

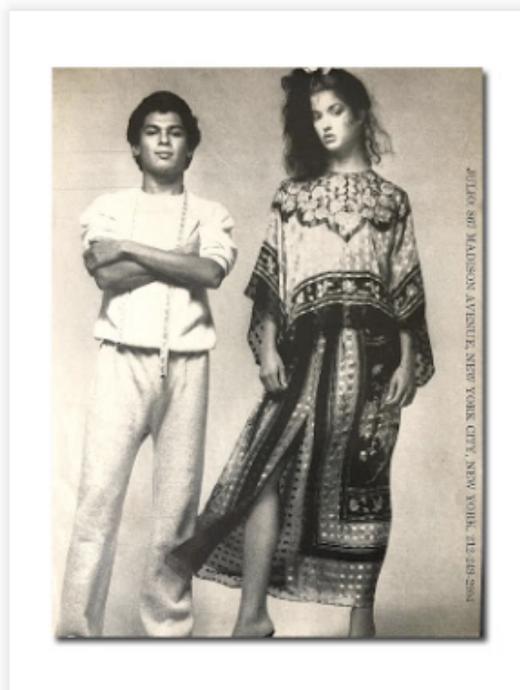
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MAY

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In the Market Report by Marilyn Kirschner

Paolo Troilo & Julio Espada: A Tale of Two Artists



Julio Espada with Janice Dickinson in a 1970's Richard Avedon ad

But while Troilo works almost entirely in black and white, another artist, Julio Espada, the 62 year old Puerto Rican born artist and designer pretty much sees the world in living color. Last Wednesday there was a reception to fete the opening of his first ever art installation, "Totem" which is on view through June 17th at the Hostler Burrows galleries (35 & 51 east 10th street, 212 343 0471). It's quite a departure for the well- respected team of Kim Hostler and Juliet Burrows, as they don't usually feature the work of a visual artist.

It was a packed house with the worlds of fashion, beauty, art, advertising, design, and Hollywood colliding. Fashion notables Paul Cavaco, Julie Britt, Nina and Laura Santisi, Jackie Rogers, Jill Stewart mixed alongside celebrity hairstylist Maury Hobson, the young and talented fashion photographer Justice Apple, legendary art director Sam Shahid, illustrator extraordinaire Ferdinand van Alphen, gallerist Lucien Terras, American film producer Rachael Horovitz.

The 60 computer generated drawings on view are bi products of a journal Julio kept which recorded his thoughts following twice a day meditations over the past 7 years. Each drawing is a separate thought and he has arranged the smaller drawings (11 X 17 inches) in the shape of a totem, thus the name, "Totem". As he said, "Their purpose is keeping an ongoing visual interpretation/record of the personal experiences and relationship to this practice. They function as reminders of ideals, intuitions, dreams, failures, myth, hopes, beauty, chaos, quiet, loss, eternity, light, and truth." They range in price from \$1750 for those that are 11 X 17 inches, to \$10,000 for one that measures 46X 94 inches. Several have already been sold.

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This talented artist is always sketching and drawing and while he is trained in all traditional mediums (oil, charcoal, etc.) his latest effort (modular digital art works) is very much in keeping with the digital age. It's also enabled him to literally "carry his studio in his pocket" because the only other thing he needs to create his works of art, is a first rate printer. He also noted that being on Instagram, <https://www.instagram.com/julioespadanyc/> has helped fuel much interest in the exhibition.



Talk about fascinating back stories. I first met Julio in New York in the late 1970's when he started his eponymous fashion line. I remember his small jewel of a store on the corner of Madison Avenue and 72nd street where he held many of his shows (it is where the Ralph Lauren flagship now stands). His advertising campaign was shot by Richard Avedon using four models: Iman, Apollonia, Janice Dickinson, and Patti Hansen, the latter also appeared on the cover of American Vogue in 1978 wearing one of Julio's designs (it was shot by Avedon). He was also featured on the cover of British Vogue and Japanese Vogue.

His designs were inspired by the iconic American fashion designer Claire McCardell who he refers to as his "guiding light as a designer". He loved that "she set boundaries for herself of what was modern" and designed clothes that were easy to pack, weightless, and perfect for travel (she always traveled with just one suitcase). Julio's goal was to create clothes that had the ease of a simple white t shirt: one could literally just pull them on and slide into them ("everything slid off the shoulder" he said). They were perfect for his customers who were looking for "liberation".

