



JOSÉ PARLÁ

---

ROOTS

FEB. 7 - JULY 16, 2017

## **SCAD: The University for Creative Careers**

The Savannah College of Art and Design is a private, nonprofit, accredited institution conferring bachelor's and master's degrees at distinctive locations and online to prepare talented students for professional careers. SCAD offers degrees in 43 majors, as well as minors in more than 75 disciplines across its locations in Savannah and Atlanta, Georgia; in Hong Kong; in Lacoste, France; and online through SCAD eLearning.

With more than 32,000 alumni worldwide, SCAD demonstrates an exceptional education and unparalleled career preparation. The diverse student body, consisting of nearly 13,000, comes from across the U.S. and more than 100 countries worldwide. Each student is nurtured and motivated by a faculty of nearly 700 professors with extraordinary academic credentials and valuable professional experience. These professors emphasize learning through individual attention in an inspiring university environment. The innovative SCAD curriculum is enhanced by advanced professional-level technology, equipment and learning resources, and has garnered acclaim from respected organizations and publications, including 3D World, American Institute of Architects, Businessweek, DesignIntelligence, U.S. News & World Report and the Los Angeles Times.

For more information, visit [scad.edu](http://scad.edu).

Cover Image: **José Parlá**, insert: *Nuevo Rumbo*, 2015, acrylic and ink on canvas

## About the Artist

SCAD painting alumnus José Parlá is a critically acclaimed, multidisciplinary artist whose artwork sits at the intersection of abstraction and calligraphy. Layers of paint, gestural drawing and found ephemera combine to evoke the histories of urban environments.

Parlá has exhibited at the High Museum of Art, Atlanta, Georgia; the Neuberger Museum of Art, Purchase, New York; National YoungArts Foundation, Miami, Florida; Van Every/Smith Galleries, Davidson, North Carolina; and the Havana Biennial, Havana, Cuba, among others. His work is in several public collections, including the British Museum, London; the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York; Pola Museum of Art, Hakone, Japan and the National Museum of Fine Arts, Havana, Cuba.

Collaborative projects include *Wrinkles of the City: Havana, Cuba*, completed in 2012 by Parlá and French

artist JR, and *Signature Roots*, a workshop and installation created in collaboration with youth in the Caldera Arts Program at The Portland Art Museum, Oregon.

Permanent public arts projects include a commission by One World Trade Center for his monumental mural painting *ONE: Union of the Senses*, the largest painting of its kind in New York City in the tallest building in the Western Hemisphere; commissions for the Barclays Center in Brooklyn and the Brooklyn Academy of Music, New York; André Balazs' Chiltern Firehouse, London; North Carolina State University's Hunt Library by Snøhetta; and at Concord CityPlace, Toronto, Canada.

This exhibition is curated by Storm Janse van Rensburg, SCAD head curator of exhibitions.

## About the Curriculum Guide

SCAD curriculum guides provide learning opportunities that fulfill the requirements of educational standards and are designed for use within the museum's exhibition spaces and in classrooms. The guides enhance understanding of art and design through investigations that reveal relevant personal, historical and cultural connections while promoting cross-disciplinary links necessary for today's innovative careers.

Recognizing the guides' overall design excellence and ingenuity, the American Alliance of Museums' Museum Publications Design Competition twice awarded SCAD curriculum guides first place in the education category, in 2015 and 2016.

This José Parlá guide explores the artist's abstract paintings and sculptures that speak in a gestural language and whose overlapping layers evoke hidden internal dialogues amidst an evolving collective discourse. His work provides the basis for activities that investigate individual, cultural and historical perspectives of art making.

SCAD would like to give special thanks to the Hodge Foundation for its support of the SCAD Museum of Art's award-winning curriculum guides.

# 1 Transform writing into expressive drawing



“Every so often I’m inspired to write the story of my life, and what’s happening as if it was a diary ... You’re not meant to read someone else’s diary ... it’s more about reading the gesture and the layers of memory that’s **encapsulated** within each layer.”

