

THE DEAD SUPREME LOS ANGELES

SCOTT COVERT

September 9–October 28, 2023

Parker Gallery is proud to present Scott Covert's first solo presentation in Los Angeles, *THE DEAD SUPREME LOS ANGELES*, following solo exhibitions at the NSU Art Museum in Fort Lauderdale, Florida and Studio Voltaire in London, UK.

A fixture of Downtown New York's art scene of the late 1970s and 1980s, Covert began his ongoing *Monument Painting* series in 1985, encouraged by friends Cookie Mueller and Rene Ricard. Using the technique of frottage on tombstones, these multilayered works dazzle with the names of deceased notable figures who come back to life with the artist's gentle insistence that they be made visible beyond their final resting places.

The artist's practice is necessarily itinerant. He researches places of interment and travels frequently, spending time in cemeteries and graveyards, physically present with his subjects. Bringing sheets of canvas and an assortment of oil sticks, the artist lifts epitaphs from gravestones across the globe, creating a crescendo of overlapping names in varying colors and tonalities, often approaching abstraction. His carefully chosen subjects – significant historical figures, actors, artists, musicians, socialites and convicts, among many others—are depicted alone or in combination with others, the latter lending a narrativizing element drawn upon associative connections.

Blue Houdini highlights a single individual, the infamous magician and escape artist known for his inventive stunts. In this work, Houdini's name is repeated over twenty times down the vertically orientated canvas, sharply foregrounded in some instances, and faded into near obscurity in others. In *Blonde on Blonde*, American bombshell Marilyn Monroe is layered over Candy Darling, a transgender icon and one of Andy Warhol's Superstars. The painting's pared down palette of mostly pinks and whites lends the work an overall quietness that contrasts with the larger-than-life individuals it memorializes.

Some works bring together a dizzying number of figures, as in *A Star on Earth, A Star in Heaven*, a large-scale, multicolored painting teeming with innumerable activists, athletes, artists, composers, musicians and poets from many eras. The title is taken from Karen Carpenter's gravestone, who is immortalized here together with Otis Spann ("Otis played the deepest blues we ever heard. He'll play forever in our hearts") and Lee Strasberg ("Adored husband, loving father"); Paul Robeson ("The artist must elect to fight for freedom or for slavery. I have made my choice. I had no alternative") and Porter Wagoner ("I'll leave this old world with a satisfied mind"). The nature of

Covert's practice is site specific, durational, intimate and deeply human. Through the physical act of transference, the artist's contemporary memento mori honor the dead and establish a guest list for the afterlife's greatest dinner parties.

Scott Covert (b. 1954 in Edison, New Jersey) lives in New York City and works internationally. Recent solo exhibitions include Studio Voltaire, London, England (2023); NSU Art Museum Fort Lauderdale, Fort Lauderdale, FL (2022); F Gallery, Houston, TX (2020) and Situations and FIERMAN, New York, NY (2017). Select group exhibitions include *Basquiat x Warhol. Painting 4 Hands*, Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris, France (2023); *Brigid Berlin: The Heaviest*, Vito Schnabel Gallery, New York, NY (2023); *Agosto Machado: The Forbidden City*, Gordon Robichaux, New York, NY (2022); *Frederick Douglass: Embers of Freedom*, SCAD Museum of Art, Savannah, GA (2019); and *Club 57: Film, Performance, and Art in the East Village, 1978-1983*, curated by Ron Magliozzi and Sophie Cavoulacos with Ann Magnuson, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY (2017). His work is included in the collections of The Bunker, Beth Rudin DeWoody, Palm Beach, FL; The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; and NSU Art Museum, Fort Lauderdale, FL.