

Juan Carlos Rodriguez Rivera

I am an artist, designer and educator passionate about food, lover of ephemeral objects, gradients and anything deemed as kitsch. My practice focuses on dismantling colonial legacies, regarding time and memory, from the perspective of a queer Puerto Rican diasporic person. My projects explore two types of memories, memories from my childhood as a queer kid in the Caribbean and memories from the time spent in quarantine as a result of COVID-19. The research that informs my work is the study of decoloniality, time, design and Caribbean folktales. Inspired by Caribbean folklore like the stories included in reggaeton music and everyday day life experiences, my paintings evoke new realities that are reflections of the Caribbean non-linear surrealist temporalities. With this in mind, my projects serve as a platform to praise marginalized aesthetics in an attempt to broaden concepts and understandings of beauty.

As a diasporic Antillean, I find it important to celebrate the visuals deemed as kitsch or ugly by westernized parameters of beauty. Furthermore, I look into my grandmother's house aesthetics and my country's vernacular written language for inspiration. My grandmother never had access to institutional education and I always wonder what guides her decisions when it comes to the look and feel of her home. I don't intend to question her decisions but to learn from her, in a way, celebrating her and her home. On the other hand, growing up in Puerto Rico I have always been interested in the hand-painted letters from the signs in different local stores and restaurants. I understand these as vernacular written languages that are a response from the Caribbean, and Latin America, to our continuously evolving creativity and aesthetics.