José Parlá

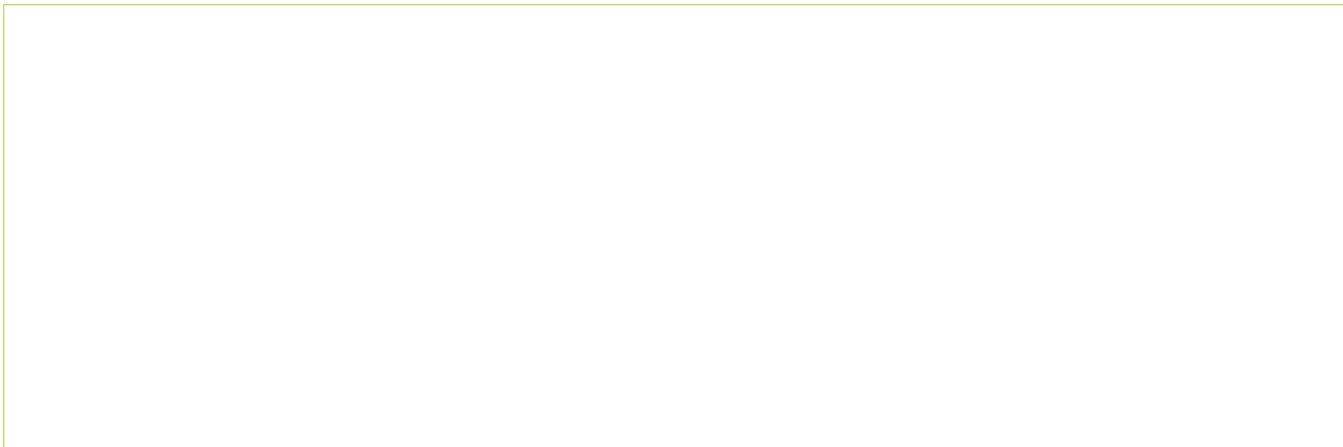


José Parlá: Left to right: *Eureka to Flagler*, 2015, acrylic and plaster on canvas; *Whiteplains to DeKalb*, 2015, acrylic and plaster on canvas; *Ashland to Baltic*, 2015, acrylic and plaster on canvas

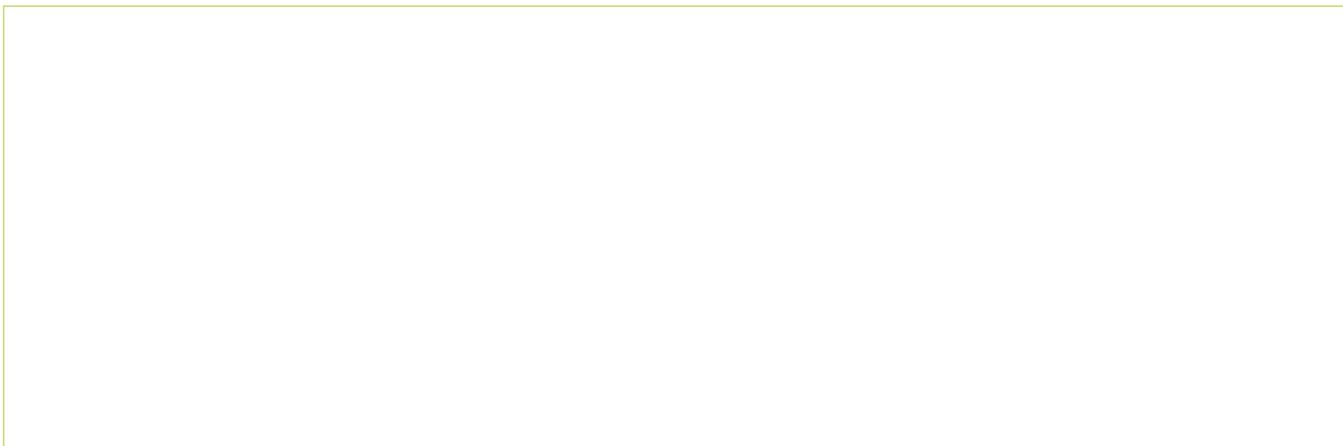
José Parlá roams cities the world over, seeking walls that bear the marks and signs that reflect the collective histories of diverse inhabitants. He brings these gathered insights together in his studio to create paintings and sculptures that intertwine colors, textures and **calligraphic** writing, capturing and **conveying** the multiple narratives and **cultures** of individual cities. The paintings above record locations that marked transitions in Parlá’s life — moves between studios, neighborhoods and cities — each symbolizing a time that was significant to the development of his artistic career.

