

José Parlá's First Solo Show at Yuka Tsuruno



Courtesy the artist and Yuka Tsuruno

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TOKYO — Hot on the heels of his solo show at London's Haunch of Venison in February, Brooklyn-based artist **José Parlá** has brought a series of new works to Tokyo to inaugurate Yuka Tsuruno's new space in the TOLOT/heuristic complex in Shinonome. Among these works is a large painting measuring 15 meters across that was freshly completed in Tokyo just days before the exhibition opened on March 21.

Compared to the ineffability and almost willfully obscurantist nature of the writing in the work of Cy Twombly, for instance, the writing and language that appears in Parlá's work is layered onto the pictorial surface in a way that suggests both disclosure and concealment at the same time. The authorial touch of his hand is self-evident, and yet the scrawled, logographic patterns themselves are all but illegible.

In contrast, the painted background underneath this writing is a riotous, roughly hewn morass of hatchings and frantic linework that viewers tend to "parse" as an image. As the art critic **Michael Betancourt** has pointed out, "to see 'language' is different than seeing 'picture', yet in encountering Parlá's works, these twin types of vision are invoked at once: we are forced to see *language as image* and *image as language*."

In Parlá's work, language is not an autonomous system of notation, but a writhing, continuously evolving textural mass whose meaning and impact is inflected by the visual conversation unfolding around it. The flowing arcs and sloping contours that snake up and leftwards — a legacy of his early years, during which he wrote graffiti under the pseudonym "Ease" — also lends Parlá's writing a certain resemblance to the graffiti styles found in the New York subway art of the 1980s, Chinese ink drawings, and Arabic calligraphy.

José Parlá's "Prose" runs March 21 through May 18 at Yuka Tsuruno Gallery.