

## FERNANDO PRATS

### *Primera línea*

We are pleased to present the seventh exhibition of Fernando Prats at Galeria Joan Prats, titled *Primera Línea (Front line)*, which shows his most recent work, carried out in the context of the protests that took place in Chile during the months of October and November 2019.

Fernando Prats work is determined by the relationship with the energy of nature and the territory, rooted in the ties that he establishes fundamentally with his origin country, Chile. The Andes mountain range, the Atacama desert, the Pacific Ocean and Antarctica, as well as memory, are inescapable and constitutive links of his work, turning the Chilean landscape into his poetic and pictorial language from a contemporary practice. Based on the constant observation of the context, nature, the human being and his intervention in critical situations, the work of Fernando Prats is understood from the concept of "pictorial geolocity", that is to say, painting as a mobilizing agent, an active surface that works through layers that open up to new displacements. It is perceived in this way as a process that transforms the language of the work itself from a perspective far from the rational, seeking a space of creation free of judgment that considers chance as a revealing force. The use of smoke as a primary element in his work, a materiality of ancestral use, allows, through an original technical process, to capture the traces and pulsations that become in the painting.

On October 18, 2019, Chile was shocked by a true social earthquake that would begin to declare itself as "the awakening of Chile", becoming the most eloquent call, after the dictatorship, for a profound change in the country's neoliberal and cultural economic model. In this context, and as Fernando Prats' method of work has always been, the artist introduced himself in the center of the demonstrations in Santiago, living in first person an experience that allowed him to record the movement and confrontation of the Front Line. The materiality, the social landscape, the superposition of the bodies in resistance, the visual languages and the word build a cartography of resonances, signs and drives of a country's memory.

"To this alludes "Chile woke up", the slogan that, starting on October 18th 2019, began to run through the streets and squares of the country like a trail, unexpectedly upholstered by a crowd that emerged from the most diverse corners to dust off a forgotten language - the language of dignity - and staging the creative moment of a destitute power. (...)

This is what the work of the artist Fernando Prats seems to exhibit, that work has consisted since its inception in capturing that particular moment in which certain materials in rebellion (physical, geographical, domestic) knot each other releasing the mnemonic energy of the country. We perceive it in a palpable way in this new show, *Primera Línea*, a kind of small visual atlas in motion in which fragments of texts, images, slogans, emblems and bodies shape the hectic days of a community that shows the artistic moment that precedes both the script of the story, and that which is characteristic of aesthetic work.

The visual daily example that Prats traces -pictorial itself and articulated by means of records and video- gives the impression of fulfilling two crucial objectives in this way: undressing on one hand the raw visuality that during Chile's revolt forges intervened monuments, the fire of the barricades, the cobblestones torn from the sidewalks, the rewritten flag and the fighting bodies as part of a performance practice that is anticipated when making the artist's singular, and showing on the other hand that the extreme energy that his own work liberates is not part of the muse that visits the creator in silence, but the underground power of some images of the confines of a creative multitude. This shows Prats as a determined friend of those who fight for their rights, and not of those who defend their privileges."

Fragments of the text "*AHORA. Acerca de Primera Línea, de Fernando Prats*" by Federico Galende (Rosario, Argentina, 1965)

# GALERIA JOAN PRATS

Fernando Prats (Santiago de Chile, 1967) lives and works in Barcelona. His work is known for the actions or expeditions undertaken mostly in Chile, including among others *Gran Sur*, Elephant Island, Antarctica (2011), *Acción Lota*, *acción Géiser del Tatio*, *acción Salar de Atacama*, *acción Mina a Rajo Abierto* (2006) or *Congelación*, on the Collins glacier, Chilean Antarctica (2002).

He has received distinctions as the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation Grant (2007); artist-in-residence at the Kunst-Station Sankt Peter Köln, Cologne (2003); 'Presidente de la República del Gobierno de Chile' Honor Grant (1997-2000); 'Pilar Juncosa y Sotheby's' special award (1994) or 'Ciutat de Palma Antoni Gelabert d'Arts Visuals' award (2010).

He has participated in international exhibitions as the Venice Biennale, representing Chile (2011); Mediations Biennale, Poznan (2012); Canarias Biennial, Chile Triennial (2009), 'Exposición Universal del Agua', Zaragoza (2008), Espace Culturel Louis Vuitton, Paris, Fundació Joan Miró, Barcelona (2011); or Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Santiago de Chile (2004), among others.

He has significant public space works as *Pou de Llum*, Manresa, Spain (2008); *Acción Medular*, in homage to General Carlos Prats González (2017) installed as a permanent work at Museo de la Memoria y los Derechos Humanos de Chile (2007) or *Su vertical nos retiene*, monumental work built at Parque Cerrillos, Santiago de Chile, thanks to a public competition held by the Chilean Ministry of Public Works for the COP25 (Summit on climate change), which was to be held in Santiago de Chile in December 2019. Currently the Barcelona's Town Hall has commissioned the artist to carry out a monumental project in Plaza Pablo Neruda in homage to the task of the republican exiles welcome undertaken by the poet.

Fernando Prats has just been the winner of the third edition of the call to carry out artistic interventions in 'Fragmentos, Espacio de Arte y Memoria, Museo Nacional de Colombia', with the project 'Aún tendría que haber luciérnagas'.

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GALERIA JOAN PRATS