

SANTIAGO PARRA: *UPHEAVAL*

15 JULY – 15 AUGUST 2020



Santiago Parra, *Untitled*, 2020, acrylic on canvas, 117 x 170cm

‘When suddenly without wanting it, my arms lift the brush and a splash marks the beginning of the painting, in stupor I watch how the brush moves up and down, side to side and something gets written down on the canvas, I know it’s my unconscious writing but while it happens I am a witness to it all. When the energy has come out I know it’s time to lift the brush out of the canvas. The painting has now finished, I look up, exhausted, seeing it for the first time, I am surprised, amazed, at how this intriguing image has come out of myself’

- Santiago Parra

JD Malat Gallery is proud to present *Upheaval*, a solo exhibition by Colombian artist Santiago Parra, from 15th July to 15th August.

Following *Rising Action*, the ground breaking solo exhibition that took place in 2018, Santiago Parra is back with his most accomplished body of work to date. Parra has described this exhibition as being more refined and more attuned. He has changed the way paint is applied and chosen deeper blacks with subtle nuances resulting in a more defined brushstroke. The change of style can be attributed to the period of isolation enforced by Covid-19 which had a direct impact on the artist’s aesthetic.

The exhibition consists of fourteen mid to large format paintings created in a span of six months. These paintings were produced during the Covid-19 lockdown, a time of intense emotional tension for the artist. As a result, immense amounts of energy exude from the paintings. There’s a lot of

angularity and composition is highly dynamic while brushstrokes appear to vibrate out of the canvas. Indeed, the artist called the exhibition *Upheaval* after seeing the paintings together. He liked how the word upheaval refers both to a massive telluric movement and also denotes a violent disruption of his inner feelings.

The subject of these works is simple: Parra yearns to express himself in the freest possible way. In this quest, he has found automatism which was a technique developed by Surrealists, its goal is to express one's inner world in the purest most accurate way without the control or judgement of social pressures exerted by consciousness. One prerequisite to this kind of work is having the real urge to do it. Parra explains that his 'objective is to let the practice develop on its own, the less conscious intervention the better'. Covid-19 really helped the artist reach his ideal aesthetic by creating new emotions inside of him that led to these tormented yet energetic canvases.

Every element of the painting: the brush, the paint and the canvas are chosen following the principle of automatism, respecting the inner voice that decides without doubting it, the aim is to empower the natural creative instinct. With everything ready Parra stands in front of the canvas and a multitude of feelings start to affect him, anguish, pleasure, fear, confidence... Here the objective is to decant one's mind and calm down, breathing is important in the way that each breath has its own tune and one has to find the one that attunes with the canvas. As Parra explains 'The concentration is beyond intense, every nerve on my body crimps, my muscles vibrate with tension and I begin to roar in an attempt to conquer the canvas, this can last for hours...'

Since *Rising Action*, Parra had a daughter which he said has changed him in a way that he had not expected, he has become more focused, clearer minded and this has undoubtedly translated into his work. In addition, Covid-19 has given Parra the opportunity to rethink his place in life, to question his values and aspirations. The upheaval that many worldwide experienced during the pandemic seems ever so accurately portrayed in his monochrome paintings. Now more than ever, Parra's greatest desire is to make truthful art. If this is indeed the case then his desire is fulfilled, as *Upheaval* is the greatest portrait of truth one could wish for.

Santiago Parra is in the collections of the Perez Art Museum Miami (PAMM), Miami, USA, Jorge Pérez Collection, USA, Jean et Colette Cherqui Collection, France, Tanya C. Brillembourg Collection, USA, Solita Mishaan Collection, Spain, Cesar Gaviria Collection, Colombia, Kehinde Wiley Collection, USA, and Collection Lazaro, Spain.

For interviews, images and comment, please contact: press@jdmalat.com

Exhibition Opening Hours: Monday – Saturday, 10am – 6pm

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