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Meghan Hendley-Lopez (../author/meghan-hendley-lopez/)

VISUAL Vernacular: NICOLA PARENTE

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subject=Free%20Press%20Houston%20%3A%20Visual%20Vernacular%3A%20Nicola%20Parente%20-%20vernacular-nicola-parente%2F)

Nicola Parente, "Color Energy" (detail)

Italian-born artist Nicola Parente works in a variety of mediums that reverberate a sense of urban movement. Dancing between fluid and static states, his work uncovers qualms and triumphs with technology, the human progression, and the natural world surrounding us. Highlighting our encounter within an urban existence, Parente's art reflects the architectural commodities along with the ever-changing landscape of our progress in technology and beyond. Most noted for his paintings, Parente's work consists of captured movement, isolated speed in fragmented colors. Other influences, including the ocean and Parente's own experiences traveling by train, also funnel themselves into his work, offering a symbiotic union between white space and blurred lines of distinction. He has an extensive exhibition list that includes multiple shows both in the US and Italy. Applying his artistic talent to

photography, installation work, and even dance, Free Press Houston spoke with Parente as he explains about his meditation on the modern.

Free Press Houston: What was your childhood like in regards to how the arts were integrated?

Nicola Parente: I was about 12 years old when my parents planned a family vacation and took me to Rome, Florence, and Venice. These cities were so different than my small farming and fishing town of Mola di Bari. I remember being in awe of the architecture, art, sculpture, and gardens, particularly visiting the Vatican and the Vatican Museums. I don't recall ever going to a museum before this. I was fascinated the grandness of each space, the beauty of the oil paintings, frescos, and sculptures. The sculpture that made the biggest impression on me was Michelangelo's "Pietà," housed in St. Peter's Basilica, Vatican City. It was not behind glass back then so remember touching and getting chills and was in amazement thinking such beauty was sculpted out of one solid piece of marble. Though I could not put it into words, it was during this trip that I became aware of how important art was to be in my life.

Nicola Parente, "Perspective"

FPH: Was there a defining moment or experience that made you decided to dedicate your life to music and art?

Parente: In my mid-20s I had a deep conversation with one of my best friends about the meaning of life and regrets. He asked if you could be doing anything with your life, money being no object, what would you be doing? At the time I was doing wine sales though I was doing some painting. My response was to pursue art, I wanted to be an artist! He asked me why I was not doing this. I said I did not want to live under a bridge. We laughed. Two years later I discovered that a friend that I went to school with had passed. After his passing, Yasser and I had the same conversation, but this time around we spoke about regrets and how it was impotent to truly do something you love. I painted a large-scale canvas that night and never stopped

painting. I made the decision that I did not want to live my life based on expectations anymore and wanted to live authentically and pursuing my art and being a creative was going to do this for me, so I did and I have no regrets.

FPH: How has your time in Italy influenced your work?

Parente: As a young boy living in Italy, my parents did not own a car. When we were to travel outside of the small village of Mola di Bari we would take the train. I could not wait to take those train rides, even if it was for a short distance. Those train rides were magical to me. I remember never wanting to take my eyes away from looking out the window. It was like a big movie screen with the movement of the landscape swishing by. Today I still love riding in trains and I bring those memories into my paintings. The movement of the landscape, the blurriness of what I see comes back to me while I create my works.

FPH: What is your preferred medium and what is your process like?

Parente: For the past decade I have been painting on new materials. Being a contemporary artist, I wanted to use 21st century materials, so I experimented for years before finding an industrial plastic that I use as my surface. I paint flat on a large table and visualize what's to come. I start by creating marks in pencil or charcoal then start throwing down colors, inks, and start creating the movement using tools. I consider myself a reductive abstract painter because I continue to take layers away from the surface in order to get the image I see in my mind.

It is difficult for me to say what is my preferred medium. In the early 2000s I was doing performance art (Richie Hubscher, Easy Credit Theater) at Notsuoh. As I continue to expand and grow as an artist, I continue to seek new challenges that will fulfill my need to create. Though I am primarily a painter, I also create abstract photography. I've created set designs for ballets (at Dominic Walsh Dance Theater). Also, I have created numerous installation-based works and have been creating textile designs in the form of custom rugs (for AER Textiles).

FPH: Tell me about your use of motion and movement in your pieces.

Parente: We cannot stop motion, its everywhere and all around us. It fills our lives with vast energy. It's this energy, this vibration that I want to come through when someone looks at my paintings.

FPH: Any upcoming projects you would like to mention?

Parente: I'm excited to be featured in the Art Car Museum's new exhibit, *The Rørpost Collaboration Project*. It's an international art energy collaboration featuring two countries, four exhibitions, forty-two artists, and eighty-four works of art. The opening reception is Saturday, September 10 from 7 to 10 pm and the show runs through October 30.

I also was selected and commissioned to create a truly one of a kind Big Ass Fan for the new Houston showroom of Big Ass Fans by Haiku, slated to open September 14 (1224 N Post Oak, Suite 120). This will be their first US showroom.

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by **Meghan Hendley-Lopez**
([../author/meghan-hendley-lopez/](#))