
Paul Ramírez Jonas:
ATLAS, PLURAL, MONUMENTAL
April 28–August 6, 2017

Contemporary Arts Museum Houston



***His Truth is Marching On*, 1993**

Wood, glass bottles, corks, water, mallet, rope, and hardware

The Dikeou Collection, Denver, CO



OKAY TO TOUCH

Like many music boxes and player pianos, this large instrument was built to play a single song. Using the instrument's mallet to tap the water-filled bottles in succession will play the song "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," also known as "Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory," and before that as "John Brown's Body."



***Paper Moon (I Create as I Speak)*, 2008**

Inkjet prints on paper, black paper,
music stand, microphone, and amplifier

Courtesy the artist and Galeria Nara
Roesler



OKAY TO TOUCH

The sentence “I create as I speak” (itself a translation of the ancient Aramaic phrase “abracadabra”) is repeated over and over again in this 616-page-long text. Variations in uppercase and lowercase letters—as well as the use of the letter X, periods, and spaces—come together to form a twenty-foot likeness of the Earth’s Moon. One page has been removed from the wall and rests on the lectern. You are invited to step up to the microphone and read this text out loud or to yourself.



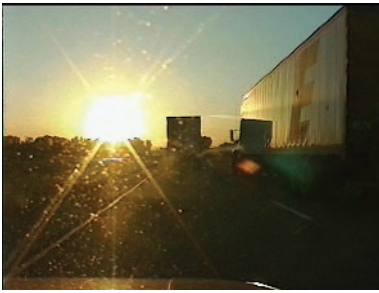
***The Commons*, 2011**

Cork, pushpins, steel, wood, and hardware
Courtesy the artist and Galeria Nara
Roesler



OKAY TO TOUCH

Typically made of bronze or stone, most monuments are designed to remain lasting and unchanging. This equestrian monument by Paul Ramírez Jonas is different: it is made of cork, a material that can “publish” an endless number of voices. This monument has no singular voice or identity; you are invited to interact with it by push pinning offerings onto its base.



***Longer Day*, 1997**

Single-channel video (color, silent),
18:35 minutes

Courtesy the artist and Galeria Nara
Roesler

“I woke up at dawn in Brooklyn, New York, got in my car, and headed west. I drove as far west as I could until sundown. Speeding towards the sun would extend my day, perhaps for as much as an hour. I was on a straight and flat highway somewhere in the middle of the United States when the sun began to set on the horizon. At that point, I turned on the video camera to capture the end of my race against the sun, and my futile attempt to make the day last forever. I did however succeed in extending the sunset a minute longer than if I had stood still.”—Paul Ramírez Jonas



***Magellan's Itinerary*, 1995**

Dot-matrix print on archival continuous-
feed paper

Courtesy the artist and Galeria Nara
Roesler



Top of the World (Red Ball), 1997

Silicon rubber, pigment, and high-density foam

Courtesy the artist and Galeria Nara Roesler



OKAY TO TOUCH

This is the top slice of what would otherwise be a 40-foot-tall red rubber ball. You are invited to sit or stand on it to watch videos, to experience the world from a new height, or to imagine exploring new worlds.



***Broadside 1*, 2007**

Unfired clay and portable lectern with
built-in microphone and amplifier
Courtesy the artist and Galeria Nara
Roesler



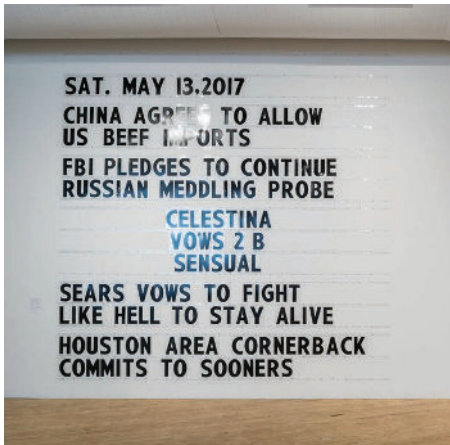
OKAY TO TOUCH

This portable lectern is a pedestal for an oath typed on a tablet of unfired clay. If you choose to step up to the microphone and recite the oath, the lectern will amplify and broadcast your voice. Does an oath's power come into effect only when it is read aloud and repeated word-for-word? Or is a silent reading enough? *Broadside 1* asks visitors to consider the notion of word as bond and to think about the public repercussions of personal speech.



Public Trust, 2016–ongoing

Table (birch plywood, felt, plastic letters, elastic, Bible, Bhagavad Gita, Hebrew-English Old Testament, Quran, Constitution of the United States, Constitution of the United States in Spanish, Zend Avesta, plastic bottle with Ganges River water, Jupiter Stone, disposable medical lancets, piggy bank, call bell, ink pad, pen and ball chain, flip clock, embossing seal, paper, and graphite) and marquee (plastic letters, plastic rail, letter-changing pole, cabinet, and hardware)



Courtesy the artist and Galeria Nara Roesler

Public Trust was produced in Boston, August 27–September 17, 2016, by Now + There



More information continued on next page.

