



## Bookshelf | The World of Gilles Mendel, According to Enoc Perez

CULTURE By KARI MOLVAR | NOVEMBER 16, 2013



Seating charts often lead to awkward dinner pairings. But when the artist Enoc Perez found himself sitting next to Gilles Mendel, the French-born creative director of J. Mendel, at a benefit for the Dia Foundation in New York last year, the two, in fact, hit it off quite well. “I could immediately relate to him because my wife is French, and she is a big fan of his work,” Perez said. “He’s also architectural in terms of his lines, and I do a lot of paintings of architecture, so we had ground in common.” First, a friendship developed — and soon after, a collaboration. “I thought maybe I could do a portrait of him, but it would be about looking at his work through my eyes,” Perez explained. Mendel was into it and allowed Perez into his workroom, where the artist shot pictures of everything he saw — scraps of fabric, dresses on forms, fur garments being constructed — and then created a series of collages for his new book, “Gilles Mendel by Enoc Perez.”



Many of the works depict fashion models in Mendel's looks juxtaposed with Perez's paintings of landmark buildings, from the Normandie Hotel in Perez's native Puerto Rico to the Lever House in New York. "There's a sculptural element to Gilles's work; the inside of a garment is like a skeleton, there's a structure to it, and I was inspired by that," Perez said. For other collages, Perez was inspired by the idea of dress-up, using his hand-painted nudes, on canvas, like dolls. "I make a lot of nudes as part of my work, so I thought, Why don't I dress my nudes in Mendel? I was able to overlay images of dresses that I photographed on top of the nudes, and add fabrics." Perez used the Brushes app on his iPad, then deconstructed the hard copies with "crayons, watercolors, oil sticks, Scotch tape, silver leaf, you name it," he said. "I looked for elements and outlines that would unite the images, in terms of what I saw as Gilles's world ... and then I gave everything a little of my own anarchy." The 69-page book will be released on Monday to coincide with the opening of Mendel's new flagship Madison Avenue boutique. *"Gilles Mendel by Enoc Perez," \$80; available beginning Nov. 18 at J. Mendel, 787 Madison Avenue.*