

# Paddle8

## 8 Firsts with Enoc Perez

The painter and sculptor on his first muse, his first post-exhibition meal, and the first works that made him want to be an artist.

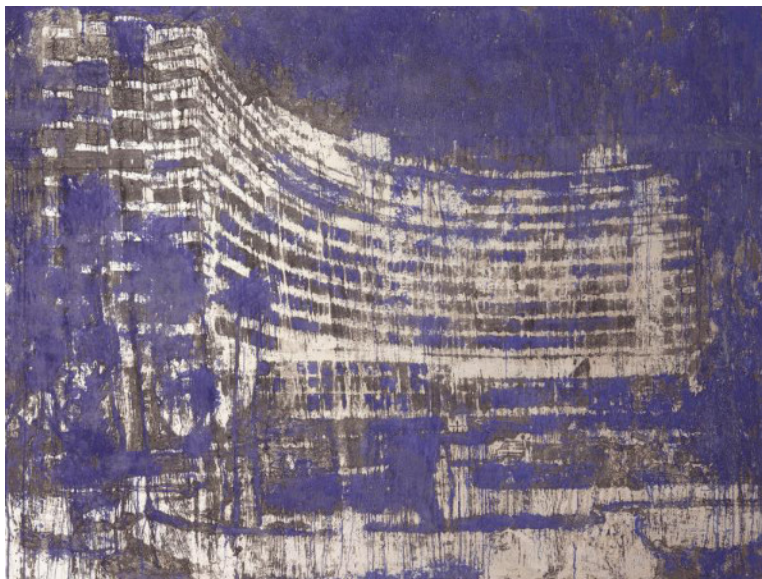
January 27, 2015  
Rebecca Bates, interviewer



Artist Enoc Perez. Photo: Billy Farrell/BFAnyc.com

McDonald's isn't normally the venue you might choose to celebrate a milestone (unless you're in college, it's 2am, and that milestone is how many beers your roommate just had). But when Enoc Perez was looking to commemorate one of his first shows, a lonely McDonald's meal was the best the then-budding artist could do. "It got better," he assures Paddle8. It's the "firsts" that can often make or break an artist's early career: the first breakthrough in a new medium, which piece you sell first (and to whom), the first established artist to notice you. Enoc Perez is perhaps best known for the recurring architectural references in his paintings, faded façades of the world's most notable buildings. Perez, whose work numbers among the major pieces in a sale benefiting Lycée Français de New York, tells Paddle8 about the impetus for his first architectural painting (hint: there was a

girl involved), the first day he arrived in New York from Puerto Rico, and his childhood experiences with art.



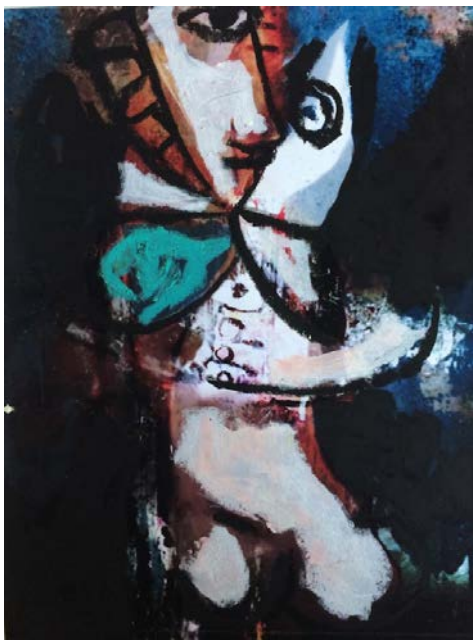
EnocPerez, "Fontainebleau, Miami," 2014. Photo via enocperez.com

*Paddle8: What was your first experience with art?*

Enoc Perez: My first experience with art was at home looking at an art encyclopedia that my father had in his library. We got it at a supermarket. I was always waiting for the next volume. My dad also took me to museums as much as he could starting early. The first big memory I have of being impressed to the point of going back home to draw in a hurry was at El Museo del Prado in Madrid. I must have been nine or ten, and I saw [Francisco] Goya's *Maja Desnuda*, [Diego] Velazquez's *Las Meninas*, and also a beautiful Ingres nude. The impression was so strong that I still remember the excitement and empowerment that I felt. The next thing from my youth that I remember was when I saw *Guernica* in New York before Tony [Shafrazi] got to it. We got a catalogue that I still have today.

*P8: You grew up in Puerto Rico, but went to school in New York. What did you do on your first day in the city?*

EP: I organized my room and went to a party that night. Scary and great.



Enoc Perez, "Untitled," 2014.

*P8: Who was the first artist you admired who took an interest in your work?*

EP: David Salle many years ago, and more recently, Richard Prince. Both formative artists to me; meeting them felt validating and inspiring. Being fortunate to call both of them friends has been and continues to be a lesson in the love, dedication, and work ethic of being a painter. A lesson in intellectual freedom. The real thing.

*P8: What was your first major work that you sold? What did you buy with the money from that first major sale?*

EP: The first major works that I sold were sold at the same time, Ponce Intercontinental Hotel and Puerto Rico Sheraton Hotel, one to Peter Brant and the other to Tony Shafrazi. To this day, I don't know who spotted the paintings first. Tony says it was him, and Peter says it was him. I love both of them, Peter and Tony. I bought stretchers and supplies to make more paintings with the money I made.

*P8: What did you do to celebrate the opening of your first big show, either a solo or group exhibition?*

EP: I remember one of the first shows—not sure if it was a group or solo, but I was by myself. I went to McDonald's and had a large coke and a quarter-pounder. Alone. It got better as the years went by.

*P8: What was the first artwork by another artist that you collected?*

EP: A Jean-Michel Basquiat drawing.



Enoc Perez, "Normandie," 2012.

\*P8: So much of your work engages with architectural history. What's the first building that you depicted in your Architecture series?

EP: The first building that I made was early in 2001, a painting of the Normandie Hotel. I made that painting because I had just met this beautiful woman who was 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. I knew the history of this hotel in Puerto Rico that was designed by a Puerto Rican architect as a love letter to his French wife. I thought it was a fitting subject since the beautiful girl that I was after is French. Carole is today my wife and mother of my children. I'm an architecture groupie, but the first architecture was about a woman.

*P8: Do you remember the first sculpture you created?*

EP: I remember the first sculpture I made that I consider to be successful. I wanted to make sculptures for years, and I realized that if I used the subject of my first architecture pieces, that may lead me somewhere. I had a swizzle stick from the Normandie Hotel so I based it on that. It's funny with sculpture, because what I come up with are a painter's sculpture, not a sculptor's sculpture. I think it may be the same for a sculptor making painting.