Public Trust invites participants to make a promise. Each Saturday from 1–5 PM through August 5, 2017, you are invited to sit at this table with a facilitator and declare a promise. The facilitator will typeset your words in plastic letters on the table. Paper and graphite are then used to make a rubbing for you to keep, and a second one is made for the artist’s archive. In order to complete your promise, you’ll be asked to make an oath or a vow: some options include swearing on a sacred text or locking fingers with the facilitator in a “pinky promise.” To mark the transition from private word to public vow, your promise will be typeset on the marquee billboard alongside selected promises made by politicians, scientists, economists, and other public figures found in the week’s headline news.

**Public Trust is activated each Saturday from
1–5PM through August 5, 2017.**

#PublicTrustHTX



***Witness My Hand*, 2013/2017**

Photocopier, paper, wood, Plexiglas, bust,
and hardware

Courtesy the artist and Business Solutions
International



OKAY TO TOUCH

Bust:

Jean Antoine Houdon

Denis Diderot, nineteenth-century copy

Plaster

Private Collection, Houston, Texas

Witness My Hand is based on the artist's premise that a copy machine can be a pedestal for sculpture; unlike typical pedestals, this one is active. If the sculptural bust displayed here is "an original," the photocopier creates endless reproductions that are simultaneously "originals" and "copies." You are invited to make a copy and take it with you. This work's title is a reference to the role of notary publics who, by witnessing, authenticate the execution of documents. Notaries' stamped seals often contains the words "witness my hand and seal."



Ladder Kite, after Joseph Lecornu, 1994
Kite (cotton fabric, single-use disposable camera, modified alarm clock, string, wood, and hardware) and chromogenic print
Courtesy the artist



Kite after Walter Brooks, 1993
Kite (cotton fabric, single-use disposable camera, modified alarm clock, string, wood, and hardware) and chromogenic print
Collection Sandra Gering



Hexagonal Box Kite, after Alexander Graham Bell, 1994
Kite (cotton fabric, single-use disposable camera, modified alarm clock, string, wood, and hardware) and chromogenic print
Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio: Museum Purchase, Derby Fund

More information continued on next page.

Between 1993 and 1994, Paul Ramírez Jonas built faithful reproductions of kites invented by individuals hoping to create the first flying machines. The artist also hacked alarm clocks to create timed systems that depressed the shutters of single-use disposable cameras and attached them to the kites. During these flights, each camera took a picture that connects the kite's tether and the artist's hands. The resulting photographs demonstrate that Ramírez Jonas's kites could fly just as the original designs did; they also re-enact historical events and document an artistic performance.



***Men on the Moon, Rest Period*, 1998**

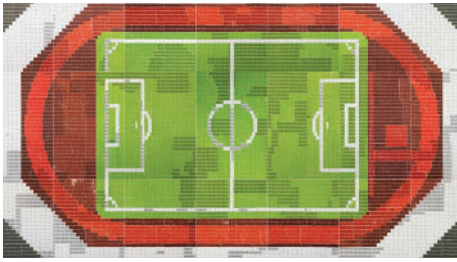
Edison phonograph (wood, plastic funnel, hand drum, thumbtacks, flywheel, and hardware), wax records (machinable wax and silk screen), and book (linen-bound inkjet and laser prints and graphite on acid-free paper)

Collection Artist Pension Trust

More information continued on next page.

In 1990 Paul Ramírez Jonas began casting wax cylinders. Onto these cylinders he has recorded the 23 hours of NASA communications with the first astronauts to spend time on the moon on July 20 and 21, 1969. The recordings are made on the artist's homemade Edison phonograph. Invented by Thomas Edison in 1877, the Edison phonograph is the first sound-recording machine. Ramírez Jonas made his from repurposed parts: scrap wood, a fly wheel, a plastic funnel, a hand drum, and a pushpin. When in use, sound moves through the hand drum's diaphragm and the pushpin acts as an embossing point. When lowered onto the rotating wax cylinder, this "needle" translates the sound vibrations passing through the diaphragm into a uniquely-grooved furrow in the wax. Each of these wax records holds approximately 60 seconds of sound. The contents of each record is transcribed into an accompanying "lyrics book." The project divides the recordings into 4 sections: *Tranquility* was completed in 1992, *EVA* in 1996, and *Rest Period* in 1998. *Return*, the last segment, has yet to be recorded and transcribed.

The Edison phonograph also functions as a playback device. When the needle traces the grooves of the rotating cylinder, it resonates the diaphragm and replays the sound. Ramírez Jonas's machine does not distinguish between recording and playback functions; instead, it performs these actions at the same time. Thus, listening to the audio simultaneously records any ambient sound at the playback site; repeated listening would effectively erase Ramírez Jonas's original audio recordings.



Assembly: Ghazi Stadium, 2013

Silk screen and collage on paper
Courtesy the artist and Galeria Nara
Roesler

Each of the hand-printed, colored, and silkscreened tickets in Paul Ramírez Jonas's *Admit One* and *Assembly* series correspond to a venue's audience capacity. The 25,000 tickets used to create *Assembly: Ghazi Stadium* represent 25,000 seated bodies.



