

Press release

Oscar Muñoz | El Coleccionista

25 January, 2020 – 7 March 2020

Opening: Friday, 24 January 2020, 6–9pm

carlier | gebauer is pleased to announce *El Coleccionista*, a solo exhibition of recent works by Oscar Muñoz. One of the most significant artists working in Colombia today, Muñoz has exhibited extensively throughout the Americas, yet has received comparably less exposure to date in Europe. *El Coleccionista* is his first solo exhibition in Germany and his first exhibition with carlier | gebauer.

Since the 1990s, Muñoz has developed a reputation for his use of ephemeral materials to explore elusive phenomena such as history, memory, loss, and time. His hybrid works combine photographic processes with drawing, painting, printmaking, installation, video, and sculpture in an attitude of alchemical experimentation. Muñoz's work stages scenarios in which we witness the accumulation, dissolution, deterioration, or disintegration of the image. Manipulating evanescent elements like water, dust, heat, sun, and time, he has poetically reflected upon the fleeting nature of the human condition through unconventional formats such as mirrored portraits activated by breath or a vanishing self-portrait made with water on hot cement.

In the exhibition's title work, the video installation *El Coleccionista (The Collector)*, a long, slender shelf spans the wall of a darkened room bearing sheets of blank white paper in various sizes. A spectral, practically transparent man slowly navigates the length of the wall, placing pictures on the shelf or otherwise moving, removing, or rearranging them. A collection of faces appears and disappears in these images: celebrities, politicians, art historical figures, and anonymous individuals. As an accumulation of intersubjective experiences—of seeing and being seen—this wide range of photographic material melds together as a fluctuating stream of memory, ranging from snapshots and newspaper photographs to studio portraits and mugshots. The inherent instability of the image and its relationship to the processes of memory, particularly as it relates to history and political events in the artist's native Colombia, is equally present in the works *Seis Intentos* and *Ludovico's Method*. In *Seis Intentos*, portraits of anonymous deceased individuals sourced from newspaper obituaries slowly distort before they dissolve and slip down a drain, only to reappear when the film is reversed. While *Seis Intentos* alludes to that which recedes from the individual's view, but not from their memory, *Ludovico's Method* gestures towards something that one is forced to witness. An ocular speculum, like the one used to pry open Alex's eyes in *A Clockwork Orange*, holds a small projection screen playing Muñoz's video *Horizonte*, which contains fragments of a 1953 historical film document where the first Liberal guerrillas of Colombia deliver weapons.

If a photograph fixes a moving image in perpetuity, extracting it from the moving stream of life, then Oscar Muñoz's work operates in the temporal zone just before or after this decisive moment—a “proto-photographic” space. His practice circles around the moment of capture, the instance of becoming, charting “the pregnant moment between latent and visible image, between being and not, between memory and forgetting.”

Oscar Muñoz (b.1951, Popayán) lives and works in Cali, Colombia where he founded the independent non-profit space Lugar a Dudas. He has participated in numerous solo and group exhibitions internationally at venues such as MoMA, New York; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Philadelphia Museum of Art; Fondation Cartier, Paris; SFMoMA, San Francisco; Jeu de Paume; Paris, Mori Art Museum, Tokyo; and The Museo Tamayo, Mexico City. Among other biennials, his work has been featured in the 51st and 52nd editions of the Venice Biennale. Muñoz's works in significant collections, including Tate Modern, London; MoMA, New York; Fundación

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Angeles County Museum (LACMA), Los Angeles; Pérez Art Museum, Miami; Philadelphia Museum of Art; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; and SFMoMA, San Francisco.