

KUKJE GALLERY | PRESS RELEASE

Oscar Murillo Solo Exhibition *Catalyst*

Press Conference: November 29 (Thurs.), 2018, 11AM at Kukje Gallery K2 & K3

Exhibition Dates: November 29, 2018 – January 6, 2019

Venue: Kukje Gallery K2 and K3 spaces

Making art is a necessity of sorts to me. It is important to note that from an early stage it has always been about how inner energy can be physically manifested—the painting and formal concerns of making art became the most radical, extensive, and exhaustive way to manifest these fields and frequencies of inner energy.

- Oscar Murillo

Kukje Gallery is pleased to announce *Catalyst*, a solo exhibition of work by Oscar Murillo on view from November 29, 2018, to January 6, 2019. A timely introduction to the expansive oeuvre the artist has developed over the past six years, Murillo's first solo presentation in Korea will be comprised of approximately 20 works. These include an installation of sprawling black canvases punctuated by his *flight* drawings, *catalyst* paintings, and a new video work. In addition Murillo will show paintings from his ongoing series of composite paintings. The installation in the gallery's K2 and K3 spaces will profoundly reinterpret the white cube, infusing it with a state of tension and condensed energy.

Born in 1986 in Colombia, Oscar Murillo immigrated to London with his family in 1997. Murillo is best known for his dynamic painting style that is marked by ferocious scribbles of oil paint on fabrics of varying sizes and textures that are then stitched together to create unique assemblages. A closer look into his practice, however, reveals that the artist possesses a vast and highly idiosyncratic vocabulary wherein he responds to each exhibition's specific context, an approach that allows the artist to combine various mediums including drawing, print, painting, video, installation, and performance.

One of the underlying themes that run through Murillo's practice is the "impossibility of settlement¹," a response not entirely irrelevant to his experience as an immigrant and as an internationally active artist constantly on the go. In addition, Murillo is part of a generation that has experienced social media's desensitizing effects on the perception of sociopolitical conflicts. For the artist, production is not confined to his studio, and each medium he selects, rather than reaffirm their formal and symbolic values, functions as a recording membrane—capturing the impressions from his itinerant observations and serving as a physical embodiment of his automatic acts of "drawing."

¹ Victor Wang, "Horizons in Flight Mode," in *Oscar Murillo: the build-up of content and information* (Hong Kong: David Zwirner Books, 2018), 31.

The *flight* drawings, installed intermittently throughout the exhibition space, offer an archived trajectory of the parenthetical time that the artist has spent in transit, usually on airplanes or in hotels. The drawings resemble a multi-layered stream of consciousness, as if a complex chain of thoughts and information has been downloaded from the brain through the artist's hand, only then to escape through the tip of the ballpoint pen. Despite this frenzied energy, however, there still exists a sense of order within Murillo's obsessive mark-making, materialized in repeated renderings of flight paths, maps, signs, and initials. Securing a physical distance from the ground, flying creates a fissure in even the most basic unit of measurement of time. Yet, given that flight paths are governed by the political landscapes thousands of meters below (i.e. national borders, travel and trade routes, etc.) the dynamics of flying are inseparable from the laws of the ground. As such, flight provides the artist an opportunity to observe the current social conditions through a more horizontal and abstract lens. Together with the *flight* drawings, the exhibition will showcase a video work that highlights mobility and explores the perpetual state of flux embodied in the drawings.

Exhibited in K3, Murillo has installed a grouping of his large *catalyst* paintings. This ongoing series expands upon the elements of psychological anxiety imbued in his drawings, translating them into fields of condensed, dynamic energies. Murillo likens the production of these paintings to a physical process of consuming and expending energy. The artist depends solely on elementary tools to accumulate physical energy on the canvas, committing himself to the automatic, intuitive process of mark-making—a process that is reminiscent of a ritual, whereby one reaches a state of catharsis through a repetitive act. In this way, the *catalysts* also bear resemblance to action painting as it grants significance to the act itself. As alluded to in the title, Murillo's paintings are not merely a byproduct of this action, but the impetus that creates and sustains his versatile works beyond the white cube.

In K2 and K3, Murillo's black canvases serve to reconcile his various works into a cohesive context. This approach to installation plays a significant role within the artist's overall practice as it reflects his interest in the exhibition space as an interactive arena—open both to the surrounding environment and audience—that allows for new and ongoing interpretations of the work. Coated with multiple layers of black paint on each side, the canvases are cut and then sewn back together into new compositions in collaboration with family members and friends. The canvases are subsequently left on the floor of the studio and allowed to age; some also travel to various exhibition spaces where they collect their own patina of dust, dirt, and the remnants of time. In this way, the black canvases remain open to variable conditions of the everyday. First presented in 2015 at the Museo de Arte de la Universidad Nacional de Colombia, this vast collection of black canvases were also draped over the façade of the Central Pavilion at the 56th Venice Biennale that same year. Later they were installed as part of the Anyang Public Art Project in 2016 and the Sharjah Biennial in 2017, with each exhibition reflecting its site specificity. At Kukje Gallery, a group of black canvases will be exhibited alongside a series of sculptures made from corn and clay. These organic pieces are sculpted to embody infinitely mutable forms that serve as a metaphor for the cycle of production and consumption.

