To My Father

Gabriel García Román

March 30 - May 21, 2016
Gallery Aferro Main Gallery
73 Market Street, Newark

OPENING RECEPTION
April 2nd, 2016
7pm – 10pm
Artist Talk and Poetry Readings
May 21, 6 PM
featuring Bakar Wilson, Sheila Maldonado, Alba Hernandez, and Banjela Davis

GALLERY HOURS
Wednesday - Saturday
12pm - 6pm
and by appointment

Roman has already garnered national press for his stunning chine-collé and photogravure portraits of LGBT/non-conforming activists, poets, and artists of color, depicting his subjects as contemporary queer icons. Finding inspiration in portraiture styles of Renaissance, Flemish and Christian Orthodox paintings, the series aims to elevate these multi-dimensional, powerful and proud contemporary figures and give visibility to a population generally underrepresented in the art world. From the queer Latina fighting for immigration rights to the non-binary disabled Trans Filipino, Roman portrays these “outsiders” as central to the narrative, just like saints—figures that are inherently worthy of attention, emulation, and storytelling. Much like traditional religious paintings conferred a sense of safety and meditative calm on a home; the works in this series aspire to provide a similar sense of refuge that’s drawn from the inner grace of the subjects and projected outwards onto a world that might not always be safe.
Gabriel García Román was born in Zacatecas, Mexico in 1973 and raised in Chicago. He received his B.A. in studio art at The City College of New York. Garcia is a photo-based artist and craftsman. As an artist, he’s constantly looking for ways to counteract the flatness that’s inherent to photography: weaving, folding, cutting, interlacing prints or collaging are all different attempts at realizing that goal. Photography allows him to explore aspects of his identity and decode the world he lives in. Queer. Mexican. American. Immigrant. Secular. Catholic.

To My Father includes works from across Román’s body of work including his series, Defining You, consisting of hand-woven intricate images where the warp is a studio portrait and the weft is a collage of images selected from the subject’s childhood photo albums—images that speak to formative experiences or simply conjure up memories they’d like to relive. The unique woven patterns echo DNA structures that depict how our experiences are intertwined with our identity. This weaving can also be considered the embodiment of the artist’s own experience as a bilingual immigrant through which old and new ideals are merged into one. In titling the exhibit, there is an acknowledgement that the artist’s diverse body of work is indebted to his father’s insatiable curiosity. As a child, he eagerly watched as his father took apart countless items and put them back together in order to see how they worked. This inability to remain still, combined with perpetual tinkering and fiddling with things, instilled in the artist a similar curiosity that finds its embodiment in an ever-expanding artistic vocabulary.

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