

Dalton Gata

Dressed to Leave This World

November 28 – December 20, 2024

Opening reception Thursday, November 28, 6–9 PM

Peres Projects is pleased to present *Dressed to Leave This World*, Dalton Gata's (b. 1977 in Santiago de Cuba, CU) third exhibition with the gallery and his first in Milan. With this new series of acrylic portraits on cotton-linen canvas, Gata envisions the clothing worn on the final day on earth as a rite of passage into the afterlife—a meaningful ritual and sacred act in which fashion transcends mere adornment to become a statement of self-definition. His figures, in lavish dress and meticulously sculpted hair, stand poised on the precipice of worlds, suspended in a moment where their appearance holds symbolic power over what lies ahead. Gata's figures are deliberate in their sartorial choices, captured with a distinctive sense of grandeur and determination, as though fully aware that this moment of crossing allows them to cast aside earthly pretensions and embrace their truest selves. Yet dressing for departure also transcends the literal, granting each character the freedom to embody a grand, self-fashioned beauty—dressed, ultimately, as who they most desire to be.

Gata transforms garments into symbols of autonomy and resilience on the painted surface, each piece woven with personal and collective identity. His characters emerge from stylized realism into surreal worlds, inhabiting luminous, otherworldly landscapes scattered with brutalist structures, glinting metallics, and skies painted in spectral tones. These realms convey the fluidity and fragility of identity, where fashion becomes both armor and expression; a quiet defiance for those whose identities often lie beyond societal norms. Such boundaries are defied not only through clothing style but also anatomical form, presenting beings that are part human, part animal—centaurs among them, a recurrent motif in Gata's work—and whose features and adornments flow seamlessly between the real and the mythical. These hybrid figures embody transformation itself and a perpetual state of becoming, their shifting forms signifying the fluidity of existence. Regardless of their physique, Gata's figures always radiate a defiant glamour, gazing back at the viewer with a knowing, sometimes playful awareness. The works pulse with a tension between adorning and revealing the self, inviting us to question whether these flamboyant figures present their true selves, or embody something more elusive: an intentional, artful performance of identity.

This rich tapestry of vibrant colors, textured fabrics, and morphing silhouettes further underlines themes of ephemerality and transformation. Through blossoming flowers and sprouting leaves worn as accessories, Dalton Gata renders clothing as a metaphor for life's passage, capturing its precarious balance between creation and decay. In doing so, he evokes a sense of beauty tempered by impermanence, a beauty that persists in its vibrancy, even in the face of mortality. Each garment becomes a narrative bridge, linking contemporary influences with traditional ones to reveal the layered complexities of cultural belonging in a globalized society. In these paintings, Dalton Gata's characters also reflect the strength of marginalized communities who navigate life with a fierce, defiant pride. His works illuminate fashion as a medium of both protection and expression, a powerful shield against a world that doesn't always welcome the full spectrum of being. Style, under Gata's brush, is transformed into a tableau of possibility and resistance, a reflection of our most intricate and layered selves and a radiant, unyielding testament against conformity. In these richly detailed canvases, Gata offers a glimpse into a world where the boundaries of life and death dissolve, and the final gesture of dressing is infused with personal meaning, allowing each figure the agency to be remembered on their own terms.

Dressed to Leave This World lures the viewer into a realm where clothing becomes a profound statement of existence itself. His characters are not merely dressed to exit this life; they are prepared to enter the next stage in full expression of their vision of beauty and selfhood. Celebrating the intricate layers of identity, the dazzling intersections of style, and the poetic assertion of self, Dalton Gata invites us to contemplate the beauty and strangeness that accompany our journey through life and beyond. This is Dalton Gata's third exhibition with Peres Projects and his first in Milan. Recent solo exhibitions include Peres Projects, Berlin (2022), Chapter, New York (2022), Galeria Agustina Ferreyra, San Juan (2022), and the Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA Miami), Miami, curated by Alex Gartenfeld (2021). Recent group exhibitions include NEWCHILD gallery, Antwerp (2024), Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Texas (2024), an exhibition curated by Marina Reyes Franco at the Americas Society, New York, in collaboration with the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Puerto Rico (2022), Mendes Wood DM, São Paulo (2022), and Clima Gallery, Milan, curated by Samantha Ozer (2020). His work has entered the collections of the Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA), Miami and the Museum of Modern Art, Warsaw. His work is currently on view at the Whitney Museum, New York.

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