

## Ernesto Renda Artist Statement, Works 2014 - 2019

Through my work, I explore the concept of solipsism and the semiotic short-circuit. In Pierce's system of signs, the index is the category of sign that straddles form and content: the proverbial "it is what it is." While there are many ways that we use language to represent the subject (to conjure their presence), the fingerprint is the only inexchangeable and exhaustive signifier. Unlike the name, the fingerprint designates and fixes the whole subject, completely and also meaninglessly, as Lee Edelman points out in his essay "Sinthomosexuality". The images I depict in my work are always already recognized through the sieve and sipher of the fingerprint.

I have recently begun to employ a divisionist approach to color, which is a style that was developed by neo-impressionist painters like Georges Seurat and Maximilien Luce. In divisionist color, every color is in each area of color, and passages of red or blue often bleed between forms in the same way that real light behaves. I believe that, more than a century later, divisionist color as a *painting* technique makes a direct address to the pixellated image, which is also made up of thousands of tiny dots of illuminated red, green and blue or the inkjet printer which applies color in dots of 4 basic colors. Linda Nochlin famously regarded Seurat's pointillist "Grand Jatte" painting as mechanistic and soulless. I like think of my fingerprint's intervention as the humanist response to the machine's imagination, which we see in a banal way in pixellation and compression programs and in a more sinister way in Google's Deep Dream images. In another sense, the imprint is what the image "feels" as it is tapped, swiped, pressed, etc.

The *Stolen Enjoyment* series is an ongoing project which employs false continuities to put figures or characters in what I call "anti-relation." There is the basic level of forms which appear as mythical scenes--a figure pinning another to a wall, a figure protecting another figure from a wolf, etc. This level acts as the framing device for the richer visual level where Jared French-esque icons from gay culture flail around and pose for the viewer. Central to this are the drag queens who comically fail to fit into their frames. Anti-relation is produced as each frame negates the others. With the exception of the horizon line, which creates the false continuity, the figures inhabit the same pictorial space while not actually existing in the same spatial space. The images act as boolean expressions (if A=yes, then B=1 or if A=no, then B=0).

In my 3-dimensional paintings, I played with a painting style that wants to have it both ways, to have a beautiful abstract expressionist painting and a crisp digitally-produced mixed media work. In earlier works, like those on trash bags, I was experimenting with what I would call a "dumb formalism", a type of vision that postures as objective while making extremely specific, culturally-informed decisions in image-making. In one way or another, my work ties itself back to a "guilty" look, in the same way that philosophers have identified the practice of "guilty reading" (when we process a text by looking to find what we already believe to be true.)