

Carlos Rolon (a.k.a. Dzine) Makes Paintings that Look at the Patterns Produced by Public Security

“It is only through art,” wrote Marcel Proust, “that we can escape from ourselves and know how another person sees a universe which is not the same as our own.” It’s a useful observation when considering the case of artist Carlos Rolón, a.k.a. Dzine.

ARTSY EDITORIAL

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Rolón expresses a specific point of view, indeed: that of a male artist born in 1970 into Chicago’s Puerto Rican community. But his latest pieces don’t overwhelm the viewer with indicators of his cultural upbringing—his approach in “ONLY YOU: New Mirror Paintings,” now on view at Casterline|Goodman Gallery, is a subtle one. These “mirror paintings” are at turns decorative and ephemeral, light and dark, geometric and glittering. They appear abstract, at least until you hear the artist explain the concept behind this most recent body of work. The paintings “take their patterns from security fences on gates and windows found throughout Puerto Rican neighborhoods,” Rolón said in interview, “emphasizing the relationship between decoration and protection in the home.”



The new show might be seen as a continuation of his earlier work, and a meditation on the themes closest to his heart. Over the past few years, Rolón has released two books detailing projects that drew from the familial traditions and culture that surrounds him. *Nailed: The History of Nail Culture and Dzine* chronicles his celebrated traveling installation *Imperial Nails*, which explored nail art, beauty rituals, and what Rolón calls “faux luxury” as an homage to his mother. *Boxed: The Visual History and the Art of Boxing* was a love letter to his father and illustrated an installation that recreated his childhood basement. “Sports have always played an important role in Latino culture,” Rolón has said, “especially in Puerto Rico and Cuba.”

ONLY YOU: New Mirror Paintings

Casterline|Goodman Gallery presents ONLY YOU: New Mirror Paintings, an exhibition of works by Carlos Rolón/Dzine, on view from July 30 to September 15, 2015.

The mirror paintings are a natural extension of Rolón’s impressive body of work, for which he’s already earned a Joan Mitchell Award for Painting and Sculpture and an award from the National Endowment of the Arts. Like the projects dedicated to Rolón’s parents and their legacy, these pieces are investigatory, raising questions about the boundaries between working class and upper class, aesthetic beauty and functionality, femininity and masculinity, the public and private sphere. Once you’ve appreciated their delicate beauty, the mirror paintings challenge the viewer to contemplate the structure of security: about who is being protected from whom—and why.

—Bridget Gleeson