



OSCAR MURILLO TRADES HALL & INSTITUTE

21 September — 19 October 2019
Preview: 5:00 AM breakfast,
Saturday 21 September 2019

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You feel a shadow over a dark moment. What, on a symbolic level, does that darkness signify? Evil? Something else?

I think we all feel that darkness is menacing. Just the other night, I was at home, in my yard, behind which there is a jungle of sorts. At night, if you turn on a light, bugs come flooding in. There are a lot of bats too, and one of them lost its bearings in the front yard – I've got it on video.

Bats live in the shadows.

Exactly. Seeing the bat like that – the way that shadow suddenly appeared – sent me running; it was so black it didn't seem real. And that must be what people experience when they see all those black canvases like shadows – that must be the impression they make on them. I don't think it's something we think explicitly, but we all carry that weight one way or another. It's important that the work be abstract, so that the person has the chance to project whatever they want, to see what they see, as if it were a religion. [...] I see these canvases as symbolic manifestations that don't really have a particular purpose. They are more like abstract spaces where you can unload a weight. In that sense, they are perfect, even if, at first, they produce an immediate sense of repulsion. But if you wait a little, there is a chance for relief, a chance to discharge all that energy.

[...] The day before yesterday [...] I was in a small town called Salento, in the coffee region. The town is like a colonial stage set or something, all painted over; it's in the middle of the mountains and full of tourists. We were walking along and we came to the lowest point in the town, where a cockfight was going on. I'd never seen one before; the cocks, embroiled in their fight, were very agile as they went at one another. About ten minutes in – maybe less – the two cocks started bleeding. I mean, it was really something, extremely visceral. Two animals wasting all that energy, for no reason whatsoever, going at it so hard they nearly die – some of them do die after the fights.

I couldn't make myself stay. But that was another manifestation, a moment when despite all that purity – the thin air, the landscape – despite all that beauty, violence broke out. Everything boils down to that moment of violence.

Extracts from an interview between María Belén Sáez de Ibarra and Oscar Murillo, published in Oscar Murillo, 2017 (Munich: Haus Der Kunst)

Performance documentation: Zaira Caicedo, courtesy the artist
Cover image: Oscar Murillo, *conditions unknown* (video still), 2019, courtesy the artist