friedrichs pontone
273 Church Street
New York, NY 10013

For immediate release

Joseph Parra: Lure opening November 20th

November 2026

Friedrichs Pontone is pleased to be presenting Joseph Parra: Lure. This will be the artist's first solo show with the gallery. The opening reception is on Friday, November 20th, at 6pm, at 273 Church Street. The exhibition will continue until December 23rd.

Joseph Parra (b. 1990, West Palm Beach, FL) is a Brooklyn-based artist whose painting practice explores the relationship between imagery, desire, and the idealized body figure. Through meticulously constructed compositions with extruded acrylic paint, Parra examines the influence of online imagery on perceptions of intimacy, sexuality, and physical perfection. Combining figurative imagery with an intricate, tactile surface, his work challenges the polished aesthetics of digital culture, emphasizing the contrast between virtual representation and physical experience. His process draws on divisionism and reductionism, using individual dots of saturated, high-gloss paint to build larger images that shift between figuration and abstraction.

Parra's background in painting includes his experience receiving his BFA at the Maryland Institute College of Art in 2012. After attending the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in 2014 and participating in residencies including The Byrdcliffe Artist in Residence Program, Offshore Residency, and Second State Press, he received

his MFA at Hunter College in 2022. His recent solo exhibitions include *the edge of flesh and blood* at Montclair State University and *TechNoir* at ASHES/ASHES in New York.

For this exhibition, he explores themes of the intersection of queer identity, mediated desires, and the exhausting toll of digital culture. It's based on the ideology that there's pressure to project curated, superficial façades that erode our physical and emotional realities. His exhibition follows a deliberate trajectory of single figures to multiple figures per work, moving from highly complex, traditional representations of a perfect exterior into states of blurring, falling, and visual breakdown, as the boundaries between body and space begin to dissolve. The visualization of this unraveling culminates in a metaphorical projection of death and a sequence of wrestling figures that symbolize a singular individual's internal warfare. This is executed with extruded paint that builds a sharp topography of textures, the work subverts all fluid movement, mirroring the harsh friction between smooth online profiles and the raw, universal struggles happening away from the screen.

Artist Statement

We use our phones and other devices to search for validation, inspiration, and intimacy. In my work, I examine how desire is mediated by digital technologies and the ramifications of imagery circulated online. I focus on our obsession with the hyper-idealized body to expose the falsehoods behind the screen. This notion is challenged in the physical topography of textures I create as I manually squeeze paint directly from paint tubes. The individual drops of extruded paint

work together to create a larger image, establishing that each mark has a purpose. Before I start a painting, I go through extensive sketching and testing to achieve divisionism, the separation of colors into dots that interact optically, and reductionism, the economy of mark, condensing information into a dot matrix for maximum efficiency.

I create luscious paint extrusions to reflect the desirable imagery in my work. The paint triggers the senses as it begs to be touched yet is out of reach. This frustrating act of denial confronts the expectations embedded within depictions of sex, power, and perfection. Through generations of queer culture, the muscular male-presenting body remains constant over time. The inherent superficiality of these images and our compulsion to them online is exaggerated with the materiality of acrylic paint selected: high gloss and saturated colors. These unrealistic qualities represent the “fake” and embellished bodies that are physically modified or Photoshopped. By isolating specific body parts, I bring attention to unattainable realities and expectations. The figures are anonymous, containing no identifiable features; they are everyone and no one.

The paintings from a distance are figurative, but as you get closer, the abstract dots and layers become more pronounced. The size and shape of the squeezed paint helps create form, but more importantly, so does the intricate layering. Depending on how much of the first layer I leave visible when squeezing paint on top, I can create light and shadow with gradients and form. I like to think that these dots and their range from light to dark and covered to uncovered reflect

our overlapping “masculine” and “feminine” traits and how they differ from person to person.

The dissemination of photographic documentation online has become the most common way to share artwork. In my work, the three-dimensional paint protruding from the surface enhances the tactile quality that cannot be duplicated in photos online. These textures emphasize that the true nature of a painting can only be experienced in person, just like our real lives exist beyond the digital screen.