

Spark of Fire

Santiago Parra

7th March – 6th April 2024



Santiago Parra in his studio, Bogotá, Colombia

“So we were clay and nothing else until the earth felt the fervour, the heat that turned the mud into life.” -- Santiago Parra

JD Malat Gallery is delighted to present *Spark of Fire*, the fifth solo exhibition of the internationally recognised contemporary artist Santiago Parra. On view from 7th March to 6th April, *Spark of Fire* showcases the Colombian artist’s progressing practice, showcasing a rich variety of monochromatic paintings in tandem with his experimentation with a new form of expression.

As an artist, Parra aims to “render intuition and feeling and emotion at the core of my practice to show how they are at the basis of creation.” Informed only by the subconscious feelings and emotions with no interference of rationality, Parra makes

art from instinct and impulse, moving the brushstrokes to bring life to the canvases, speaking to every viewer.

Inert objects, like cans of black paint, white canvases, and paint brushes become alive as they come together in a painting through the hands of an artist. The title *Spark of Fire* connects Parra's artistic practice with various tales in mythologies unravelling the beautiful analogy of how inert materials are brought to life through the impetus of energy. Like Prometheus who sculpted humans out of clay and then stole the fire from the gods to give humans the spark of fire that brought them to life, Parra manages to give dead materials that spark of life through his transcending process of autonomous painting. In *Spark of Fire*, the history of the beginning becomes narrated through each one of the paintings where viewers can navigate through nature, oceans, and moving forms that resemble the struggle and finesse of that beginning.

Parra brings 14 new artworks to the exhibition, all recently created between 2023 and 2024, in which he displays diverse strands of his artistic oeuvre. In his unprecedented recent series inspired by Jackson Pollock, Parra unleashes all the creative energy through the splattering and dripping of paint on large-scale canvases. At times resembling rushing waterfalls, and sometimes filled with disordered mark-making through intense, calligraphic brushstrokes, this series of works showcases Parra's most bold and unconstrained expressions.

In addition, the Colombian artist continues his exploration of organic forms in automatic paintings. His swirl-like series exudes a natural simplicity achieved through purely free-moving brushwork that completes the painting in one instance. Engaging also with more jagged and linear compositions, the artist's paintings possess a rustic and unsettling power enunciating layers of intricate feelings.

The creation of Parra's new series of paintings began with his visit to the Peggy Guggenheim Collection in Venice, Italy. Instantly in awe of Jackson Pollock's 1946 painting *Eyes in the Heat*, Parra found an irresistible urge to engage with Pollock's work and make a different kind of art. Describing the sensation as "being called to continue a great poem, a cathedral that has to be made for several generations", Parra felt the need to continue the legacy, engaging in "a long song that has to be sung for generations". Upon returning to his studio, he immersed himself in the emotions, allowing them to guide his creative process. He then waited for an authentic feeling to appear, understanding the form that the painting would take, be it splashes of paint, swirling curves, or intricate structures.

In the following days, Parra approached his canvas with a clear mind, embracing meditation to quiet his thoughts. Surrendering to the flow of his unconscious, he unleashed his brushstrokes with a sense of freedom, transcending rationality and

sentience. In a trance-like state, he developed a hyper-awareness, informing his movement of the paintbrush. Beneath the complete void, Parra weaves the deeper narratives of human existence into the diverse forms of expression he has developed, as the hyper-aware painter is inherently informed by personal and collective experiences.

Parra's body of work is driven purely by instinct, resulting in creations that are spontaneous and organic. Described as "almost animalistic", just like Pollock's action paintings, the Colombian artist defies traditional paradigms in Western art history and broader cultural contexts. "Far from the traditional easel, they are done in what could be described as a ritual, there is no representation nor composition," states Parra. The artworks constitute the medium in which the artist expresses himself, with the expression itself speaking to the nature of human beings that can be appreciated by everyone.

Parra's paintings encompass a profound subjectivity that captivates all who behold them. Created in the same period yet featuring vastly different compositions and approaches, Parra's new body of work encompasses embodied expressions of the artist's innermost feelings and swings of emotions. The subjectivity of his work invites viewers to be fully immersed in their own feelings, exploring their inner landscapes and finding their true selves. As one becomes disconnected from the cerebral and rational for a brief moment, we reconnect with our organic form, reconciling with our physical reality.

Operating on the ground floor of the gallery space, *Spark of Fire* showcases Parra's evolving artistic pursuit, partaking in a conversation with his past and present selves, as well as his artistic influences. The monochromatic paintings contain a rich texture and varied tones through which the dark black acrylic paint consumes all things rational and presents to us the vastness of life unvarnished.

In this brief moment in the space of JD Malat Gallery, we are swallowed in the artist's liberating oeuvre, finding our natural selves once again - fragile yet robust, bursting with the energy that gave us the spark of life.

For more information, images and comments, please contact: press@jdmalat.com

Opening hours: 10am - 6pm Monday - Friday, 12pm - 6pm Saturday

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