

# BEN BROWN FINE ARTS



José Parlá, *Painting as Geomorphology*, 2019, acrylic, oil paint, collage, enamel and plaster on canvas, 182.9 x 274.3 cm. (72 1/8 x 108 in.)

## José Parlá TEXTURES OF MEMORY

curated by Dieter Buchhart

19 September – 4 November 2019

Private View: Wednesday, 18 September, 6-8pm

Ben Brown Fine Arts Hong Kong is extremely proud to present *Textures of Memory*, an ambitious exhibition of works by New York-based artist José Parlá. Curated by Dieter Buchhart, *Textures of Memory* is presented across two venues in conjunction with Hong Kong Contemporary Art (HOCA) Foundation and offers the Hong Kong audience a comprehensive insight into Parlá's output ranging from urban art to his abstract palimpsest paintings.

In the gallery, *Textures of Memory* features a series of new abstract paintings and sculptural pieces drawing on key and recurring themes in Parlá's practice including the urban space, human markings and calligraphy. Informed by his recurring visits to Hong Kong over the years, the title refers to the physical impressions left around the city by time and evokes the dense maze of paints and textures which allude to the cityscape. Among the thick coats of acrylic, spray paints and pigmented powders one can find pieces of the city itself worked into the very fabric of the canvases. Advertising posters, political slogans, building debris and recycled materials are employed to highlight economic, social and environmental issues as witnessed by the artist in the relentless cycle of construction and destruction within the urban landscape.

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In works such as *Bergen Street & 3rd Ave Boerum Hill* and *Verona Street Redhook* (both 2019), the reminiscences associated with particular locations are reflected in Parlá's choice of paints; private observations are conveyed in bold brushstrokes, while personal narratives are transcribed in calligraphies. Each layer signifies a memory sustained, each line and shape chronicling an event of note.

Concurrently, HOCA Foundation presented a historical context of the artist's *oeuvre* with 12 representative paintings and sculptures from 2004 to 2018 at The Annex, 2/F, Nan Fung Centre, Central, from 18 September to 11 October 2019.

Born in Miami to Cuban parents, Parlá spent his childhood in Puerto Rico before returning with his family to Miami in the 1980s where, as a teenager, he took part in the city's underground art scene. Moving to New York in his early twenties, Parlá continued to develop his signature abstract style, informed by his studies of historical landscape painting and Abstract Expressionism. The idiosyncratic calligraphic markings that became an identifying feature of his paintings evolved out of subway art and were influenced by the varied scripts, symbols, and glyphs he encountered during his travels to the Middle East, Asia, and Latin America. His artworks tell stories of immigrant roots, city wanderings and human encounters which reference personal histories while also leaving room for his viewers to find their own stories. Spanning the last five years of the artist's practice, the works presented across two locations weave together the stories of Parlá's recent past and explore the collective memories of the world through which he travels.

Ben Brown Fine Arts and HOCA Foundation published a monographic book to accompany the exhibitions, which delves further into the past 30 years of Parlá's *oeuvre* and the significant milestones throughout.

An artist talk presented in partnership with SCAD Hong Kong took place on 19 September at 6:30pm on the SCAD Campus, 292 Tai Po Rd, Sham Shui Po, featuring both the artist José Parlá and *Textures of Memory* curator Dieter Buchhart via webcam.

## **About the artist**

José Parlá (b. 1973, Miami, USA) is a critically acclaimed, multidisciplinary artist working in painting, large-scale murals, photography, video, and sculpture. Parlá studied at Miami Dade Community College, Miami, FL; New World School of the Arts, Miami, FL; and Savannah College of Art & Design (SCAD), Savannah, GA. Parlá's work has been exhibited at the High Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA; SCAD Museum of Art, Savannah College of Art & Design, Savannah, GA; Neuberger Museum of Art, Purchase, NY; National YoungArts Foundation, Miami, FL; Van Every/Smith Galleries, Davidson College, Davidson, NC; and the Havana Biennial, Havana, Cuba among others. Parlá's work is in several public collections including the British Museum, London; Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY; POLA Museum of Art, Hakone, Japan; and the National Museum of Fine Arts, Havana. Permanent public arts projects include a commission by ONE WORLD TRADE CENTER, New York, NY, for his monumental mural painting, *ONE: Union of the Senses*, the largest painting of its kind in New York City, in the tallest building in the Western Hemisphere; Barclays Center, New York, NY; Brooklyn Academy of Music, New York, NY; André Balazs' Chiltern Firehouse, London; North Carolina State University's Hunt Library by SNØHETTA; and Concord City Place, Toronto. Upcoming exhibitions include solo exhibitions *Isthmus*, at Istanbul'74 a project of the Istanbul Biennial and *It's Yours*, for The Bronx Museum of the Arts, New York, NY curated by Manon Slome (PhD)

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## About Dieter Buchhart

Dieter Buchhart (b. 1971, Vienna) is prominent curator, scholar, critic and art theorist with a PhD in art history and restoration science. Buchhart has published interviews and articles in prominent arts publications worldwide as well as catalogue essays and monographs on artists such as Edvard Munch, Egon Schiele, Keith Haring and Jean-Michel Basquiat. From 2007 to 2009, Buchhart served as director of the Kunsthalle Krems, Austria, and over the course of his career has curated major exhibitions in a number of renowned international museums and institutions including the Barbican Centre, London; Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris; Beyeler Foundation, Basel and the Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. Buchhart's research focus spans the art historical canon from art of the 1880s through to contemporary art.

## Ben Brown Fine Arts

Ben Brown Fine Arts opened its first location in the heart of Mayfair in 2004. The gallery has prominently positioned itself on the contemporary art scene with the representation of Ron Arad, Miquel Barceló, Tony Bevan, Yoan Capote, Rob & Nick Carter, Kitty Chou, Awol Erizku, Candida Höfer, Claude & Francois-Xavier Lalanne, Heinz Mack, Vik Muniz, Nabil Nahas, José Parlá, Ena Swansea, Djamel Tatah, Hank Willis Thomas, Gert & Uwe Tobias, Gavin Turk and Jan Worst. Also renowned for its strong expertise in 20th Century Italian art, the gallery has been exhibiting the work of Lucio Fontana and Alighiero Boetti, amongst others, since its inception.

In 2009 the gallery took the first step in an international expansion with the opening of an exhibition space in Hong Kong. Ben Brown Fine Arts Hong Kong space was the first international gallery to open in the historic Pedder Building, offering a programme of western and international art exhibitions tailored to the Asian market. Since its establishment, the Hong Kong gallery has hosted exhibitions of gallery artists as well as presented historically significant exhibitions of important modern artists, such as Pablo Picasso, Alighiero Boetti and Sean Scully. Ben Brown Fine Arts participates in major art fairs worldwide.

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