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Julio featured in Vogue 1978 spring collections

He was known for his exceptional fabrication, wonderful color sense, an ability to temper tailoring with softness. He mixed together elements not normally found together (leopard spots and plaid for instance), and proposed flat shoes with everything (talk about being ahead of his time). His soft jackets (sometimes cut higher in front), high waisted pleated trousers, pull-on jumpsuits, draped blouses, cotton jerseys that wrapped around the body, fluid matte jerseys and bias cut layered chiffons were sought after by style icons such as Jacqueline Onassis and Babe Paley. “I kept a fashion house going for 10 years without any sizes, buttons, or zippers” he marveled. “We had such success”.

While he was not a household name, he had a cult following. Among his champions in the 80’s: the late John Duka, a revered style reporter for the New York Times, and Bill Cunningham, who at that time, wrote a fashion column for Details (in addition to his work at the New York Times). In 1978, he won the Lord & Taylor Design Award (Richard Avedon shot the portrait that ran in W magazine).

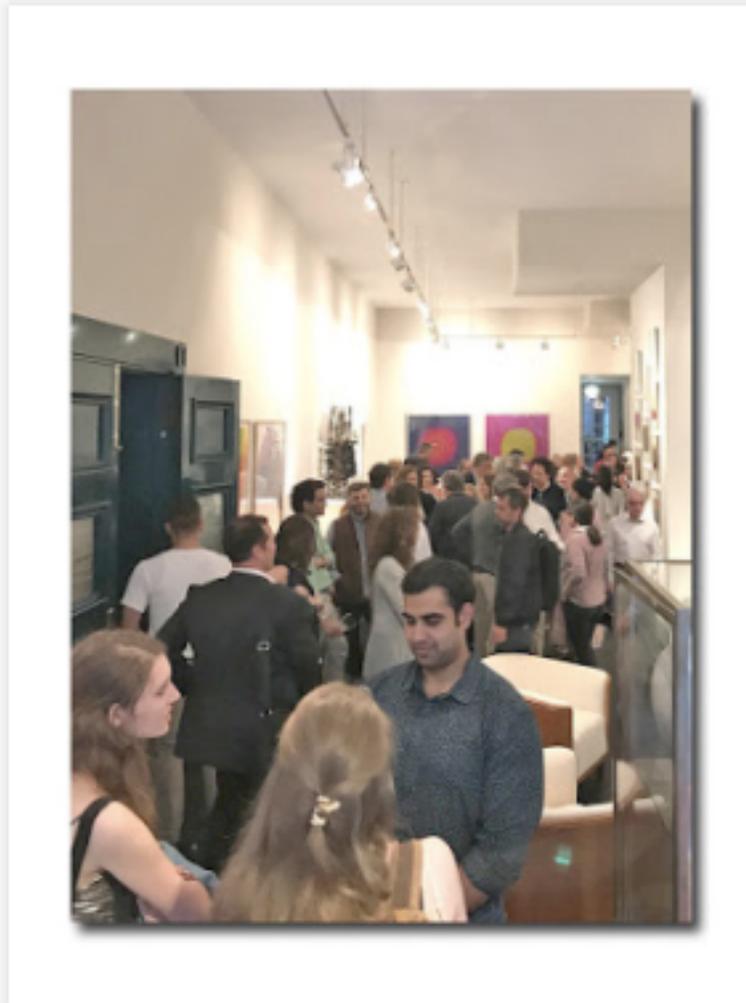
Julio subsequently worked for Perry Ellis and Esprit, and in October 2000, he was appointed artistic director of Emilio Pucci (a post he had until 2003). Catherine Vautrin, the CEO at the time, believed it to be a match made in heaven owing to the famed Florentine label’s relationship to fashion and graphic art, and Julio’s experience as an “eccentric fashion designer” along with his talent as a painter and sculptor. Other projects have included interior design and product development. Highlights of his career comprise 3 covers of Vogue and have led to a first ever fashion installation at MoMA PSI.

When I asked if he is still thinking about getting back into fashion, he quickly replied, “Once fashion is in your system you can never get it out”. He also pointed out that many of the world’s greatest artists had a love of fashion, including

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Matisse and Rembrandt who both collected clothes. He said he loves seeing what people are wearing on the streets (“that’s the reality; magazines are the fantasy”) and has put together a portfolio of what he considers to be great designs from accessories to outerwear (they have yet to be shown to anyone).

When I suggest the horrible business climate might be a deterrent, his response was, “There will always be a customer for beautiful things. Running a business is the hard part. I’ve never been a good business manager. I am more of a hand’s on designer. There has to be a partnership between the creative and the financial” and he cited Tom Ford’s amazing success stemming from his partnership with Domenico de Sole.



Julio Espada opening reception