

LEILA HELLER GALLERY.

**ENOC PEREZ**

***THE DESERT BLOOM***

**September 21 – November 4, 2017**



*Louvre Abu Dhabi* 2017. Oil on canvas. 92 x 120 inches. (234 x 305 centimeters)

Dubai, UAE—For Immediate Release—Leila Heller Gallery Dubai is pleased to present a new body of work by American painter Enoc Perez. Famed for this persistent portrayal of the international style in the built environment—landscape in the form of portraiture—modernism in the form of memory—Perez here applies his unique technical evolution of the media of painting and printmaking to the long history of the architecture of the Near East. Turning his gaze to at once the formal

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contours of the Sheikh Zayed Mosque in Abu Dhabi, to the futurist vaulting parabolas of Zaha Hadid's Haydar Aliev Cultural Center, and to the 7<sup>th</sup> century foundational structure foundation to Islam the Dome of the Rock, the painter traces an urban landscape which is both deeply ancient and heroically contemporary—or as Sarah Newman of the Corcoran Gallery in Washington D.C. notes, "as much mental and social as it is physical."

Born in Puerto Rico and arriving in New York in the twilight of the era of Pop Art's stark announcement of painting's dead-end, Perez sought to recuperate the medium through a reversal of Warhol's mechanistic gesture. Utilizing photographic images as reference points, Perez does not reduce painting to the iteration of the infinitely reproducible image, but rather renders the process of printmaking into the expressive and deaccelerated painterly gesture.

Perez constructs, building each image up in layers of saturated pigment, finished by hand, as what he deems "printed paintings." As Newman concludes, "as much as Perez's works investigate place, they invite us to consider the faltering condition and enduring seductions of painting in contemporary life."

Surpassing both painting and its death, Perez replaces the mechanistic with the emotive, investing each image with the visceral longing at the heart of Modernist architecture or colonial structures, both of which have occupied a central place in his previous bodies of work. The perception of desire in Perez's practice is not accidental; his first portrayal of a building

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was also a portrait of a woman. "The first building that I made was in early 2001, a painting of the Normandie Hotel. I made that painting because I had just met this beautiful woman who was just married at the time, I wanted to make a show about her so I had to make the show in code because of her status... Carole is today my wife and mother of my children." Perez's printed paintings began as love letters. For this exhibition in Dubai, the artist addresses his images to a region whose sense of both past and future exceed those of the contemporary west; what is revealed are envois embedded with history, ambition, and desire—preludes of what's to come.

**ABOUT THE ARTIST** Born in San Juan in 1967, Enoc Perez first took painting lessons at the age of eight. As the son of an art critic, he spent family vacations traveling to museums in different countries and learning about the history of art. In 1986, Perez moved to New York to study painting at the Pratt Institute before earning his Master's Degree at Hunter College. Embracing art's potential for pleasure and beauty, Perez paints sensuous nudes, still lifes, tropical resorts, and modern architectural icons in a sleek aesthetic with dazzling, vibrant colors.

Perez is best known for his paintings of modernist buildings that nostalgically capture the utopian ambitions and optimism that inspired their construction. "In a way, these architects really believed in the idea of utopia. There's a true sense of believing in these buildings, and if you look at contemporary architecture, that's not as much the case. The fact that they're from a different era makes them nostalgic. I love painting, and I believe in painting, and I share that with these architects who believed in utopia."

Enoc Perez's artwork is in the collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; British Museum, London; Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami, Florida;

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Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven; New York Public Library; RISD Museum of Art; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts; Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; Museum of Contemporary Art, San Juan, Puerto Rico; Zimmerli Art Museum, Rutgers University; The Frances Lehman Loeb Art Center, Vassar College; Hammer Museum, University of California, Los Angeles; Williams College Museum of Art; Queens Museum; University Museum of Contemporary Art, University of Massachusetts, Amherst; University of California, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive; Picker Art Gallery, Colgate University; Art, Design, and Architecture Museum, University of California, Santa Barbara; Richmond Center for Visual Arts, Western Michigan University; Vera List Center, New School; and the Chazen Museum of Art, University of Wisconsin.