

Press release

Diego Delas | *Speak, Memory*

28.02.-18.04.2026

Opening: Saturday, 28 February, 2026, 12 - 3 pm

carlier | gebauer is pleased to announce *Speak, Memory*, Diego Delas' first solo exhibition with the gallery.

How to find that which is lost?
on Diego Delas' *Speak, Memory*

Expanding on recent research and bodies of work, *Speak, Memory* explores the remnants of vernacular culture in Spain, looking into the virtually lost practice of domestic amulet making. Featuring large, suspended pieces, the exhibition reconfigures the gallery space into a playful scenario echoing a stage-like theatre of sorts, to engage with the challenging times we are living in.

The colourful hovering elements refer to the animal realm by displaying forms and shapes such as cod teeth, a donkey head, floral attires as well as birds and chestnuts. Regularly found in amulets and talismans, this set of symbols projects an animistic worlding reminiscent of pre-Christian cosmological views. At the same time, the stylisation imposed onto the animal representations, creating silhouettes rather than clearly defined images, suggests a movement towards abstraction configuring a form of communication capable of conveying meaning without words, in what would be a rehearsal for a language.

While echoing ancient pagan cosmologies, the simplicity of the animal representation namely the rough quality of the silhouettes grows out of Delas' handmade methods, employing self-taught techniques of production, eschewing collaboration with artisans and with it the very idea of craftsmanship. Such methodology and outcomes echo the homemade features of the original amulets, employing knowledge passed on through generations. Domestic labour standing as both education and ritual, repetition as a means to channel and substantiate needs and desires, their combination leading to a strategic alignment of events and materiality.

Delas' decision to revive intimate gestures and symbols from the past begs the question of what they might tell us about the present. Amulets were often produced in impoverished farming contexts, their progressive disappearance taking place in parallel with radical social shifts as a result of scientific developments revolutionising labour and agricultural conditions. Today, technology is yet again generating important changes in our societies, from labour to politics, thoroughly impacting the ways we engage with the world. Arguably Artificial Intelligence is one of the leading actors triggering a dramatic paradigm shift by compressing knowledge from millennia into immediacy. Then and now, a growing sense of powerlessness flourishes in tandem with generalised feelings of anxiety as the narratives and symbols which grounded life in recent times steadily collapse.

Delas seems to offer a much-needed, albeit humble, relief from both apocalyptic readings of the now and nostalgic yearning for the past, suggesting a different take on the challenges of the present. Similarly to the original context of amulet production, the approximation to pagan iconography, the allusion to language beyond words and the alignment with ancient domestic means of production become source codes in the artist's exploration of a locally grounded and yet universal grammar. At the same time, such vernacular roots signals the renunciation of ideas related to authorship - of craft, religion or labour - abandoning positions of authority to rehearse unmediated, non-hierarchical and community-bound conceptions of life.

Delas' insistence on manual labour brushes against the grain of current and almost unrestricted predominance of purportedly dematerialised technology. It is a tentative stance of endurance which draws strength from beliefs and gestures lost in the whirlwind of time. It encourages us to slow down the voracious rhythms of consumption and nurture gentle acts of devotion towards oneself and the other, which we seem to have forgotten. The exhibition rechoreographs ancestral spiritual rituals via manual labour to create image-fables that reflect the fleeting, magical qualities of life as well as prompting its many lived and imagined possibilities.

Text by João Laia, artistic director of Galeria Municipal do Porto

Diego Delas (b. 1983, Aranda de Duero) lives and works in Málaga. After graduating from Architecture and Fine Art in Madrid, he continues his studies in London receiving an MA in Painting from the Royal College of Art and later a PhD from the Ruskin College of Art, University of Oxford. He has also received prestigious scholarships and awards such as the AHRC Doctoral Training Partnership from the University of Oxford, and more recently the Botín Foundation scholarship. His work has also been selected for the Thyssen Bornemitzsa Foundation, TBA21-Academy, Cervezas Alhambra Award for Emerging Art, Paulo Cunha e Silva Award, Generación Award, Montemadrid Foundation Award, BARCU Fair in Bogotá, Lucy Halford Bursary, Windfall Bursary and RCA (HEFCE) Student Bursary for the Royal College of Art in London, among others.

His work has been exhibited in solo and group exhibitions internationally, with works acquired by collections such as the MUSAC (Castilla y Leon Museum of Contemporary Art), the Montemadrid Foundation, the DKV Collection, the Kells Collection and the Cervezas Alhambra Collection, a.o.