

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**MARINA CRUZ:
BELONGING AND BELONGINGNESS
NOVEMBER 30, 2023 – JANUARY 20, 2024
ALBERTZ BENDA, NY**



Marina Cruz. *Yellow Balloons and Black Holes*, 2023. Oil on canvas. 48 x 60 inches | 122 x 152.5 cm

NEW YORK, NY: albertz benda is thrilled to present a solo exhibition of works by Marina Cruz, an artist who lives and works in The Philippines. Cruz will present a new body work at the gallery's Chelsea space.

Cruz is deeply embedded in the artistic milieu of Manila, having trained under the late Professor Leo Abaya, who curated her first ever solo show, Norman Sustiguer, who taught painting techniques at The Philippines College of Fine Arts, and the late Professor Roberto Chabet, who introduce her to conceptual art. She has worked across various media, including painting, photography, embroidery, text, installation, and sculpture. Throughout these processes, she plumbs her family history across generations with an abiding consideration of how objects hold memory and emotions, in particular garments worn by her female relatives.

Cruz takes as subject matter a family archive of clothing that was created by her grandmother, typically comprised of found discarded material such as chicken feed bags. These garments were intended for her daughters, in particular the artist's mother, who was a twin, as her brother lived with an uncle nearby. Cruz now owns over one hundred garments, which create a personal trove of family history. They speak to the culture of her native country as well as to the love and handspun nature of homemade outfits, which we might also understand as creative acts. The dresses and shirts were passed down from one sibling to another, revealing a frugality that defies today's current destructive obsession with fast fashion and the persistent urgency of commercial culture.

Through meticulously detailed paintings in acrylic on canvas, she pays homage to this matrilineal legacy of labor and love. Her work may be seen in the legacy of feminist artists including Mary Kelly, (glove dress artist), and Beverley Semmes, although Cruz's poignant family history belies a different conceptual conceit; while her

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Portrait courtesy the artist and A3. Photo by Anjo Lapresca.

second-wave predecessors also used garments as signifiers of lived female experience, Cruz's absence of bodies is also a eulogy for lost relatives, including her grandmother, rather than a statement on oppressive patriarchal domination.

The paintings are notable for their impressive technique and skill; Cruz was trained to paint using the grid technique. In this formalist process, the object almost becomes an abstract entity, defined by curves or pleats within a square of the grid rather than the specific object. Cruz, who had focused on abstraction as a student, combines this strict formal approach with a personal, emotional framework. The breathtaking realism of the paintings elevates these modest,

at times tattered, frocks and imbues in them a new life separate to their outdated use. They now enter contemporary cultural history, adding to a lineage of female artists interrogating the legacy of past generations through their work today.

ABOUT MARINA CRUZ

Born in 1982, Marina Cruz graduated cum laude from the University of the Philippines College of Fine Arts. She has shown prominently in several exhibitions in Manila and internationally, including the Mind Set Art Center in Taiwan. In 2007, she won both the grand prize of the Philippine Art Awards and the Ateneo Art Awards which gave her the opportunity to attend a fellowship at La Trobe University's Visual Arts Center in the same year. She was also awarded the Freeman Fellowship at the Vermont Studio Center in 2008, and the Thirteen Artists Award in 2012.

ABOUT ALBERTZ BENDA

Founded in 2015, albertz benda is a contemporary art gallery with an international program exploring material and textility as well as cultural and social dialogues. Our New York space is host to rotating exhibitions with an emphasis on solo presentations of emerging artists, new research into historic figures, and thematic group exhibitions. In 2021, the gallery expanded to a second location in Los Angeles. Featuring an evolving identity separate from our New York program, the LA space is realized within the context of a domestic setting, advancing new connections between visual arts, craft, and design.

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