***Talisman*, 2009**

Inkjet print with ballpoint pen and marker on archival paper, keys, ink, and hardware
Courtesy the artist and Galeria Nara Roesler

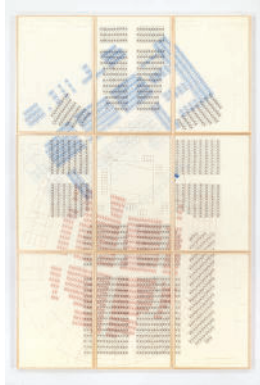
Talisman is a participatory work Paul Ramírez Jonas created for the São Paulo Biennial in 2009. Participants received a custom-engraved key that opened the front door of the exhibition's main venue, the historic and iconic Ciccillo Matarazzo Pavilion. In exchange for this key, each participant allowed the artist to create a copy of a key from his or her own key ring. The exchange was finalized when they signed a contract that established an agreement between the participants, the curators, the artist, and the São Paulo Biennial Foundation that limited their behavior if they chose to use the key to open the front door and explore the exhibition outside of museum hours.



Admit One: New York State Court of Appeals, 2013

Silk screen and ink on paper

Courtesy the artist and Galeria Nara Roesler



Assembly: Bally's Atlantic City Boxing, Teatro alla Scala, U.S. Supreme Court Chamber, 2013

Ink, colored pencil, and graphite on perforated paper

Courtesy the artist and Galeria Nara Roesler



Elements and documentation from
Dictar y Recordar, 2010

Poster (ink and correction fluid on cardboard), forms (inkjet prints on paper), typewriter, three-ring binder, plastic sleeves, and video (color, sound 2:16 min)

Courtesy the artist and Galeria Nara Roesler

Dictar y Recordar is a 24-hour event that took place in Tegucigalpa, Honduras. Paul Ramírez Jonas invited the public to gather and attempt the impossible: to record a complete history of Honduras. During this time, 10 typists recorded the stories of participants who recollected the history of Honduras. Voices were transformed into written pages, and the pages became a book. Following the project's completion, the artist gifted these collected stories to the National Archives of Honduras and the Smithsonian Institution's Archives of American Art.



Elements from Key to the City, 2010

Plinth (custom-made stainless steel structure), digital prints, engraved cut keys, and book (offset print)
Courtesy the artist and Galeria Nara Roesler

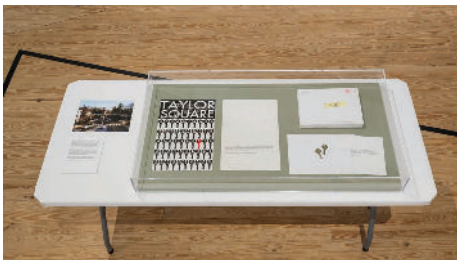


Commissioned by Creative Time in cooperation with the City of New York



OKAY TO TOUCH

Keys to the city are both a symbol and an award. They are traditionally given to heroes or non-citizens in exchange for service and bravery, symbolizing that they are now “one of us.” In 2010, Paul Ramírez Jonas created a public art project that was installed in Times Square in New York City. Participants were invited to bestow a key to the city to anyone of their choosing for whatever reason they deemed important. Their exchanges are documented in the binders to the left. The keys to the city they were given temporarily unlocked 24 sites located throughout all five boroughs of New York City. In addition to the key, each participant also received a guidebook resembling a passport that contained the location and information about the sites their new keys could unlock. Over 18,000 people participated in this exchange.



Elements and documentation from
***Taylor Square*, 2005**

Returned mailings and offset-printed posters with adhesive and engraved cut keys

Courtesy the artist and Galeria Nara Roesler

Commissioned by the Cambridge Arts Council's Public Art Program

Taylor Square is a permanent public artwork located in Cambridge, MA. When invited to create a work for a nearby fire station, Paul Ramírez Jonas decided to repair a deteriorating traffic triangle in front of the station. The triangle's transformation into an officially-recognized public park included repairing curbs and sidewalks and installing a flagpole and small bench surrounded by a gated fence. 5,000 copies of the key that opened the park's gates were mailed to the homes surrounding or adjacent to the park with an invitation by the artist that the residents use the new park space and openly share copies of the key. Ramírez Jonas states: "Taylor Square belongs to the public. It is closed, yet simultaneously open, re-emphasizing that the ownership of public space resides in the public itself."



Elements from ***Mi Casa, Su Casa***, 2005
Signboard (particleboard, paint, ink, cotton strapping, and hardware), flag (cotton fabric and thread), key-cutting machine, engraved key blanks, cut keys, artist's house key, key ring, and paper tag
Courtesy the artist and Galeria Nara Roesler

During lectures he gave at schools, corporations, clubs, universities, and a jail on both sides of the international border between Tijuana and San Diego, Paul Ramírez Jonas spoke about space and how we define it as locked or unlocked. Each of these eleven talks was followed by an exercise in trust: audience members were invited to exchange keys with the artist and each other. Ramírez Jonas began the exercise by using the displayed key duplicating machine to create a copy of the key to the front door of his home, which he gave to the next participant; that individual's key was then copied and offered to the third participant, and so on until the final key was made and offered to the last person in the line.