

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**SOLO EXHIBITIONS BY CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS JOSÉ PARLÁ AND FAHAMU PECOU PRESENTED WITH WIFREDO LAM RETROSPECTIVE**

ATLANTA, Jan. 16, 2015 – In conjunction with “[Wifredo Lam: Imagining New Worlds](#),” the High Museum of Art presents two solo exhibitions by leading contemporary American artists José Parlá and Fahamu Pecou. In their concurrent exhibitions, on view Feb. 14 through May 24, 2015, Brooklyn-based Parlá and Atlanta-based Pecou respond to the work of Lam, providing contemporary perspectives on his life and career.

The artists examine Lam’s artistic legacy through works that explore their own personal reflections on the artist’s involvement with the Surrealist and Négritude movements, his fusion of African-inspired imagery with that of the natural world, and the influence of the Santeria religion on Lam’s artistic approach.

“These exhibitions provide visitors with a more nuanced understanding of Lam’s enduring impact by presenting two truly unique perspectives on the work of one of the most defining artists of the 20th century,” said Michael Rooks, Wieland Family curator of modern and contemporary art. “It will be fascinating for our audiences to experience the full arc of Lam’s oeuvre in relation to the evolving careers of José and Fahamu, who share so much in common personally yet have very distinct styles.”

Presented in galleries adjacent to the Lam retrospective, the exhibitions feature mostly new work by the artists and include paintings and sculpture, murals, and sound elements. Parlá and Pecou also collaborated on an installation in a third space. Conceived as an “altar to the imagination,” the installation examines the boundlessness of imagination, a theme explored across all three presentations, and further investigates the influence of Santeria on Lam’s work as well as the religion’s impact on the artistic practice and personal lives of Parlá and Pecou.

The Lam, Parlá and Pecou exhibitions all feature bi-lingual wall texts, in both English and Spanish.

Parlá (born 1973) has received critical acclaim for his works, which encompass painting, sculpture and installation, often in dialogue with the rich tradition of muralism and the more recent history of street art. Composed from layers of paint, gestural drawing and found objects, Parlá’s large-scale abstract paintings evoke impressions of the landscape as well as decaying walls along city streets, suggesting density in both urban and natural environments. His layers of calligraphic strokes intimate memories and histories that have been lost or obscured but could erupt from the surface and confront the viewer. This is Parlá’s first museum exhibition, and it follows the November premiere of his monumental commission for One World Trade Center in New York City.

Pecou (born 1975) is a visual artist and scholar whose works combine observations on hip-hop, fine art and popular culture. Pecou interrogates the materialism and machismo of hip-hop culture through painted self-portraits in the guise of a hip-hop star—a persona the artist invented in order to embody the object of his critique. Concurrently, Pecou’s work celebrates the poetic nature of hip-hop’s language, both verbal and physical, as well as its powerful and empowering contribution to an increasingly hybrid global culture. The High owns one drawing by Pecou, which was on view in the

High's summer 2013 exhibition "Drawing Inside the Perimeter." This is Pecou's first major museum exhibition.

Significant works to be featured in the exhibitions include:

José Parlá:

- "Night and Day in London Town," 2012 – A monumental painting more than 40 feet in length that poetically evokes time passing over the course of a day in London and incorporates Parlá's signature calligraphic mark-making.
- "Hackney Canal, Rio Don Diego," 2008 – A large painting inspired by Lam's masterpiece "La Jungla," 1943 (collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New York), through its synthesis of forms that evoke natural imagery and man-made symbols.

Fahamu Pecou:

- A series of new paintings featuring Pecou's self-portrait based on the covers of vintage magazines published by the Johnson Publishing Company, publishers of *Ebony*, *Jet* and numerous other titles. These works bring the impact and influence of the Négritude movement into the present moment.
- Sound stations that cast the visitor as DJ, inviting the public to interact by mixing the sounds of Surrealist and Négritude poetry with hip-hop sampling.

