

ARTFORUM

Paul Ramirez Jonas

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New York isn't nearly so crowded with commemorative statuary as many older, European cities, but the grammar of the sculptural tribute is familiar and resonant here nonetheless. In *The Commons*, 2011, the centerpiece of his current show, Paul Ramirez Jonas has taken a landmark statue from the Campidoglio in Rome as his model. Ridding the original's military horse of its imperial rider, Marcus Aurelius, the artist has remade the antique bronze in cork. This isn't the first time that the California-born, Honduras-raised Jonas has employed the distinctive material; for 2009's Mercosul Biennial in Brazil, he used it to render a series of alternative plaques for public monuments, effectively transforming the authoritative labels into a collection of open-access notice boards—all were fully stocked with pushpins.

The Commons plows a similar furrow; the life-size sculpture's base is dotted with paper ephemera that appear to have been posted there by visitors. Everything—from press releases to cookie fortunes, offhand doodles to gnomonic pronouncements—fights for position. (I left behind a business card and took away a handwritten recipe for spinach lasagna.) It's the kind of neat interplay between the personal and the municipal—with a nod to the literary if we think of Proust's cork-lined study—that might function well as a Fourth Plinth project for London's Trafalgar Square. In a gallery it feels a bit cooped up but remains a strikingly surreal image. The solitary companion work, a drawing of a seating plan collaged with entrance tickets, hints more quietly at thought around popular engagement.



Paul Ramirez Jonas, *The Commons*, 2011, cork and push pins, 10' 5" x 10' 4" x 5' 4".

— Michael Wilson

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