

Paul Ramírez Jonas

February 23 – April 2, 2011



The Commons, 2011, detail, cork and push pins, 126h x 124w x 64d"

Alexander Gray Associates is pleased to present an exhibition of recent works by New York-based artist Paul Ramírez Jonas. In his second exhibition with the gallery, Ramírez Jonas continues his ongoing inquiries of social contingency, collective memory, and common space.

In recent years, Ramírez Jonas has been particularly involved with new forms of public art. For his 2010 Creative Time commission, *Key to the City*, the artist provided directions and keys for excursions throughout New York City; audiences enthusiastically navigated popular as well as lesser-known sites throughout the five boroughs, developing their own psychogeographic maps. *Key to the City* followed upon the heels of publicly situated sculptural installation from his *Publicar* series, for the 2009 *Mercosul Biennial* in Brazil. In these sculptures, public monuments made from boulders and brass plaques were re-imagined for public use; brass plaques were replaced with cork and push pins, allowing viewers to define what or whom to commemorate.

In the exhibition at Alexander Gray Associates, Ramírez Jonas presents *The Commons* (2011), a life-sized, 10 1/2-ft. tall military horse, built of cork. Modeled after the iconic equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius at the Campidoglio in Rome, Ramírez Jonas' shifts the reference and form dramatically, transforming solid bronze to porous cork; historical specificity to open-ended narrative. The artist describes, "This is a monument, unusual in that it has no rider, unusual in that it implies the viewer. I use cork, because it is a material that can publish an endless number of voices, our voices. It opposes the singular voice of the State, or the singular identity of the ruler or hero normally portrayed on a horse, or the singular, immutable inscription on the public space that bronze and stone allow."

Ramírez Jonas' recent series of *Admit One* drawings further develops the idea of the constitutive body. On a graphite drawing that resembles an architectural blueprint of The Great Hall of The Cooper Union, small, tightly ordered stamps that read "Admit One" stand in for seated bodies. This proposal for an alternative site of political exchange, admits that while inclusion is sanctioned, the empty stage invites possibilities for a wide variety of public address and that the audience always outnumbers the speaker on stage.

Paul Ramírez Jonas (b. 1965, California, raised in Honduras), lives and works in New York. In 2009, he participated in the *53rd Venice Biennial* (Pabellon de America Latina); the *7th Mercosul Biennial*, Porto Alegre, Brazil; and *The Quick and the Dead*, curated by Peter Eleey at the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN. Recent solo museum exhibitions include the Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, Ridgefield, CT (2008); The Blanton Museum of Art, University of Texas, Austin (2007); and a mid-career survey at IKON Gallery, Birmingham, United Kingdom (2004). Public art commissions include Hudson River Park, New York, NY; and Taylor Square, Cambridge, MA (2005). *The Commons* will be included in his upcoming one-person exhibition at Pinacoteca Do Estado, Sao Paulo, Brazil in June 2011.

Ramírez Jonas' work was featured in numerous group exhibitions since the early 1990s, including the *São Paulo Biennial* (2008); *Ensemble*, Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia (2007); *Shanghai Biennial* (2006); inSite_05 (2005); *In the Public Realm*, Public Art Fund, New York (2001); *Media City Seoul, Seoul Biennial*, Korea (2000); *Projects*, Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin (1997); *Inclusion: Exclusion*, Künstlerhaus, Graz (1996); *Johannesburg Biennale* (1995); *Fever*, Exit Art, Wexner Center (1993); and *Fluxus Attitudes*, New Museum (1992). Ramírez Jonas is represented in the collections of the Blanton Museum of Art, Austin, TX; The Bronx Museum of Art, Bronx, NY; Colección Patricia Phelps de Cisneros, Caracas and New York; Malmö Konstmuseum, Malmö, Sweden; and the New Museum, New York, NY. He has received numerous grants and awards, including fellowships from the Joan Mitchell Foundation, Art Matters, and the Howard Foundation. He holds a B.A. from Brown University and M.F.A. from the Rhode Island School of Design. He is a Professor of Art at Hunter College, New York, NY.