

The machinations of the art market tend to distort. Oscar Murillo's rise has indeed been sensational and, along with the attendant opening up of possibilities, there has followed, at times, a somewhat lazy levelling of the complexities of his work and an overemphasis on persona. Murillo's paintings are a central component of his expansive practice and form the strong vertebrae of his studio-based production. He works additionally with performance, installation, drawing, film and video, although it is primarily through painting that Murillo unpicks concerns with form, materiality and the intricacies of composition. It is this medium which best allows him to convey his experience of, as he says, 'being out in the world'. His paintings absorb, accrue and record a concentration of interests and information compressed in one place.

HSBC, pork pashtuk (2014–15) catalogues the range of Murillo's painterly marks, including the automatic, where the breeding of dirt and dust in the cradle of the studio infuses cotton duck with a ready patina. Murillo is very hands-on in his practice of painting, though rarely heavy handed in the making of a mark: he continues to experiment with mediating processes where colour, pattern or sign infused on one fragment of canvas might be transferred to another; a broomstick may be employed as a stylus to work directly on the surface, or again to transfer line through another canvas acting as a carbon. The canvas support that holds *pork, oriental, tea* (2014–15) is comprised of sewn panels, some of which have been used to transfer information onto this or other paintings before inclusion. For Murillo, the act of sewing is a compositional and conceptual device that alludes to things bound together for the first time over and above the act of mending something broken. Materials as well as actions carry symbolic weight in his practice: canvas, corn, dirt, silk, dust, tea and pork serve to locate Murillo in the multicultural diversity of London as experienced through the signage, currency and food products on offer in the environs of his studio. Others may reach back to the first decade of his life spent in Colombia. Paintings may be presented folded, stacked, or unstretched and recumbent on tables, as in *Condiciones aún por titular* (Conditions still to be determined) (2015), hung as a banner or heraldic tapestry as in *trade today* (2015) or the improvised curtain wall of *binary function* (2015).

A work presented at the 56th Venice Biennale – *signalling devices for now bastard territories* (2015) – signals the intent of Murillo's practice and the role of painting therein. Several layers of ivory black oil paint are applied and then burnished into what feels like, and is experienced as, heavy compressed material hanging down from the portico. On the exterior wall behind hangs a photographic copy of worker's documents belonging to Murillo's father before emigration from Colombia. Time is here compressed and fossilized. Murillo is not singularly interested in an issue, but the range of his concerns – identity, hybridity, difference, dislocation and decolonization – are compressed and concentrated in the frenetic energy of a materialist ritual. These black works quantify the information gathered through his investigations with a radical negativity: the signalling devices have absorbed the detritus of a failed millennium. There is nothing left, all has collapsed. A void clears the way for new possibilities – post-national, perhaps post-human – maybe even in paint.

– John Slyce

OSCAR MURILLO Born 1986, La Paila, Colombia. Lives and works in London and La Paila. **Selected Solo Exhibitions:** 2016 – 'meet me! Mr. Superman', Nouveau Musée National de Monaco; Yarat Contemporary Art Centre, Baku, Azerbaijan; 2015 – 'binary function', David Zwirner, London; 2014 – 'we don't work sundays', Marian Goodman Gallery, Paris. **Selected Group Exhibitions:** 2016 – 'Not New Now', 6th Marrakech Biennale, Morocco; 'The Future is Already Here – It's Just Not Evenly Distributed', Sydney Biennale; 2015 – 'Full of Peril and Weirdness: Painting as a Universalism', M Woods, Beijing; 2014 – 'The Forever Now: Contemporary Painting in an Atemporal World', The Museum of Modern Art, New York. **Selected Bibliography:** 2016 – Gabriel Coxhead, 'Oscar Murillo, David Zwirner', *Modern Painters*, Jan; 2015 – Clara Dublanc (ed.), *Oscar Murillo: Frequencies*, David Zwirner Books, New York; 2014 – James Cahill, 'London: Oscar Murillo at South London', *Art in America*, Mar; 2012 – Catherine Wood, 'Dirty Painting', *Mousse*, Oct–Nov.



1.

1. *pork, oriental, tea*, 2014–15
Oil and oil stick on canvas and linen
225.1 × 225.1 cm / 88 7/8 × 88 7/8 in
2. *HSBC, pork pashtuk*, 2014–15
Oil and oil stick on canvas and linen
290.2 × 250.2 cm / 114 1/4 × 98 1/2 in
3. *trade today*, 2015
Oil and graphite on canvas and linen
with steel
440 × 950 × 39 cm / 173 1/4 × 374 × 15 3/8 in



2.

