

**GALLERIA POGGIALI
MILAN**

presents

Zhivago Duncan
Soulmate / Cellmate

Critical essay by Kit Hammonds

02.04.2019 - 28.06.2019

Opening Tuesday 02.04.2019 from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Galleria Poggiali Milan
Foro Buonaparte 52 - 20121 Milan

From **2 April to 28 June 2019** the **Galleria Poggiali of Milano** presents *Soulmate / Cellmate*, a solo show by the multifaceted artist **Zhivago Duncan** (Terre Haute, USA, 1980), with a critical essay by **Kit Hammonds**.

Soulmate / Cellmate brings together a new body of works specially conceived and produced by the artist for the Milan premises of the Galleria Poggiali. This series of works ranges from painting to sculpture, with ceramics and paintings that symbolise and represent Zhivago Duncan's cosmology. In the exhibition the artist has recreated an image of his mind. Starting from a free and fluid speculation, in the paintings he has sketched out worlds in formation, mythical and imaginary landscapes in psychedelic colours.

Zhivago Duncan thus finds himself in dialogue with the project room overlooking Foro Buonaparte, moulding and altering the cubic space by the installation of paintings of exotic and abstract forms produced using the batik technique. This is an ancient technique, the origins of which are still uncertain, which manages to give the works an incredibly rich luminosity. It is a procedure that emerged by accident during the dying of fabrics, when the presence of stains of fat or other impermeable substances prevented the colour from penetrating when the fabric was immersed in the dye bath. In this series, to make his batik works Duncan has used wax, covering certain areas of the painting with it in such a way that the colour cannot penetrate the surface of the canvas.

Using this technique, Zhivago has created unique works featuring forms that are strikingly unusual and unpredictable, stemming from exotic horizons and the crossroads of different cultures. From his youth, the artist has in fact been exposed to the most diverse cultures and traditions. Born to a Danish father and a Syrian mother, he became familiar with profoundly different cultural backgrounds, characterised by stories, myths and legends that marked his childhood and are inevitably channelled into his artistic work.

As with the works displayed in the very recent solo show titled *Beauty Blocked My View* (November 2018 – January 2019), held at the Meem Gallery in Dubai, in the works showcased in *Soulmate / Cellmate* Duncan again expresses his desire to probe his past, exploring it, getting to know it and finding his roots. In the show the artist recreates a world tied up with his ancestral heredity, a connection between its physicality and the metaphysical personification of a lost world. "All this is rendered on canvas through a mesh of citations, prophecies and images of deities drawn from ancient Syrian tales. Duncan's creative process is underpinned by a yearning to discover hidden

interconnections. This exploration is expressed in a joyous universe of shapes and colours, which in actual fact conceal fragile foundations and a profound inner lamentation.” *Kit Hammonds*.

The show also includes countless sculptures in moulded and enamelled clay that are closely related to the large canvases. A series of constantly evolving clouds, bubbles, cells, organelles and mitochondria recreate light, fluctuating, imaginary ambiences that tell the story of biological processes, of the phenomena that generate life and the laws that govern them. These differently-sized shapes will invade the gallery premises, along with pyramids and polyhedral buildings. Three-dimensional constructions and dwellings that represent an ecological system as interesting as it is ambiguous. Utopian models of (invisible) cities linked to the artist’s past, or vital processes and biological forms connected with our origins? In Zhivago Duncan’s work the line separating these two worlds and perspectives is very fine indeed.

The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue with a critical essay by Kit Hammonds.

INFORMATION

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Tuesday - Saturday: 11 a.m. – 7 p.m.

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