

to a thriving silk industry during the Soviet era. In these detailed drawings Murillo exposes the town's economic downturn and alludes to the struggles experienced by this once thriving working community.

For the sound work *My name is Belisario*, Murillo asked his father, Belisario, to recount his life story and experiences of life in Colombia. Featuring a recording of this spoken account made in his native Spanish, Murillo has subsequently had it translated into a number of other languages. The work explores the ways in which individual stories, such as those of refugees, can be representative of multiple experiences, and how they can be lost within a cacophony of voices. From his son's birth to his early attempt to flee troubles in Colombia resulting in wrongful imprisonment in a Panama prison, and the family's subsequent move to the UK, the perspective offered by Murillo's father provides a deeply personal and evocative insight into the artist's early life with his family. It sets a context for the ideas and themes that flow through the exhibition.

For talks, events and activities please go to the website or pick up the printed Kettle's Yard calendar.

A special book, to be published in 2020, will document the artist's practice, exhibitions and projects during 2019. Produced in collaboration with the Kunstverein in Hamburg.

### Artist Biography

Oscar Murillo was born in La Paila, Colombia in 1986. He moved to the UK with his family in the 1990s. He earned his BFA in 2007 from the University of Westminster, London, followed by his MFA in 2012 from the Royal College of Art, London. He joined David Zwirner in 2013 and had his inaugural exhibition, titled *A Mercantile Novel*, at the gallery in New York the following year. Murillo's works and projects have been the subject of solo exhibitions at prominent institutions worldwide. Recent presentations were held in 2017 at CAPC Musee d'Art Contemporain de Bordeaux; Concorde, Paris; and the Yarat Contemporary Art Centre, Baku, Azerbaijan. In 2015 Murillo had solo shows at the Museo de Arte de la Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Bogotá; Centro Cultural Daoíz y Velarde, Madrid (part of ArcoColombia 2015); and Artpace, San Antonio, Texas.

With thanks to the artist and all those at Oscar Murillo's studio.

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# OSCAR MURILLO

# VIOLENT AMNESIA

9 APRIL–23 JUNE 2019

Oscar Murillo (b. 1986 La Paila, Colombia) presents a new exhibition of his work featuring paintings, installations and drawings in multiple locations across Kettle's Yard. The title of the exhibition, *Violent Amnesia*, comes from a painting made over a period of four years from 2014 to 2018, exhibited here for the first time.

*Thinking of these two words together, they are like magnets repelling each other. It's about a constant jarring. The title has to do with the idea that the world is upside down. You can see this in the painting, and the West is missing—the US and Europe. Then you have the images of birds coming from the north, suggesting an invasion of sorts. The title, violent amnesia, is trying to capture this idea of forgetting, but doing it in a way that is not easy. I try hard to keep a balance in my work between my desire to think primarily about image-making, texture, form and so on, and this constant awareness of the world, which is something that comes very naturally to me. What's happening in Venezuela, the exodus of people leaving to enter*

*Colombia, for instance. The exhibition title is also about knowing that what I want to express can never be fully realised, can never be fully imagined.*  
—Oscar Murillo

