

Federico Solmi

POSTMASTERS

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In his latest output, Federico Solmi scans hand-painted imagery and applies it to digital three-dimensional models of world leaders. He then imports each into a video-game platform and records their movements as if they were on a movie set. Titled “The Brotherhood” 2015, this series includes “video-paintings” of mostly infamous leaders with works that indict the viewer and society as much as the leaders themselves, as they flamboyantly posture like shallow celebrities. For example, *The Invader (Christopher Columbus – Italy)* (all works 2015), in which the titular figure struts, laughs, and salutes in front of an abstract landscape of shifting colors, resembles a Hollywood screen test

In group scenes such as *The Waltz*, Solmi emphasizes the pomp and circumstance that accompanies state functions, in this case manifesting in a ballroom dance where leaders from different eras, such as Ramses II and Mussolini, move in close embrace. The scratchy lines of Solmi’s distinctive, cartoonish, garishly hued renderings of the leaders and their surroundings thankfully don’t resemble the polished, rounded forms of mainstream digital animation, with its cloying, interchangeable characters.

The artist has painted ornamental details on the Plexiglas surface of the works, which covers each video monitor, further intensifying its theatricality. In *The Brotherhood Triptych*, Napoleon, Mussolini, and Marie Antoinette among others arrive at a red-carpet event, proceed down a grand staircase, and depart on a spaceship amid a cheering throng of spectators, evoking the idea that such leaders are mainly entertainers wielding unearned power. The audio tracks of individual works, including distorted national anthems and carousel music, combine to heighten the forced pageantry to comedic levels. Solmi has also painted the walls a deep reddish orange, so as to mimic the manufactured splendor of government-sponsored events—propaganda to maintain the status quo.



Federico Solmi, *The Invader*, 2015, acrylic, gold leaf, mixed media with LCD screen and video, 24 x 16".

— Chris Bors