September 12 – October 24, 2020



Ambrósio 2020

Alexander and Bonin is pleased to announce the opening of Dalton Paula's first solo exhibition in North America on Saturday, September 12.

Twenty-four portraits line the gallery. Portrayed on two-part canvases with blue-green backgrounds and gold-streaked hair, are historic Afro-Brazilian figures who have never been visually depicted during their lifetime or posthumously. As part of his research, Paula visited Quilombo Alto do Santana in Goiás, near Goiânia, where he works and lives. Quilombos are political organizations and communities of black cultural resistance of African origin that were recreated in Brazil during the 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Paula photographed residents of the quilombo and used these images as the basis for his portraits, where the subjects are illustrated in period clothes and hairstyles. In doing so, Paula constructs a counter-narrative that differs from the predominant representations of the black Brazilian population.

There is an intimacy and a tenderness to Paula's hand, to the way he infuses each canvas with dignity. The paintings themselves recall early 20<sup>th</sup> century *retratos pintados*, in which a formal black-and-white photograph was painted, often with a blue background, and embellished to reflect the desires and fantasies of the subject. There is a parallel absence in many paintings; Paula leaves their jewelry unpainted and unrepresented, reflecting the ongoing dispossession of the wealth of Black Brazilians and their absence from places of power. The use of two canvases creates a line down the center of each portrait and evokes a sense of visual discomfort which serves as a metaphor for what the artist experiences during his visits to quilombos: poor black communities enduring a daily struggle for better living conditions.

Dalton Paula was born in 1982 in Brasília and lives in Goiânia. Paula's work has been exhibited at the São Paulo Biennial (2016); Instituto Tomie Ohtake, São Paulo (2017); New Museum Triennial, New York (2018); the 11<sup>th</sup> Bienal do Mercosul, Porto Alegre (2018); "Histórias Afro-Atlânticas," Museo de Arte de São Paulo (MASP) and Instituto Tomie Ohtake, São Paulo (2018); and "Allied with Power," Pérez Art Museum Miami, Miami (2020).

For *Kate*, a 1976 installation by Ree Morton along with selected drawings from 1972-1976 are on view in the staircase gallery. These works were included in *The Plant that Heals May Also Poison*, a retrospective presented at ICA, Philadelphia, the Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery, Saratoga Springs, and the ICA, Los Angeles over the past year.

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