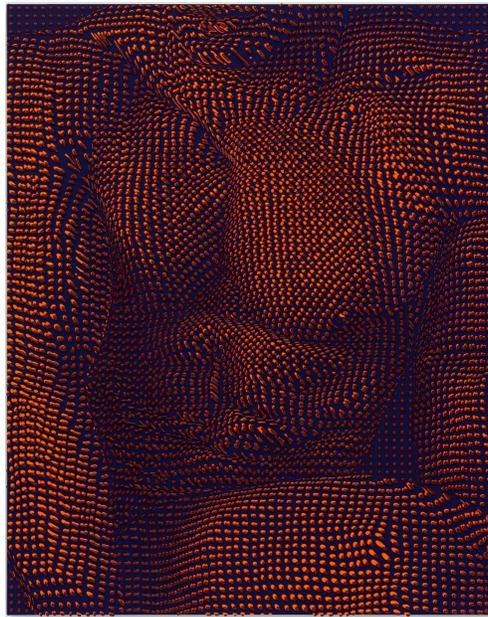


FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 9, 2023

**The Montclair State University Galleries Announces
*Case Studies 3: Joseph Parra – the edge of flesh and blood***

**Parra’s work reflects on desire and digital images through a topography of textures
that beg to be touched yet are out of reach**

On View September 14 – December 16, 2023



Joseph Parra, *Muscled and Tanned*, 2023
Acrylic on Canvas. Courtesy of the Artist and ASHES/ASHES

Joseph Parra’s paintings in *the edge of flesh and blood* explore the larger consequences of searching for validation, inspiration, and intimacy through digital images asking “How does desire change when life is mediated through screens?”

Using acrylic paint and a custom wooden rig, Parra squeezes hundreds of globs of paint by hand in a quasi-grid-like fashion on a single canvas. Together, the individual drops of paint create a larger image, similar to how individual pixels function as the building blocks of screen-based images. Parra relies on the physical presence and dimensionality of the paint to bring awareness to the fleeting nature of digital images that project ideals of sex, power, and fantasy. He isolates torsos, arms, and chests with a particular focus on the male body to draw attention to notions of masculinity and how these images circulate online. The hollow nature of the images he references is also explored through ideas of anonymity. For example, there are no distinct, identifiable features such as a face present in the paintings - these bodies belong to everyone and no one. Similarly, Parra depicts these hyper-aestheticized bodies in nondescript

environments that appear more like loading screens or low-fi renderings than actual places further suggesting an idea of an impossible setting or unattainable reality.

The resulting images are as seductive as they are frustrating and forlorn. Tucked behind glass display cases, Parra's paintings pull at our desire by showing muscular bodies flexing, prone, strong, and vulnerable all while the mounds of paint result in a topography of textures that beg to be touched yet are out of reach. This very act of denial is a core concern for Parra as he confronts the difficulties of living up to the expectations embedded within depictions of power, sex, and perfection. Through these paintings, Parra simultaneously problematizes, eroticizes, and examines the hyper-idealized presentations of the body. Ultimately, Parra's paintings draw into focus the gaze we find ourselves trapped in, staring into a black mirror asking us to desire the impossible realities bestowed by these images and the lifestyles they trade in.

This exhibition is curated by Jesse Bandler Firestone, Curator and Exhibition Coordinator at Montclair State University Galleries.

Digital Engagement

The University Galleries is a proud partner of [Bloomberg Connects](#), the free arts and culture app created by Bloomberg Philanthropies. The Bloomberg Connects app, available for download from Google Play or the App Store, makes the University Galleries accessible for both onsite or offsite visits through photo, audio, and video features that offer insights into past and current exhibitions from artists, curators, professors, students, and more. The Galleries' joins over 200 cultural organizations around the world with exclusive digital guides on Bloomberg Connects.

On View

Please visit the Kasser Theater website for up-to-date information regarding hours.

www.peakperfs.org/box-office

Opening Reception

Thursday, September 14

5 – 7 p.m.

Segal Gallery

Celebrate the opening of Montclair State University Galleries Fall 2023 exhibitions *The Backend*, *Case Studies: Joseph Parra – the edge of flesh and blood*, and *Sound Booth – Brian Oakes*

6 p.m.

Remarks by Director Megan C. Austin, Dean Daniel Gurskis, and Curator Jesse Bandler Firestone

[Register on Eventbrite](#)

About The Montclair State University Galleries

The Montclair State University Galleries brings together ideas, perspectives and dialogues to foster curiosity and shared understandings through art. The University Galleries presents diverse and inclusive exhibitions and programs creating connections that unite the campus experience with local and global communities. www.montclair.edu/galleries

All exhibitions and programs are free and open to the public.

Social Media

Join the conversation on social media by tagging @montclairstategalleries @josephparra and using the hashtag #MontclairStateGalleries when posting.

Support

This exhibition is made possible, in part, by funds from the McMullen Family Foundation, the College of the Arts, and private contributions.

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