Flowing calligraphic writing is another key feature of Parlá’s work. He layers and erases portions of this script in a way that brings to mind **palimpsests** and faintly recognizable writing from ancient texts. His spontaneously created and largely illegible writings can be interpreted by imagining the physical action that created them and trying to infer the writer’s state of mind. For example, compare the expressive qualities of gestures associated with making sweeping arcs versus those that produce a series of sharp angles. Parlá describes this combination of drawing and writing as “a barometer to my mood and experience in life.” He adds that, “Again, there is much behind the calligraphy: stories, personal journals, fiction, imagination, stream of conscious writing, names, etc. The paintings themselves are symbols of all of this together along with my observations and experiences of a place or memory.”

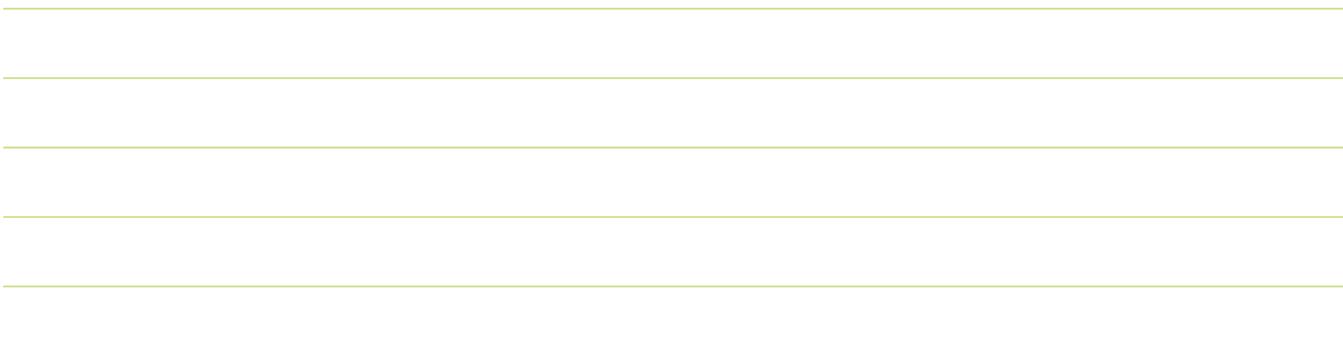
Create your own version of a calligraphic handwriting that is unreadable by **conventional** methods. Test different approaches in the space below.



Use the space below as if it is a page in a diary. Fill it with your thoughts, writing illegibly in a gestural language. Erase and write over portions of your script to experiment with layers of expression.



Examine the gestural marks and scripts in Parlá's work. How does experimenting with Parlá's techniques, together with a closer analysis of his paintings, contribute to your understanding of these works? Write your response in the space provided.



## 2 Relate sculptural forms within a range of contexts



“One of the things that I’ve been able to do in my work is to tell my own story. But even ... though it can be abstract, it can also allow the viewer to see their own stories, maybe manifestations of their own lives.”

José Parlá

José Parlá creates his wall-like sculptures, like the ones shown, using a heavily textured **impasto**. Similar to his two-dimensional paintings, Parlá’s sculptures resemble artifacts from the past, offering intriguing partial views. Missing portions and **vestiges** remind us that collective histories and personal memories are fragmentary, selective and **elusive** by nature. His work invites viewers to piece together meaning from these impressions.

Though Parlá’s sculptures resemble his paintings in many ways, three-dimensional forms invite a different type of awareness and experience for viewers. What influence does the three-dimensional form have on your perception of Parlá’s work? Record your thoughts in the space below.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



José Parlá, *West Liberty Street and Whitaker Street, Savannah, Georgia, 1991, 2014*, acrylic, collage, ink and enamel on wood

As Parlá does in his work, consider personal connections, cultural references or concepts and historical associations of importance to you. Below, write down the three most important.

