



## **Gilles Mendel + Enoc Perez**

### **The love affair between art and fashion heats up.**

December 3, 2014

Alix Browne, writer

The French designer Gilles Mendel and the Puerto Rican painter Enoc Perez met a few years ago at a gala for New York's Dia Art Foundation. "There were some ladies at our table complaining about not having cable after Hurricane Sandy," Perez recalls. Mendel, whose Jewish grandmother endured the Nazi occupation of Paris, turned around and told them, in his gallant way, to knock it off. "At that moment, I thought, Okay, this is the person I want to talk to," Perez says. "We've been talking ever since."

#### **Blank Canvas**

The dialogue between the artist and the designer reached a high point early this year when they joined forces on the J. Mendel spring 2015 collection. "As friends, we have been able to discuss ideas," Perez says. "We like to imagine, conspire, and push each other creatively in conversation." The collaboration is a result of those talks. Adds Perez, "We share a lot of values as artists. We could not predict the result, but I suspect that we both knew what it would look like. We trust each other – how many people can you say that about?"

#### **Work in Progress**

For Mendel, the first challenge was to translate Perez's work into textiles. He didn't want to merely make prints based on Perez's paintings of modern architecture, but to also capture the quality and feeling of his layered application of paint and silver leaf. "The far greater challenge, however, was to

transform these vivid, opulent fabrics into beautiful, wearable clothes,” Mendel says. “No one wants to look like they’re wearing a painting!” He offset the texture and color by keeping the silhouettes sleek and architectural. “Architecture is another point of intersection between Enoc’s work and my own.”

### **Exhibition-Worthy**

When the collection finally came down the runway, each man had a renewed appreciation for the other’s work. “I learned that the creative process is a very similar experience in all mediums,” Perez says. “I now know that making a good dress is hard, and making a bad one must be just as hard.” The artist was particularly thrilled about his role as muse. “I’ve never been in the position of inspiring anything. I knew that I was looking at a masterpiece – Gilles’s masterpiece. It’s a beautiful thing.”