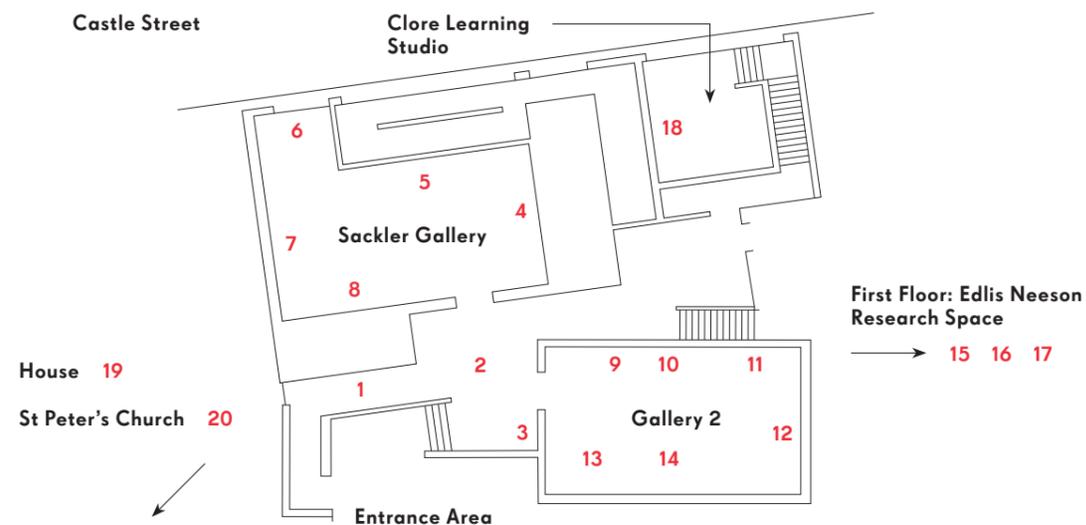
Murillo's multifaceted artistic practice offers a highly charged expression of his own experiences of displacement. Since arriving in London as an immigrant from Colombia with his family at the age of ten, the artist's itinerant life and his continuing experiences of global travel have permeated his works. These range from *flight* drawings made on aeroplanes to large-scale paintings layered with text and images. The works reflect our culture of constant communication and are inspired by the uncertain and acute conditions of our time, whether social, economic or political.

The artist will be performing live on 30 April and 17 May. For more details see the website or our printed calendar.

KETTLE'S YARD



Supported using public funding by  
ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND



- 1 *violent amnesia*, 2019  
Cut vinyl lettering and white paint

#### GALLERY LOBBY

- 2 *The Institute of Reconciliation*, 2014–ongoing  
Oil on canvas, burnt corn and clay
- 3 Alfred Wallis (1855–1942)  
*French lugsail fishing boat*, undated  
Oil on card. Kettle’s Yard collection

#### SACKLER GALLERY

- 4 *violent amnesia*, 2014–18  
Graphite, oil and oil stick on canvas and linen, grommets and stainless steel rail
- 5 *(untitled) law*, 2018–19  
Oil, oil stick, graphite on canvas and velvet
- 6 *untitled*, 2015–16  
Oil on canvas and linen, grommets and stainless steel rail
- 7 *The Institute of Reconciliation*, 2014–ongoing  
Oil on canvas, coins, burnt corn and clay
- 8 *surge*, 2017–18  
Oil and oil stick on canvas and linen

#### GALLERY 2

- 9–13 *(untitled) catalyst*, 2018–19  
Oil and graphite on canvas
- 14 *The Institute of Reconciliation*, 2014–ongoing  
Oil on canvas, grommets, stainless steel rail, church pews, burnt corn and clay

#### EDLIS NEESON RESEARCH SPACE

- 15 *organisms from all countries unite*, 2016  
Graphite, oil stick and coloured pencil on paper with carbon paper in artist’s frames
- 16 *My name is Belisario*, 2016  
Audio recordings, copper table, artist’s own rug
- 17 *The Institute of Reconciliation*, 2014–ongoing  
Oil on canvas, burnt corn, clay, pen, pencil, graphite and carbon on paper (in the vitrine on the landing)

#### CLORE LEARNING STUDIO

- 18 *Frequencies*, 2015  
Mixed media  
*Frequencies* is a long term project devised by Oscar Murillo, as a collaboration with students aged primarily 10 to 16 from schools across the globe

#### HOUSE

- 19 *flight #*, 2019  
All works pen, pencil, graphite and carbon on paper, Perspex frame

#### ST PETER’S CHURCH

- 20 *The Institute of Reconciliation*, 2014–ongoing  
5 papier-mâché and fabric effigies, church pews, burnt corn and clay

Please do not touch the works.

