

Oscar Murillo: Violent Amnesia 9 April – 23 June 2019

Press view:

5 April 2019, 11am –1pm



Oscar Murillo, *violent amnesia*, 2014–2018, Graphite, oil, oil stick, grommets and stainless steel on canvas and linen, 300 × 164 × 15 cm, Photograph by Matthew Hollow © Oscar Murillo

Oscar Murillo (b. 1986 La Paila, Colombia) will be presenting new work at Kettle's Yard this spring, his first solo exhibition at a UK public institution since his acclaimed 2013 exhibition at South London Gallery. Murillo's multifaceted artistic practice offers a highly charged expression of his experience of displacement. Including painting, installation, drawings and performance, the exhibition will be as much a live transmission as a static display, reflecting the artist's itinerant life since arriving in London as an immigrant from Colombia with his family in the 1990s.

Murillo will be using spaces across Kettle's Yard, including the window on Castle Street, St Peter's Church, the lower floor of the Kettle's Yard House and the Research Space, as well as areas between and near the galleries themselves. The title of the exhibition, 'Violent Amnesia', derives from a painting made over a period of four years from 2014 to 2018, exhibited here for the first time. The exhibition's jarring title highlights the artist's interest in collective forgetting, expressing a precarious relationship between anxiety and inertia that is made evident in Murillo's dynamic practice.

In the first gallery, Murillo will show a new group of paintings from his 'catalyst' series (2011 ongoing). Each work is made by saturating a canvas in paint before covering it with another canvas and using a broomhandle to transfer paint in an energetic mark-making process that involves the artist's whole body. Made on the floor of the studio and deliberately allowed to subsume dirt, dust and other accidental substances, these intense canvases, in deep blues, reds, and blacks, are as much representations of Murillo's energy and process – in a way a form of automatic painting – as they are discrete works.

In the second gallery, further new paintings will be exhibited. For *violent amnesia* (2014–2018) Murillo has adapted the format of his well known 'banner' paintings. An unstretched canvas hangs loosely as though it were a flag, removed from the traditional strictures of painting. While a number of previous banner paintings were executed in monochromatic black, as in the artist's monumental flag installation for the 56th Venice Biennale (2015), in this work Murillo has incorporated a pastiche of colourful figurative images, including the outlines of continents and images of birds. For the artist, the birds, which are able to migrate freely without restriction, provide a significant counterpoint to the human experience of movement.

My Name is Belisario, an installation reconfigured for Kettle's Yard and shown in the UK for the first time, involves the artist's father describing his experience of migrating to London from Colombia. Belisario speaks in Spanish but visitors can also choose to hear the narrative in English, Bengali, Arabic and French, all of which are spoken in different Cambridge communities. The work explores how individual stories can be lost in a cacophony of voices, whilst also emphasising how a personal narrative can translate and reflect the stories of other refugees in the UK and around the world.

A new performance work will link the gallery spaces, using some of the same materials as Murillo's performance at the 10th Berlin Biennale in 2018, including a black cape-like costume and sculptures made from baked clay and corn.

Outside the galleries, there will be a number of drawings on show in the Kettle's Yard House and a series of sculptural works, *collective conscience* (2018 ongoing), installed in St Peter's Church, next to Kettle's Yard. Human-scaled cloth effigies of blue-collar workers, split open to reveal batteries, wires and Lego blocks, these sculptures derive from a Colombian New Year's Eve ritual in which effigies are typically burnt at midnight to rid the community of any bad energy associated with the previous year. The installation addresses a recurrent theme in the artist's work: human labour within a global capitalist system, in particular an interrogation of the position of workers who are implicated as both producers and consumers within what the artist sees as a stagnating system.



Oscar Murillo, *catalyst #28*, 2018, Oil and graphite on canvas, 260 x 235 cm, Photograph by Matthew Hollow © Oscar Murillo
Courtesy the artist



Oscar Murillo, *surge*, 2017–2018, Oil and oil stick on canvas and linen, Photograph by Matthew Hollow © Oscar Murillo
Courtesy the artist

Notes to Editors

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About Oscar Murillo

Oscar Murillo's (b. 1986) work constitutes a sustained and evolving investigation of notions of community, informed by cross-cultural personal ties, as well as the constant transnational movement that has become integral to his practice. Executed in a wide range of media including painting, installation, video work and actions, Murillo's work explores themes such as globalisation, production and consumption, and labour and migration, and challenges modes of address and display embedded in the contemporary art world. Murillo 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 musée 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.

About Kettle's Yard

Kettle's Yard is one of Britain's best galleries - a beautiful and unique house with a distinctive modern art collection, and a gallery exhibiting modern and contemporary art. Supporting this is an established learning and community engagement programme, archive, and programme of chamber concerts. In February 2018, Kettle's Yard reopened after a two-year development by architect Jamie Fobert. The new Kettle's Yard includes major new exhibition galleries, generous education spaces, a café and new welcome areas. Kettle's Yard's mission is to contribute to society by inspiring and engaging audiences through art, learning and research of the highest quality. We believe that great art should not be the privilege of the few, but for everyone. Our values reflect Kettle's Yard's creator Jim Ede's support for artists and belief in art's power to make us look again and change how we act in the world.