

Spectroscopic

Artist: Jonathan Parsons
Preview: Friday 8 November 6-8.30pm
Exhibition: Saturday 9 November – 8 December
Times: Friday Saturday Sunday 12-5pm

“Some phenomena are highly visible when observed at a small scale. It is remarkable, I think, that a flag atop a distant building and the small print on a till receipt are both equally legible. The sun and the moon have an all-pervasive influence on our lives. Their discs appear to be the same size in the sky and yet, if you make a ‘thumbs-up’ at the end of an outstretched arm, you can entirely blot out either behind your thumbnail.”

Jonathan Parsons

Coleman Project Space is delighted to present Spectroscopic, a solo exhibition by Jonathan Parsons. In these new paintings, drawings and mixed-media works he plays with descriptive words and visual language to explore notions of scale, optics and a sense of wonder in this time of unparalleled access to knowledge – from the handheld to unimaginably vast objects and paradigms beyond our grasp.

Though deeply rooted in manual acts of making, Parsons’ text experiments integrate both digital and material processes, from CGI to solar pyrography, reflecting a rigorous, empirical approach. Here, spectroscopy – the science of measuring and interpreting electromagnetic spectra, which simply means the “observation of radiant energy” – becomes a scalable metaphor for observing and interpreting images in visual art.

The names of rare and remarkable aerial effects, celestial charts and typographical symbols all inform these works that emphasise the physicality of letterforms and other codified languages: they are burned into being, applied as a palimpsest onto surfaces, or engineered into objects. The presentation of constellations and data sets, held like evidence frozen on canvas or paper, evokes a sense of the infinite improbably contained for our contemplation.

But for all the rules governing our existence – and however grounded in what we know – experience, Parsons observes, is a mercurial force, guiding us fantastically, as well as factually, through the complexities of our phenomenological and relational interactions – in the Earthly everyday or far beyond.

Jonathan Parsons was born in 1970 in Redhill, England and works in London. He gained his BA from Goldsmiths in 1992 and his PhD from the University of Gloucestershire in 2022. He is known for the diversity of his practice, which includes installation, sculpture, found objects, drawing, painting and fabrication. He has exhibited internationally in numerous solo and group exhibitions, as well as producing several public art commissions including architectural installations, flag pieces and land art. He was selected for the *British Art Show 5* (2000) and was one of the youngest artists to be included in the notorious *Sensation* exhibition at the Royal Academy of Arts (1997), which toured to Berlin and New York. He co-curated *Seeing Round Corners* for Turner Contemporary, Margate (2016), which attracted more than 150,000 visitors. Other curatorial projects include *Analysis, Disruption, System*, Stiftung Konzeptuelle Kunst, Soest, Germany (2023) and *The Order of Things*, The Wilson, Cheltenham (2017). His work is represented in many private and public collections, including the Arts Council Collection, Government Art Collection (UK), Norwich Castle Museum and Art Gallery, The Jerwood Foundation and the London Transport Museum.

Coleman is an independent art gallery in Bermondsey celebrating its 21st anniversary year