

Paul Ramírez Jonas

ATLAS, PLURAL, MONUMENTAL



Suggested Resources

These resources are recommended by Paul Ramírez Jonas for further exploration of the themes presented in his exhibition *Atlas, Plural, Monumental*.

- Reading
- “Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics” by Claire Bishop in *October*, Issue 110, 2004
 - *The Emancipated Spectator* by Jacques Rancière, 2009
 - “Mierle Laderman Ukeles: On Maintenance and Sanitation Art” by Tom Finkelpearl in *Dialogues in Public Art*, 2000
 - *Offending the Audience* by Peter Handke, 1966
 - *One Place after Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* by Miwon Kwon, 2002
 - “The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article” by Jürgen Habermas, 1964
 - *The Temporary Autonomous Zone* by Hakim Bey, 1985
 - “A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey” by Robert Smithson in *Artforum*, 1967

Viewing *Perfumed Nightmare* by Kidlat Tahimik, 1977

Listening *Siembra* by Rubén Blades and Willie Colón, 1978

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Cover (left) *The Commons*, 2011. Cork, pushpins, steel, wood, and hardware. Work and image courtesy the artist and Galeria Nara Roesler.

Inside Cover (right) *His Truth Is Marching On*, 1993. Wood, glass bottles, corks, water, mallet, rope, and hardware. Image courtesy the artist and Galeria Nara Roesler. Work courtesy The Dikeou Collection, Denver, CO.

Atlas, Plural, Monumental is generously supported by Mary and Marcel Barone, Business Solutions International, and Cullen K. Geiselman. The exhibition is also made possible in part by a grant from the Union Pacific Foundation.



This exhibition is made possible by the patrons, benefactors, and donors to the Museum's Friends of Steel Exhibitions:
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The catalogue accompanying the exhibition is made possible by a grant from The Brown Foundation, Inc. of Houston.

Funding for the Museum's operations is generously supported by Melissa Kepke Grobmyer, Louise Jamail, Dillon A. Kyle, Catherine and George Masterson, Elisabeth McCabe, Faye Sarofim, and Robin and Andrew

C. Schirrmeister III. The Museum receives partial operating support from The Brown Foundation, Inc. of Houston, the Houston Endowment, the City of Houston through the Houston Museum District Association, the Texas Commission on the Arts, The Wortham Foundation, Inc., and Art Market Productions.

CAMH also thanks its artist benefactors for their support, including Chris Beckman, Michael Bise, Bruce High Quality Foundation, Mel Chin, Jules de Balincourt, James Drake, Keltie Ferris, Mark Flood, Barnaby Furnas, Theaster Gates, Jeffrey Gibson, Trenton Doyle Hancock, Camille Henrot,

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Contemporary Arts Museum Houston

April 29–August 6, 2017



“There are three vital protagonists within any artistic equation: the creator of the work, the artwork itself, and its viewer. Relatively speaking, Ramírez Jonas’s early artworks asked audience members to consider actions embedded in objects he made. His more recent work though has effected a decisive shift of focus to the other leg of this triangle: to considerations of how audiences interact with artworks.”

—Dean Daderko, Curator

Atlas, Plural, Monumental is Paul Ramírez Jonas's first survey exhibition in the Americas and features work spanning a quarter of a century, including sculptures, photographs, videos, drawings, and his signature participatory artworks. Ramírez Jonas is redefining public art through an innovative practice that considers how artworks can galvanize the formation of new communities.



Left Documentation from *Key to the City*, 2010. Work and image courtesy the artist and Galeria Nara Roesler. Commissioned by Creative Time in cooperation with the City of New York.
Right Documentation from *Dictar y Recordar*, 2010. Courtesy the artist and Galeria Nara Roesler.