*I was in Tokyo in 2017 about to take a bullet train to Nagoya and was struck by a term in Japanese culture ‘Mono no aware’ [物の哀れ] which roughly translates as ‘the pathos of things’ and can also be understood as a sorrow or misery, or sensitivity. While ‘Mono’ refers to ‘things’, there is a sense of melancholy associated with ‘Mono no aware’. It is not meant to be a general sadness but rather a deeply felt emotion that washes over us as individuals as we realise that everything is transient and in its own time and space, and place. This moment became a symbolic catalyst for the Cambridge exhibition with the idea that my energy becomes physically imbued in these materials, paintings, and mark-making.*

—Oscar Murillo

For Murillo the motif of the bird, a creature that is able to migrate freely and without restriction, provides a counterpoint to the human experience of crossing borders. This sense of freedom, as well as the vibrant colour and energy found in paintings such as *surge*, 2017–18, and *(untitled) law*, 2018–19, is juxtaposed in the exhibition by the use of dark colours, overlapping or obscured imagery, and violence.

The sprawling installation *The Institute of Reconciliation*, 2014–ongoing, dominates both galleries with sections of canvas that have been steeped in dense black paint and hung from the walls or ceilings. In the Sackler Gallery, some of these canvases have been used to create marks across the walls, and a large stitched work crosses the space between the galleries, disrupting the viewer’s physical and emotional understanding of the exhibition. The silence and intensity of these works suggests ritual or mourning.

Many of the works in the exhibition share this intensity. Influences from Murillo’s early life flow through the work and certain personal memories particularly resonate. For instance, he has spoken of the impact that growing up near a sugar factory in La Paila, Colombia, had on him as a child. La Paila is a working class factory town that Murillo recalls as having been disrupted sporadically by the spewing of black ash from the nearby factory as they burned sugar. A ‘black snow’ descended on the town, coating the ground and dramatically altering the mood of the streets. He also recalls a flight taken more recently from Israel to Azerbaijan, on which he was aware that a corpse was being transported. During the night, the same plane made a steep turn to avoid the airspace of a troubled territory below; this moment of unexpected drama revealed to Murillo a landscape outside submerged in blackness.

The dark canvases of *The Institute of Reconciliation* and the *catalyst* series, 2011–ongoing, also evoke the work of avant-garde artist Kazimir Malevich

(1879–1935, Russian), especially his painting *Black Square*, 1913, which was originally conceived as a curtain for the futurist opera *Victory over the Sun* and remains influential among artists working today for its radical shift away from naturalist tendencies in painting. In contrast, Murillo has selected a work by painter and fisherman Alfred Wallis (1855–1942, British), from Kettle’s Yard’s collection to be part of the exhibition. Wallis was known for his intuitive ability to depict the ‘real’ energy of the sea through expressive brushstrokes using modest materials such as pieces of cardboard and ship paint. Through processes unique to his practice, Murillo too challenges the conventions of painting today. For example in the *catalyst* series, which was conceived in 2011, a ‘master canvas’ is first saturated with paint; Murillo then places another canvas on top and works into it on the floor of his studio using a stylus. Through this process, paint is transferred between the two canvases, creating highly energised marks. In this series Murillo typically employs a limited palette of red, black and blue—readily available colours that are associated with printed and written communication in our everyday lives.

Elsewhere in *The Institute of Reconciliation*, a cape-like garment has been adorned with coins and is left on the floor of the gallery. Burnt corn and clay sculptures are scattered around the spaces. Murillo has combined the corn, which is regarded as a staple food of working people in Colombia, together with clay that is fired in a kiln. Through the burnt corn and coins, Murillo references the economy, destruction, exploitation of labourers and consumption.

*The Institute of Reconciliation* spills out from Kettle’s Yard into St Peter’s Church. Five inanimate figures await visitors to the space; some are dressed in workers’ uniforms, some appear to have suffered wounds of sorts, burnt corn and clay sculptures spilling from their torsos through sections of industrial ventilation pipe. The work not only recalls the Colombian tradition of the making of *Mateos*, which are models made and burned in celebration of the New Year, but also suggests human life as labour; an expendable resource that suffers the oppressive and damaging effects of its own output. In the context of this unique space, the figures appear as spectators waiting for something to occur; yet as a group they also become a spectacle themselves.

In the Research Space, *organisms from all countries unite*, 2016, comprises drawings that have been made by another artist from photographs taken by Murillo whilst on a trip to the small village of Sheki in Northern Azerbaijan. Murillo then has worked on top of the drawings. In close proximity to the current border with Russia, Sheki was once an important post on the ancient Silk Road and more recently host