

JUPITER

Elbert Joseph Perez
The Enemy of My Enemy
1228 Normandy Drive, Miami Beach, FL 33141
October 16 – November 19, 2022
Tues – Sat, 11AM – 5 PM



Miami – October 7, 2022 — Jupiter Contemporary is pleased to present *The Enemy of My Enemy*, an exhibition of new and never-before-seen paintings and sculptures by New York-based painter Elbert Perez, which highlight the artist's visual lexicon that is both representational and otherworldly. Grounded in Buddhist philosophy of desire, Christian doctrines of heaven and hell, and twenty-first century coping mechanisms suggested by the artist's therapist, the exhibition presents an uncanny juxtaposition of subjects and motifs that rather wittily elucidate the harbingers of an anxious mind.

By adopting the common phrase, *The Enemy of My Enemy* for the exhibition's title, Perez teases out a central tension between the self and its self-deprecating counterpart—an acrimonious relationship in which anxiety lurks as a phantom, a quiet instigator, stoking the smoldering fire of one's tortured consciousness.

This tension crystalizes in *The Logical Conclusion* (2022), a monochromatic—save for two dabs of yellow—painting of a mid-air car crash. As a metaphor for catastrophic thinking, where various

choices run through one's mind and come to a not so gentle, but rather violent synthesis, this work illustrates a state of rationality so logical as to be detrimental, and the machinations of the mind as a series of useless car accidents driven by anxiety.

The Prisoner's Dilemma (2022) similarly exemplifies an inner conflict between two choices. Here, Perez depicts a lobster on a white ceramic plate obscured by a lightning field—what could be seen as the neurological firings of a hyperactive consciousness—with its claws clamped shut by a red rubber band on one side and a blue one on the other. While the lobster itself suggests decadence, the rubber bands allude to the red pill / blue pill choice given to individuals in *The Matrix* (1999), which necessitate that a choice be made between bad and worse: a virtual fantasy world and a rather miserable reality.

A sense of defeatism and inaccessibility consequently pervade the works on view, despite the preponderance of choices that are presented to the theoretical inhabitants of the spaces that Perez creates within his paintings. *144,000* (2022), for example, pictures a lamb—a symbol of purity—barred from Heaven; *Hike Your Own Hike* (2022) depicts a trailhead with paths leading towards “Mt Hell” and “Acheron,” amongst other equally doomed destinations; and *Did God Leave the Window Open Again?* (2022) doesn't illustrate the phrase to which it alludes: “when god closes a door, he opens a window,” but rather inverts the rather optimistic saying by picturing the antagonist from *Scream* (1996) at an open window.

In all instances—including the sculptures on view which similarly place a fragile or precious object in a vulnerable position that could result in its destruction—purity, opportunity, and serenity are riddled with anxiety, infecting and inflecting quotidian spaces (*Inappropriate Ejection*, 2022) and Edenic worlds alike (*Breaching Eden*, 2022). The variety of images, objects and symbols that coalesce in Perez's work to illustrate such physiological imaginaries are culled together by the artist as he endeavors to solve a conceptual puzzle by way of a visual lexicon.

The works that result, while formally realistic, possess a distinct surreality: a dreamlike afterimage that one might wake up to in a cold sweat. The exhibition thus serves as a meditation on anxiety, its various manifestations and metaphors, as experienced by Perez and, for that matter, all of us.

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About the Artist

Elbert Perez (b. 1991, Brooklyn, NY) has been featured in solo and group exhibitions at Rachel Uffner Gallery, New York, NY; Babayaga Gallery, Hudson, NY; Venus Over Manhattan, New York, NY; Kimberly Klark, Queens, NY; and Basilica Back Gallery, Hudson, NY, among others. Perez is based between Hudson and New York City.

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