---

---

---

---

---

How do Parlá's sculptural forms illuminate the links you've created between your own ideas and experiences? Below, craft a description of his sculptural work and, drawing on your own personal, cultural and historical perspectives, analyze how the independent influences of both Parlá as the creator and you as the viewer unite to shape the overall artistic experience.

---

---

---

---

---



**José Parlá, *Ghetto, Miami, FL*, 2014, acrylic, ink, oil, enamel paint, plaster and paper on wood**



**José Parlá, *Modern Ancient*, 2016, acrylic, ink, oil, enamel paint, plaster and paper on wood**



---

# EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS

## National Core Arts Standards — High School

**Creating 1.2** **Anchor:** Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.  
**HSI:** Shape an artistic investigation of an aspect of present-day life using a contemporary practice of art or design.

**Creating 2.1** **Anchor:** Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.  
**HSII:** Through experimentation, practice and persistence, demonstrate acquisition of skills and knowledge in a chosen art form.

**Responding 8.1** **Anchor:** Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work.  
**HSII:** Identify types of contextual information useful in the process of constructing interpretations of an artwork or collection of works.

**Connecting 11.1** **Anchor:** Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural and historical context to deepen understanding.  
**HSI:** Describe how knowledge of culture, traditions and history may influence personal responses to art.



---

# GLOSSARY

**calligraphic** *adj.* Of or pertaining to stylized handwriting; an ornamental line in drawing or painting

**conventional** *adj.* Usual or traditional

**convey** *v.* Make something known or understandable to someone

**culture** *n.* The beliefs, customs, arts, etc. of a particular society, group, place or time; any trait of human activity acquired in social life and transmitted by communication

**elusive** *adj.* Difficult to find, catch or achieve

**encapsulated** *adj.* Enclose as if in a capsule; to sum something up in shorter form

**impasto** *n.* A thick, textured application of pigment

**palimpsest** *n.* A writing surface on which the remains of a partially erased text are still visible beneath a later text

**vestige** *n.* A trace, mark or visible sign left by something



---

# CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Several works in this exhibition were commissioned by Rolls-Royce Motor Cars in partnership with SCAD and first exhibited in Miami in December 2016. This commission was developed as part of the Rolls-Royce Arts Programme. All artworks courtesy of José Parlá.

## pp. 2-3 1. Transform writing into expressive drawing

**Additional Resources** **Website** Parlá's online presence includes pages devoted to his paintings, sculptures, videos, photographs and works on paper, as well as links to his artist statement, interviews and other press. [www.joseparla.com](http://www.joseparla.com)

**Interactive** Erase words or phrases to create poems from existing text. Sometimes called blackout poetry, these are remixes of the literary world. [www.erasures.wavepoetry.com](http://www.erasures.wavepoetry.com)

**Interactive** Type in a brief phrase to experience the captivating effects of "illegible" fonts. [www.1001fonts.com/illegible-fonts.html](http://www.1001fonts.com/illegible-fonts.html)

**Article** Discover how fragmented stories provide fulfilling reading. [www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2016/nov/03/fragmented-stories-can-be-fulfilling-reading-anne-carson](http://www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2016/nov/03/fragmented-stories-can-be-fulfilling-reading-anne-carson)

**Quote** p. 2 CBS Interactive Inc. "Artist José Parlá reaches new heights." *Sunday Morning*, 6 Sept. 2015, [www.cbsnews.com/news/artist-jose-parla-reaches-new-heights](http://www.cbsnews.com/news/artist-jose-parla-reaches-new-heights). Accessed 13 Feb. 2017.

