

Davide Hjort Di Fabio

Perfect Tense, 2024

LED Cube, video, color, no sound, (16:00min. loop)

We pronounce everything, 2024 Gold-glazed ceramic

Working primarily with ceramic objects that are often activated with video, sound, performance, text, installation, and photography, Davide Hjort Di Fabio's sculptures draw on a long-standing fascination with Rococo ornamentation as reflective of the human desire to immortalize nature by idealizing, romanticizing, and embellishing it. Their hybrid sculptures are a potent symbol for the queer body and the fusion of the biological, geological, and the personal.

The piece Perfect Tense draws a parallel between the Rococo period and our own era through a techno-ecological lens that crosses scales, rapidly shifts perspectives, and gives a view into our entangled nature-culture relationships. The 1×1×1 meter LED cube merges high definition video footage taken by the artist at the Palace of Versailles just outside of Paris, with satellite images of the Earth, and close-up scans of the topography of men's bodies. The cube functions as a constantly shifting screen whose rigid minimalism is in stark contrast to the voluptuous and undulating forms presented on its faces. The images constantly redirect our gaze, looking up to the ornamented ceilings of the palace, down on the Earth, and across the nude skin of the models, contorting our apprehension of the display. Versailles here functions at once as a central symbol of power structures and privileges, a model for the ornamentation and gilded representation of the landscape, serving as a metaphor for beauty and escapism in moments of crisis. The satellite images give an overhead view of our planet, an image of natural and human induced changes and challenges happening on the Earth as well as a critical distance to reflect on it from outside. Conversely, the men on their beds are seen in vivid erotic detail, zooming into their skin, their hair follicles and folds, giving a sense of intimacy while also demonstrating a Rococo infatuation with the detail, the fragment. The combination produces a flowing abstract landscape where cosmic, terrestrial, historical, and personal narratives are merged into a three-dimensional picture, a world. This technological prism encourages us not to reflect, but instead to diffract, to engage with these overlapping sites, scales and views through one another, and thus generate an unexpected perspective on the historical and material connections between humans and 'nature'.

Standing in for the missing facet at the base of the cube, Hjort Di Fabio also presents We pronounce everything, a meter square relief in ceramic gilded with gold like the Rococo surfaces of Versailles. The word rococo comes from the French rocaille, rock-like, alluding to the eighteenth-century's vogue for encrusting stones and seashells in plaster and cement, at once embellishing the nonhuman world and memorializing its decay. Instead of encasing natural artifacts, the artist here immortalizes their own material engagement with the clay, generating an abstract index for human-geological relationships and then elaborating its surface in gold, catalyzing desire and valuation.

Hjort Di Fabio's works demonstrate an ambivalent relationship to logics of beauty, at once celebrating the queerness of camp extravagance while also exploring how the desire to beautify, idealize and represent is also a tool for controlling - the body, the culture, the planet.

*Post Brothers*