

EDGAR SERRANO: Rumors of My Demise

October 30, 2021 - January 8, 2022

115 Bowery, 2nd Floor, New York, NY



Intruder IV, 2020. 36 x 36 inches. Oil on canvas.

Brief Histories is proud to present *Edgar Serrano: Rumors of My Demise*, a solo exhibition of recent paintings, opening October 30, 2021 and on view until January 8, 2022.

Edgar Serrano's paintings merge aesthetic paradigms, countercultural visual languages, and popular iconography. Drawing unexpected parallels between the digital and the real, the alien and familiar, his paintings channel an ethos of the imaginary. In his work, borders dissolve and collide to create compositions that bring to form invisible states and identities. Multiplicity and coexistence are the central focus of Serrano's practice. Born in Chicago to immigrants from Mexico, the artist grew up among unseen but ever-present borders that

came to shape his artistic practice. From an early age, the images that surrounded him were those of cartoons on televisions and reproductions in magazines and album covers. The drawings in his sketchbooks were inspired by postcards he purchased from museum gift shops. Serrano is drawn to these borders dividing the erudite world of art history from that of Saturday morning cartoons.

A recurring visual metaphor in his paintings is the window, which invites us to consider our present moment and delineates an in-betweenness of both states and environments. In his ongoing series *Intruder*, a hand is depicted prying open window blinds to spy from. Using an enigmatic source image from a Tumblr page, the artist uses digital edits to compose opaque and color-saturated scenes, offering up the Internet as a window to an eternal present. The composition also serves as an allegory for screen culture and its limitless borders.

Serrano often turns to fictional characters to represent human nature, evoking the tropes and aesthetics of villains and monsters as a metaphor for marginalized identities. *I am an Enigma, Even to Myself* (2021) surveys items gathered on a hardwood surface. An arrangement of objects, perhaps the contents of someone's pockets, forms a set of relations that might at first glance seem to carry significance only to its owner. Reminiscent of a pop-art tableau, the composition depicts a bifold wallet open to a headshot of a Frankenstein figure, alluding to the compassionate creature with a complex identity. Misunderstood, his appearance causes fear, and that same fear makes him afraid, too. Scattered around are a ticket stub imprinted with the words "lo que se ve no se pregunta," a reference to queer Mexican pop icon Juan Gabriel and his famous phrase, "what is seen is not to be asked," among a tube of red lipstick, wide tooth comb, and a folded ace of spades.

Serrano explores these notions of identity-shaping and looks to reproductions as a medium through which culture, memory and the violence of categorization can be dealt with. In *Chamber of Reflection* (2020), Serrano takes as inspiration the stickers appealing to inner-city youth, often found in vending machines in corner stores, laundromats, or apartment building hallways. The images on these stickers often draw from stereotypes circulating within and outside of Latinx popular culture. Serrano carefully constructs portraits of worlds that unfold layers of painted oil, gouache, leather and wood on canvas to break apart and unhinge these conventions. Set within the silhouette and shadows of high-art icons, Serrano builds layers of contrasting formations.

Exploring the politics of visibility and presence, Serrano concerns himself with subjects that contain their own complexities and agency. He reflects that “the possibility of self-emancipation is forged by the necessity for new forms and structures that produce liminal spaces of belonging.” The paintings presented in this exhibition make up a selection of the artist’s practice throughout the pandemic. They show a painter’s process of creating language that draws on the imaginative process of identification, the weaponized circulation of images, the critical and creative act of appropriation, and the aesthetics of abstraction.

Accompanying the exhibition is a limited-edition visual anthology of Serrano’s research and inspiration. The book’s pages travel from obscure social media images by anonymous creators to popular cultural icons, anthropology and street life, memes and screensavers.

Edgar Serrano was born in Chicago, Illinois. He earned his BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and his MFA in painting and printmaking from Yale University School of Art. Serrano’s work has been exhibited in *To Painters To Paintings*, Meredith Rosen Gallery, New York (2020); *Signs Taken for Wonders*, Jonas Mekas Visual Arts Center, Vilnius, Lithuania (2019); *Waiting for the Garden of Eden*, White Box, New York (2019); *The Unseen*, Art & Zimt, Shanghai, China (2018); *The Enemy Within*, Area Projects, Caguas, Puerto Rico (2016); *Maspeth’s World of Wheels*, Knockdown Center, New York (2014); and *La Biental: Here Is Where We Jump*, El Museo del Barrio, New York (2013). Serrano is the recipient of the Ely Harwood Schless Memorial Fund Prize and the Doonesbury Excellence in Painting Scholarship.

The exhibition *Edgar Serrano: Rumors of My Demise* runs from Saturday, October 30, 2021 and is on view until January 8, 2022. This is the inaugural exhibition presented at Brief Histories gallery located at 115 Bowery in New York City. Gallery Hours: Tues-Sat 12pm–6pm.

The gallery is accessible by elevator and stairs. For everyone’s safety, we will keep the space at limited capacity and require masks, proof of Covid-19 vaccine and information for contact tracing. We welcome you to make an appointment with us by emailing the gallery at gallery@briefhistories.art

For more information, visit us at www.briefhistories.art