## pp. 4-5 2. Relate sculptural forms within a range of contexts

**Additional Resources** **Website** Visit Google's Arts and Culture site to view examples of urban wall art from around the world. [www.google.com/culturalinstitute/beta/search?q=walls](http://www.google.com/culturalinstitute/beta/search?q=walls)

**Video** Watch as Parlá leads a painting workshop for students who create a massive wall mural. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=qLQ4SD8IrfM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qLQ4SD8IrfM)

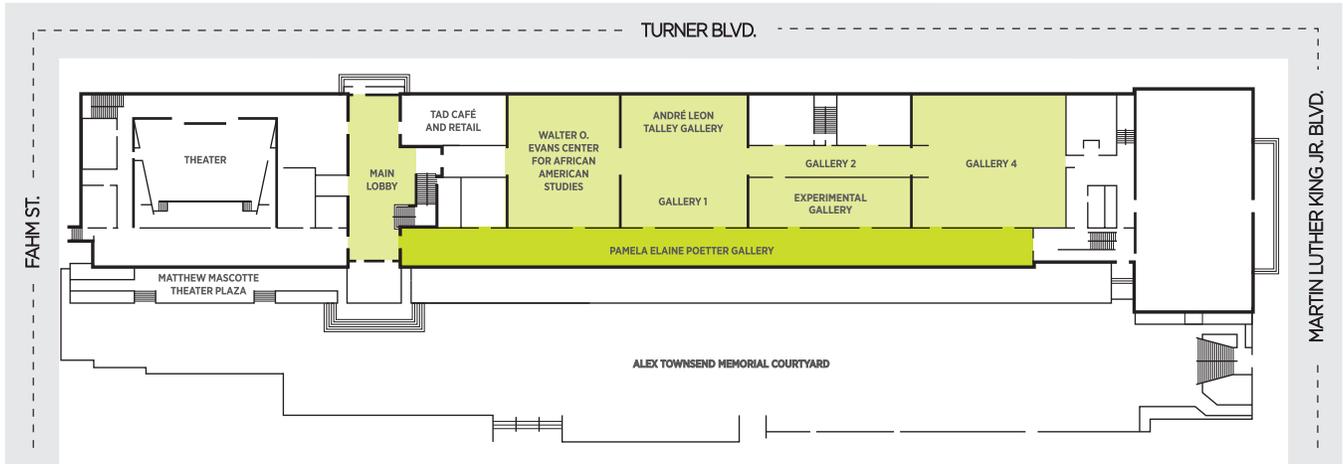
**Video** Follow Parlá as he documents and gathers artifacts from city walls, then returns to his studio to create one of his signature pieces. [www.vimeo.com/16730915](http://www.vimeo.com/16730915)

**Citation** Itzkowitz, Laura. "Master of Abstraction: Cuban-American artist José Parlá is conquering the art world one brushstroke at a time." *Brooklyn*, 25 July 2016, [www.notey.com/@bkmag\\_unofficial/external/10847680/master-of-abstraction.html](http://www.notey.com/@bkmag_unofficial/external/10847680/master-of-abstraction.html). Accessed 13 Feb. 2017.

**Quote** p. 4 Lehrer, Adam. "'Surface Body / Action Space' Finds Artist José Parlá at the Height of His Powers." *Forbes*, 12 Sept. 2015, [www.forbes.com/sites/adamlehrer/2015/09/12/surface-body-action-space-finds-artist-jose-parla-at-the-height-of-his-powers/#5308c1063082](http://www.forbes.com/sites/adamlehrer/2015/09/12/surface-body-action-space-finds-artist-jose-parla-at-the-height-of-his-powers/#5308c1063082). Accessed 1 Nov. 2015.

