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# THE LOOP ART

BY NATALIE BOGAN

## 'JOURNEY' MAN

*Artist Parente celebrates shows on two continents*

Most people can't be in two places at once. But for Houston-based artist Nicola Parente, it's not a problem. This month the Italian-born painter celebrates his first solo show at Gremillion & Co., and is gearing up for an exhibition at a gallery in his hometown of Mola di Bari, Italy.

"With my parents in Italy, I have benefited from keeping my feet in both places," says Parente, 41. "I enjoy exploring the differences and commonalities of these two cultures, and appreciate the architecture, landscape and the people—both places have shaped me and my art." The artist visits his family back home frequently.

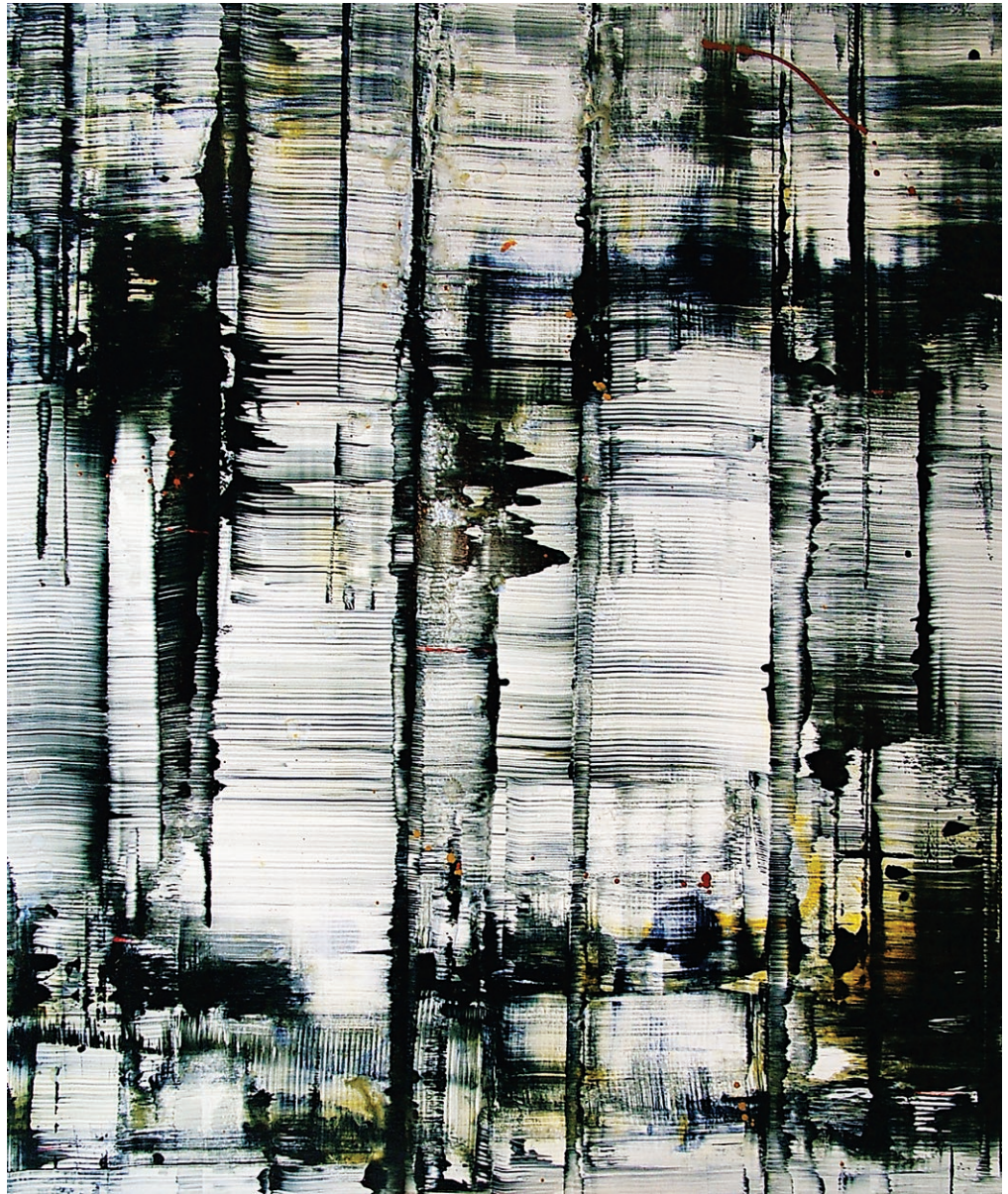
It's only natural that his latest series, *Journey*, would reflect his affinity for travel. His new collection of abstracts explores the relationship between travelers and their destinations. "In these pieces you can see a lot of movement where things are very, very sharp and then become blurry—almost like you're looking out a window on a fast moving train," he says.

In creating his "linear works" (pieces that tell a story through intersecting lines), the soft-spoken artist uses a combination of acrylic, ink and charcoal on synthetic panels to make layers of colors and streaks. Next, Parente manipulates the painting with chemicals ("to cause a reaction") and plexiglass tools to form dragging marks. The overall effect is rather dark and brooding, which seems interestingly at odds with the artist's optimistic disposition.

The basic techniques at play in *Journey* should be familiar to Parente's fans. His previous series, *Edge of Urban Time*, focused on human interaction with an urban environment using fence-like patterns layered over his signature blurred backgrounds.

"I started looking at the different wards in Houston and, over the years, saw the landscape change so much," he says. "I have images of chain link fences that are put around perimeters and things being torn down and rebuilt—it was the beginning of the process."

Starting over is something the artist knows all about. Parente's parents moved to the U.S. when he was a child but eventually returned to Italy. With his family bound for Europe, Parente decided to stay in the States and pursue an international business degree at King's College in



**PARENTE TRAP** Clockwise from above: Work from the artist's new 'Journey' series, including 'Moving Forward,' 'Seconds Passed,' 'Time Scape,' and 'Peripheral Movement,' are on display at Gremillion & Co. this month.

Pennsylvania. After that he made the leap to H-Town where he earned his MBA from the University of St. Thomas.

It's been 20 years since Parente made Houston home—a decision that continues to serve the artist well. This year he's been selected for both the Texas National and Texas Art juried exhibitions. But is there any concern that the work may be so "Texas" that audiences back home in Italy may not feel connected to it? Parente's not worried—the meaning of his Houston-produced pieces won't be lost in translation.

"I believe that there are human elements—basic needs and emotions—that are held in common wherever you may go," he says. "The interpretation is subjective. To me, it doesn't matter what it makes one feel, as long as it makes them feel something." ■

*Journey*, July 11-Aug. 25, Gremillion & Co., 2501 Sunset Blvd., 713.522.2701. Opening reception, July 11, 6PM. For more information on *Journey* see *Calendar: Visual Arts*.