"Wifredo Lam: Imagining New Worlds" features more than 40 paintings and a selection of drawings, prints and ephemera by the internationally renowned Cuban-born artist. Many of Lam's masterworks—drawn from public and private collections across Europe, Latin America and the U.S.—are presented together for the first time in the exhibition, which offers a rare overview and reexamination of the artist's career. The exhibition is organized by the McMullen Museum of Art, Boston College, and is on view at the High from Feb. 14 through May 24, 2015.

About José Parlá

Parlá is a documentarian of city life. Using the backdrop of New York City and many other towns, he re-makes in paint what can appear to be photorealist fragments of what he sees in the chaos and rush of the metropolis. His paintings reflect the accumulated memories and experiences and the walls that show a place that was but no longer is—built over and renewed in some other configuration. Parlá paints revelations—transcriptions of the process—and proof of the history of neighborhoods. Parlá's work shows that words, signs and marks come to mean more over time, in a symphony of diversity, both incongruous and in harmony, which surrounds contemporary life. His practice originated in graffiti's experimental and collaborative approaches during the 1980s, and his markings expose his drive to divulge the passing of time in the moment. Recently, Parlá presented solo exhibitions in New York with Bryce Wolkowitz Gallery, in Tokyo with Yuka Tsuruno Gallery and with Haunch of Venison in London. The artist's work is in the permanent collections of The British Museum, London; Albright-Knox Museum, Buffalo, New York; POLA Museum of Art, Hakone, Japan; and the Burger Collection in Hong Kong. In 2012, the 11th Havana Biennial selected Parlá's "Wrinkles of the City: Havana, Cuba" project, which was completed in the same year, for a vertically integrated collaboration between Parlá and French artist JR. Parlá started painting in the early 1980s, exhibiting his works in the streets of Miami, and studied at Miami Dade College, New World School of the Arts in Miami and Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD).

About Fahamu Pecou

Pecou's paintings, performance art and academic work address concerns surrounding contemporary representations of Black masculinity and how these images affect both the reading and performance of Black masculinity. Currently a Ph.D. student in Emory University's Institute of Liberal Arts (ILA), Pecou maintains an active exhibition schedule as well as leading public lectures and speaking engagements at colleges and museums nationwide. His work is featured in noted private and public collections, including the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University, the High Museum of Art, the Paul R. Jones Collection of American Art at The University of Alabama, Clark Atlanta University Art Collections, the West Collection, and The Museum of Contemporary Art of Georgia (MOCA GA). Pecou also presents a series of curated conversations among figures from the arts and hip-hop communities titled "interSessions" as well as his live talk show concept "The 15 Project," which features guests from a variety of professional disciplines.

Exhibition Organization and Support

"Wifredo Lam: Imagining New Worlds" is organized by the McMullen Museum of Art, Boston College. Support for this exhibition is provided by The Coca-Cola Company, Delta Air Lines, Northern Trust and Turner Voices. Additional support provided by Sandra and Dan Baldwin, Jiong Yan and Baxter Jones, Elizabeth and Chris Willet, and Morgens West Foundation.

About the High Museum of Art

The High is the leading art museum in the southeastern U.S. With more than 14,000 works of art in its permanent collection, the High Museum of Art has an extensive anthology of 19th- and 20th-century American and decorative art; significant holdings of European paintings; a growing collection of African American art; and burgeoning collections of modern and contemporary art, photography, folk art and African art. The High is also dedicated to supporting and collecting works by Southern artists. For more information about the High, visit high.org.

About The Woodruff Arts Center

The Woodruff Arts Center is one of the largest arts centers in the world, home to the Alliance Theatre, the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, the High Museum of Art and Arts for Learning. Each year, these arts organizations play host to over 1.2 million patrons at the Woodruff Arts Center's Midtown Atlanta location, one of the only arts centers in the U.S. to host both visual and performing arts on a single campus. Through its work with educators and schools, the Woodruff Arts Center serves over 300,000 students annually and is the largest arts educator in Georgia.

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