In his early works, Ramírez Jonas utilizes unlikely sources, such as scientific experiments, and treats them as “scores” that he creatively reinterprets. When his faithful reproductions of kites—each designed by early inventors hoping to create flying machines—took to the air, they carried alarm clocks Ramírez Jonas engineered to press the shutters of single-use disposable cameras. The resulting photographs—each paired with its kite—capture images of the artist on the ground. While these kites can be appreciated for their sculptural forms, the photographs exhibited alongside them prove their aerial capability. Taken together, these works are historical re-enactments and documents of Ramírez Jonas's actions. In other instances,

Ramírez Jonas offers participants the opportunity to complete a “score.” In *His Truth is Marching On* (1993), the public is invited to use a mallet to tap a hanging chandelier of water-filled wine bottles, whose successive musical notes produce a rendition of the anthem *The Battle Hymn of the Republic*.

In 2004, Ramírez Jonas shifted his focus toward more decidedly public forms, including keys to the city, monuments, and public oaths. If monuments commonly memorialize singular individuals and events with immutable inscriptions set in bronze and stone, Ramírez Jonas's works provide memorable and mutable alternatives. *The Commons* (2011) is a riderless equestrian statue crafted entirely from cork, and the public is invited to attach messages to its base with pushpins. In creating a sculpture that accommodates a diversity of messages rather than the singular voice of the state, Ramírez Jonas employs his engaging work to democratize the monument. Another participatory work, *Public Trust* (2016–ongoing), invites audience members to make and affirm a promise. Their words are recorded in a drawing shared with the speaker and with the visiting public via marquee signage in the gallery. This work encourages participants to consider the impact of their word. A group of local performers activate *Public Trust* each Saturday from 1–5PM through the run of the exhibition.

As visitors explore *Atlas, Plural, Monumental*, they will be asked to cross standard museum boundaries, to break the silence of the gallery by stepping up to a microphone to declare an oath, to define the message of a monument, to consider the boundaries between public and private, and more. Ramírez Jonas's work invigorates our cultural commons by inviting the community to reflect and engage with public art in inventive and surprising ways.

Public Trust, 2016. Produced by Now + There, Boston, August 27–September 17, 2016.
© Paul Ramírez Jonas. Photo: Ryan C. McMahon.



Public Programs

These events are free, open to the public, and take place at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston. Seating is limited. Please check CAMH.ORG for the most current information.

Opening Reception
ATLAS, PLURAL,
MONUMENTAL
Friday, April 28
6:30–9PM

Celebrate the opening of Paul Ramírez Jonas's first survey exhibition in the Americas, *Atlas, Plural, Monumental*, which includes sculptures, photographs, videos, drawings, and his signature participatory works made between 1991 and the present. Beverages will be available for purchase at our cash bar.

In Conversation:
Artist Paul Ramírez
Jonas and Curator
Dean Daderko
Saturday, April 29
11AM–12PM

Learn more about the exhibition during a discussion with the artist and organizing curator.

PUBLIC TRUST
Every Saturday
April 29–August 5
1–5PM

Visitors are invited to examine the value of their word by declaring a promise as they engage with Paul Ramírez Jonas's interactive artwork *Public Trust*. Local performers record these words in a drawing that is shared with the visitor and published on a marquee board alongside similar pronouncements made by politicians, scientists, economists, and weather forecasters taken from the week's headline news.

Performance: Musiqa
Thursday, May 4
6:30–7:30PM

In conjunction with the exhibition *Atlas, Plural, Monumental*, Musiqa presents a special concert focusing on audience participation.

Open Studio
Saturday, May 6
2–4PM

Create your own kite inspired by Paul Ramírez Jonas's works.

Participatory Gallery
Tour: Deborah Fisher
Thursday, May 25,
6:30–7:30PM

Join Deborah Fisher, an artist, regular collaborator with Paul Ramírez Jonas, and the founding Executive Director of A Blade of Grass, to explore how we “see experiences” in a dynamic discussion of socially engaged art.

Art at Noon
Friday, June 9
12–1PM

Join Ryan Dennis, Public Art Director at Project Row Houses, for a discussion on contemporary public art. Light lunch provided.

Museum
Experience Day
Saturday, July 29,
11AM–3PM

Come participate in hands-on activities inspired by current exhibitions.