

Artist in Focus

Santiago Parra Instagram Story Q&A

'What are you doing to stay busy?'

Santiago Parra: I've been writing down what I think about my process, and I am putting together videos with these thoughts.

'What type of canvas do you use for your paintings?'

Parra: I use raw cotton canvas and raw linen. I like the contrast between the natural fabric and the acrylic paint.

'Who are some other artists you are moved by right now?'

Parra: @inagerken @rubens_rodrigo @jenny_brosinski @lucia_mosca David Ostrowsky , Joe Bradley @pedrovmatos @davidvonbahr @mateocohenmonroy @masayoshinojo @deangelislorenzo @erdoganzumrutuglu @kehindewiley @johnnyabrahams @aboninouy @poweiner @allan_villavicencio_ @samybenmajorpintor @mioyamato @pablotokek @hachonghyun @paulkremer and all the modern painters like Jackson Pollock, franz Kline, Rauschenberg, and the minimalists, and the pop artists , and Michelangelo! All of them! I love art.

'How has your art practice been affected by self-isolation?'

Parra: I love it, I wish it would never end, the silence, the clean air, I hear myself think, I have time for everything. But of course, I hope this all ends as quickly as possible, this situation is affecting us very badly.

'Do you collect art yourself? If so, what work of art in your home means the most to you?'

Parra: Nice question, I do collect art myself, I have a couple of pieces I love very much, some paintings by some artists friends, some gifts, some I bought.

'As your works are very big, do you custom make your materials? Brushes etc?'

Parra: Yes, I had to custom made all the materials I work with, the brushes I made them with horses tails, the stretchers are custom made, I use buckets for the paint and I have to use screws to fix the canvases to the floor because of the immense force applied to them while painting, otherwise they would be thrown away by the force of the brush.

'How do you determine the size of your paintings?'

Parra: Good question, when I am designing a new format, I lay down on top of the canvas some stretcher bars to mimic a stretcher to have the sense of what the size would look like, then I start to move them around till I find the one I feel is the more balanced. This feeling of balance is found all over through my process, that feel is also called upon when I am deciding the size of the brush, or the thickness of the paint, a famous architect once told me when I asked

the same question about how did he know if a roof would hold on, he told me it is something you learn through practice, you know when you are sitting down if a chair will resist you.

'Do you have a signed print of your paintings?'

Parra: Yes, I have one, we produced one with @jdmalatgallery

'In what ways has your upbringing influenced your work?'

Parra: The travels with my parents marked me, we used to travel to natural parks, forests and rivers, I've always felt nature has shaped me.

'How did you meet JD Malat?'

Parra: He contacted me and we started a conversation, one that continues to this day. The relationship between an artist and its dealer becomes a strong friendship with the passing of time, we share the love for art and we embark in common projects.

'Do you meditate before you paint? How do you paint from the unconscious?'

Parra: Yes I meditate before I paint, I let all my thoughts resolve themselves till my mind is able to focus exclusively on the canvas, this can take hours, but time flies when I am in that state, I feel muscle exhaustion after some time as I am standing in front of the canvas with muscles flexed prepared to jump on top of the canvas. During this time tension builds up and ultimately it explodes, it is that energy that moves the brush. I think it's the unconscious that guides the brush in that instance as it all happens very quickly and because all of the tension I enter in a state of trance.

'What does "abstraction" mean for you?'

Parra: I am from the Van Doesburg school where nothing is abstract, a line is a line and a dot is a dot, there's nothing abstract there. I see my paintings as writings, where lines are enunciative. The conjugation of all the lines in a painting form the content of the painting and for me it is delivered in the form of a feeling.

'What is the biggest obstacle that could have kept you from becoming an artist but didn't?'

Parra: Giving in, there's so much pressure coming in from everywhere, it is hard to keep going straight, I think what has pushed me through all of this is that I've been lucky to have had people believing in me that gave me the strength I needed to push through, I am grateful.

'What is your advice to starting artists? Was art school helpful?'

Parra: Listen to yourself, do what you want, be stubborn. Art is whatever you want it to be. Work like your life depends on it. Enjoy. I remember what Jackson Pollock used to say when he talked about his teacher Thomas Hart Benton, he said that he was "something against which to react", so even if you don't learn anything from art school at least you are learning that there's nothing to learn in art school. At the end everything you experience enriches you.

'Would you ever consider using another medium, like a different paint or even sculpture?'

Parra: Yes, I have, I have used clay to work with bronze and it was something I enjoyed very much, I plan to work again with clay in the future.