

Patrick McGrath

My work responds to consumer media culture and the historical use of Christian icons in colonial Latin America . As a painter, growing up in Puerto Rico , one of the oldest colonies in the world and at the same time one of the countries with most cars per square mile, I explore the relationship between traditional icons and our modern day consumer society.

The paintings project a world filled with unexpected anachronisms where spirituality is transgressed by triviality. Religious symbols loose their original meaning and are amorally converted into disposable marketplace products from the Media culture.

This recontextualization of the "retablo" altarpiece painting imported from the Old World in colonial times, allows me to question today's assumptions about the demise of colonialism. By utilizing the "retablo" format, I can emulate previous indoctrination strategies and question the imported set of values from the corporate global economy. The "retablos" act then as purveyors of the belief system intrinsic to a capitalist society, which, assuming control over the media, diffuses the pervasive corporate propaganda and manufactures mass consent with its offers of salvation. While these religious icons loose their aura of sanctity displaced by some product or celebrity, these in turn seem to gain a pseudo-religious position.

In some of my paintings the cult to TV celebrities and movie stars pretends to take over every possible space reaching a ubiquitously self-centered divinity status. Many of the "retablos" that I have created are paintings distributed in three united plates. These triptychs operate as history books meant to be read carefully 'between the lines'. The lines in this case are the constant commercial interruptions implicit in the message. The work intends to pronounce a commentary about how the neoliberal globalization, with its consumerist doctrines, transmitted by the media, have altered dramatically the way we understand religion, live and relate to each other and our environment. Through a redefinition of our cultural identity and establishing a dialogue with history, I intend to confront the intolerable historic amnesia that affects us all.

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