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## ENOC PEREZ: THE ANDY WARHOL OF ARCHITECTURE

Painter Enoc Perez grew up in Puerto Rico, a place rich with modernist buildings in places like [La Concha](#) and the [Hix Island House](#). His move to New York amplified an admiration for the style. There, he pursued a career painting modernism landmarks while surrounded by icons like Gordon Bunshaft's [Lever House](#) and Eero Saarinen's [TWA Terminal](#). His style has a pop art quality to it. Perez uses photos and images from postcards and magazines in his designs, often combining them with primitive print-making techniques. His newest work is a panorama of the Watergate complex in Washington, D.C., currently on display at the Corcoran Gallery of Art. It's a nostalgia trip of sorts, with Perez utilizing a painting process similar to Andy Warhol.



**Where did your fascination with modernism come from?**

I have always been an architecture groupie. Growing up in Puerto Rico, one of the things I remember most was going to the hotels on the island and how great it felt to be in them. As a grown-up, I realized that a big part of that feeling was caused by the architecture of these buildings—grand lobbies, beautiful pools, curved lines. This architecture was "Modern." It gave me ambition.

**Are there specific cities you've lived in**



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Are there specific cities you've lived in or traveled to that helped bring out this fascination?

Yes, because almost every city has something great to look at. And if there is not, there are always a beautiful woman to look at.

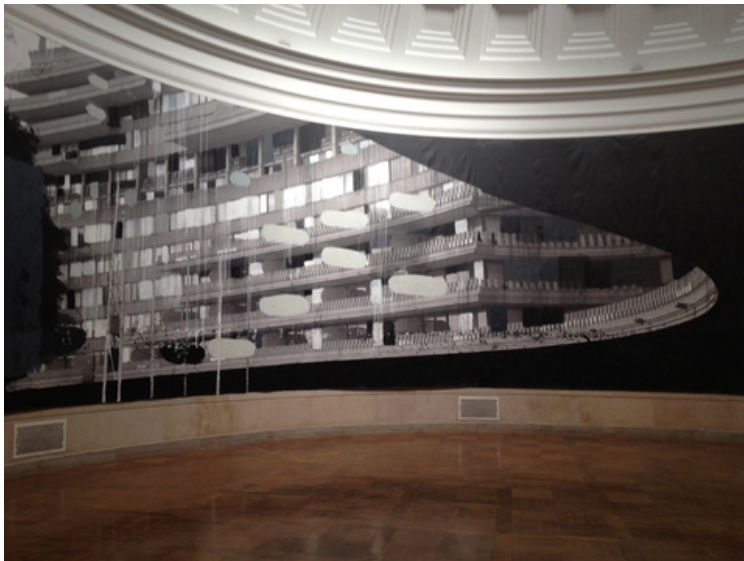
How much does nostalgia play in your architecture paintings?

I don't know if nostalgia crosses my mind, maybe it's just a by-product of the subject. I come to the buildings out of admiration.



Your painting style seems to reflect the same era as the buildings you use. Is your method intended to parallel the subject?

My method came out of a preoccupation with creating paintings that would make sense historically (at least in my mind) with New York painting. When I started to paint in New York, and still today, I felt that Andy Warhol's paintings were important to artists in New York. So I thought that if I somehow used printmaking in my process, I could have some sort of relationship with history. Then I started to make these drawings and would transfer them to canvas by adding oil paint on the back and then redrawing them on to the canvas, kind of like carbon paper—a printmaking process that I still use today. One of the interesting things about the method is that when layered enough, it produces a sense of decay, like real life. In a way, it contradicts the sense of optimism that the buildings embody. Or my own sense of optimism, even. Maybe making paintings today comes through as an act of optimism since painting has been declared dead almost every year for decades. And that desire to move forward with it may parallel the aspirations of this type of architecture.



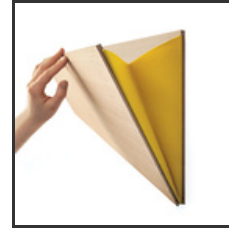
The scale of your [Watergate mural](#) takes up the walls of a small, round room inside

This story originally appeared on [The Atlantic Cities](#), a Dwell partner site. Mark Byrne is a former fellow at The Atlantic Cities and a graduate student in publications design at the University of Baltimore. [Read all of his posts here.](#)



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**the Corcoran currently. What about the complex inspired the scale?**

The Watergate murals are the biggest paintings I have done to this day. I wanted the paintings to become an experience. They had to be large and the palette had to be black, white, and gray, because this is a building that has a particular significance to our history. The inside of the buildings are curved so it made perfect sense for a rotunda, especially in Washington, D.C.



**You once did a painting of the Hearst Building (a glass tower done by Norman Foster in 2006). That seems to be a departure from your typical subjects. Why that building?**

The Hearst Tower is a great building. And as a contemporary building I think that it embodies a sense of possibility and a sense of American aspiration just like the other buildings I like, even if the architect is British. I'm not an architecture scholar; to me it's just about love.

*Enoc Perez's Utopia is at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. through February 10, 2013. All images courtesy the artist.*

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