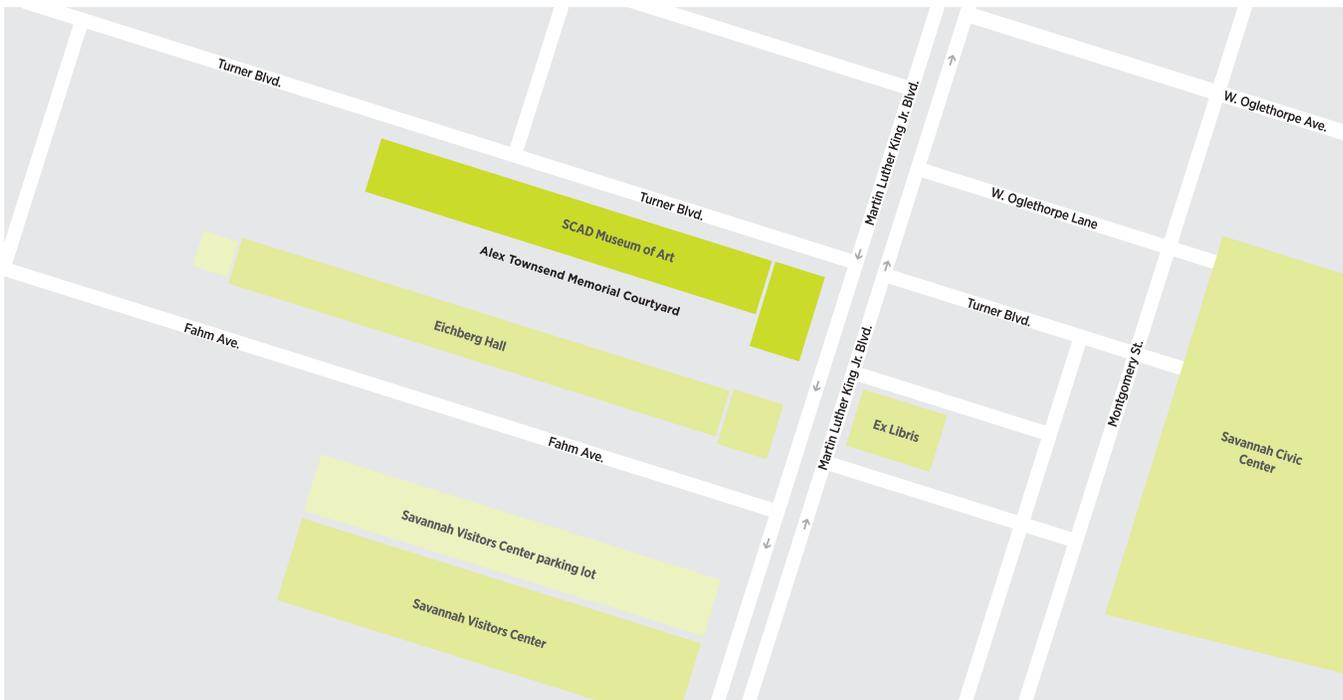
# Museum Maps

## SCAD Museum of Art



Main Level

- Galleries and main lobby
- Featured exhibition



# SCAD de:FINEART 2017 EXHIBITIONS

## SAVANNAH EXHIBITIONS

SCAD Museum of Art // 601 Turner Blvd.

**From the Depths Above** • William Singer

Jan. 31 – April 30

**Lineages** • Monir Shahroudy Farmanfarmaian

Jan. 31 – Aug. 6

**Roots** • José Parlá

Feb. 7 – July 16

**Florida Living** • Hernan Bas

Feb. 14 – Aug. 20

**With You... Us** • Glen Fogel

Feb. 21 – May 28

**Infinity Lines** • Chiharu Shiota

Feb. 21 – Aug. 6

**Chroma** • Carlos Cruz-Diez

Feb. 21 – Aug. 20

**Blind Memory** • Hank Willis Thomas

Feb. 21 – Aug. 20

**Freedom Isn't Always Beautiful** • Hank Willis Thomas

Feb. 21 – Aug. 20

## SAVANNAH GALLERY EXHIBITIONS

**Oversaturated**

Jan. 24 – Feb. 26

➤ Alexander Hall Gallery // 668 Indian St.

**Take Note**

Feb. 7 – April 17

➤ Gutstein Gallery // 201 E. Broughton St.

## ATLANTA EXHIBITIONS

SCAD Atlanta // 1600 Peachtree St. NW

**Catalyst: Master Prints by Pace Prints** • Group Exhibition

Jan. 23 – April 21

➤ Gallery 1600

**Noble Metal** • Summer Wheat

Feb. 2 – April 7

➤ Trois Gallery

**Project Diaspora** • Omar Victor Diop

Feb. 17 – Aug. 20

➤ SCAD FASH Museum of Fashion + Film



601 Turner Blvd.  
Savannah, Georgia  
912.525.7191  
[scadmoa.org](http://scadmoa.org)

Support for deFINE ART has been generously provided by Ann Tenenbaum and Thomas H. Lee, the Jacob and Gwendolyn Knight Lawrence Foundation, Artacruz and the Cruz-Diez Art Foundation.