Also on view in K2 are Murillo's composite paintings, an ongoing series the artist has engaged with since 2013. One of the artist's most recognizable bodies of work, here patches of fabric in various scales are recomposed to create a singular pictorial plane, an amalgam of different patterns, textures, and symbols. Added to the surface are energetic and abstract brushstrokes, which echo the unregulated lines in the *flight* drawings and *catalyst* paintings. Evoking a patchwork of different times and places, this particular series of paintings compresses and edits found imagery from travel ephemera, appropriated texts, and numeric symbols. Representing a kind of dark remnant of globalization and capitalism, these elements are assembled one on top of the other, infused with a sense of acceleration amidst the fragments of different geographical regions.

Throughout his practice, Murillo actively maintains an emotional and physical distance from the ongoing sociopolitical conflicts around the world by positioning himself in a self-imposed, perpetual displacement and challenging the notion of stability. The stitched, drawn, or painted lines dominant in his work have been interpreted as a visual metaphor for the divisions, thresholds, and liminal spaces that govern contemporary conditions—alluding to capital flows, flight paths, and migratory routes. Attesting to his faith in an artist's responsibility to engage the dark currents underlying politics and to raise awareness of the urgency for a "horizontal connectedness," the mainstays of his itinerant practice speaks to art's potential as a catalyst for reconciling with one's past, present, and future.

Social media allows you to transcend physicality and you become aware of difference, both culturally and geographically. Then somehow I feel completely entitled. I feel entitled to be in Asia, to be in North Africa and Latin America. And even in Europe and in the U.S., and not necessarily align myself with any of those histories. But totally at the same time, it becomes kind of [as if] you don't owe anything to anybody. And I think for me that is what is important. I think that through my practice, I transcend [these concerns]. I do not feel like I have to relate.

- Oscar Murillo

About the Artist

Oscar Murillo (b. 1986) earned his B.F.A. from the University of Westminster (2007) and his M.F.A. from the Royal College of Art, London (2012). Murillo's works are fundamentally tied to questions about the cycle of labor, production, consumption, and the environment where he produces them. Murillo has incorporated discarded candy wrappers and labels from food cans into his rough-textured paintings, juxtaposing them with vibrant colors. Murillo often integrates performative elements and dialogue within the exhibition surroundings. For his most well-known event/exhibition in New York, Murillo reenacted the factory production line of the famous Colombian chocolate manufacturer *Colombina*, opening up a dialogue on a wide range of issues surrounding the dynamics of class, economy, and power.

Murillo's prodigious practice has been the focus of many important solo exhibitions at numerous institutions including Haus der Kunst, Munich (2017), CAPC musée d'art contemporain de Bordeaux (2017), Yarat Contemporary Art Centre, Baku (2016), and South London Gallery (2013). Selected group exhibitions include the 10th Berlin Biennale (2018), Sharjah Biennial 13 (2017), the 5th Anyang Public Art Project (2016), and the 56th Venice Biennale (2015). Murillo's works are housed in major museums and private collections, including the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, Rubell Family Collection, Miami, Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst (S.M.A.K.), Ghent, among others.

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Oscar Murillo (b.1986)
pulsating frequencies
2018

Oil, oil stick and graphite on canvas and linen
210 x 295 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Kukje Gallery

Photo: Mathew Hollow

Image provided by Kukje Gallery



Oscar Murillo (b.1986)

AAAA/

2018

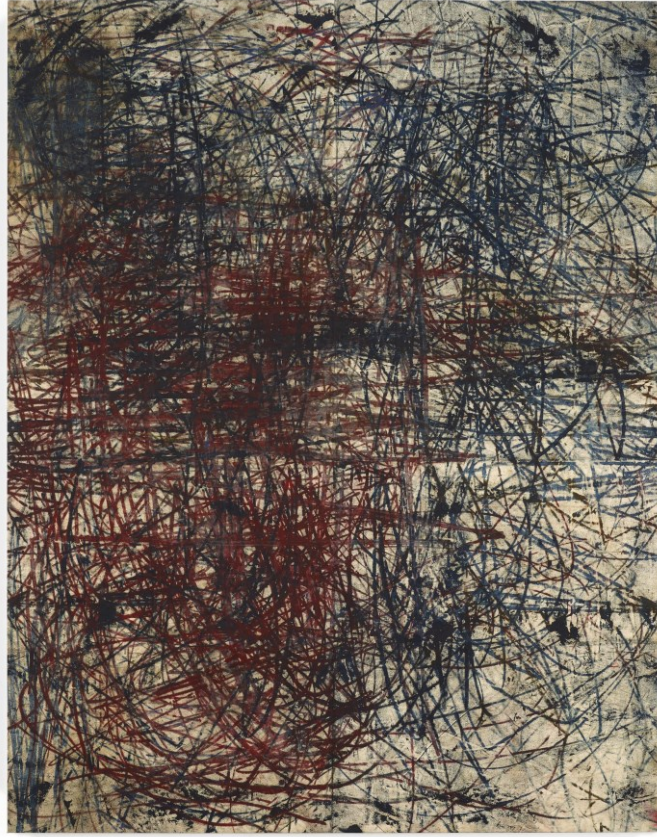
Oil, oil stick and graphite on canvas, linen and velvet

165 x 170 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Kukje Gallery

Photo: Mathew Hollow

Image provided by Kukje Gallery



Oscar Murillo (b.1986)

(untitled) catalyst

2018

Oil and graphite on canvas

210 x 165 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Kukje Gallery

Photo: Mathew Hollow

Image provided by Kukje Gallery



Oscar Murillo (b.1986)

flight #69

2018

Pen, pencil, graphite and carbon on paper in Perspex frame

42 x 31.5 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Kukje Gallery

Photo: Mathew Hollow

Image provided by Kukje Gallery