

OSCAR MUÑOZ (b. 1951, Colombia)

“How can one construe a notion of time in this immemorial setting? How can one assimilate and articulate in one’s memory all these events that have been happening for so many years now?”

Born in Popayán, Colombia, Oscar Muñoz studied art at the Escuela de Bellas Artes in Cali in the 1970s. As an art student, he began making drawings based on photographic images, and although his studies did not specifically include photography or audiovisual media, these media and their relationships to reality and meaning-making have subsequently become central to his artistic practice.

Muñoz is also known for his use of ephemeral materials in poetic reflections upon memory and mortality. For example, *Aliento* (1995-2002) consists of a series of seemingly blank mirrors. However, when the viewer comes close to them and breathes on them, subtle obituary portraits emerge momentarily on the surface. Muñoz’s video *Re/trato* (2004) shows the artist painting a self-portrait with water. As the water makes contact with the hot pavement Muñoz is painting on, the portrait vanishes. Muñoz often bridges the media of film, video, photography, installation, and sculpture.

In the 1980s and 1990s, Colombia was wracked with a war between feuding drug cartels and the Colombian government. Muñoz’s installation, *Ambulatorio* consists of a large aerial photograph of that city printed on a sheet of shattered security glass. Viewers walk on top of the glass floor, looking down upon the city. The work was inspired by a bombing; walking through Cali after the bomb exploded, Muñoz was fascinated by the prevalence of fragments of glass encrusted into the pavement. The work has subsequently been re-made in Belfast and in Monterrey. “My work today,” Muñoz writes, “is based on my endeavor to understand the mechanism developed by a society which has ultimately suffered the routinization of war... A past, a present and in all likelihood a future full of violent events on a daily basis, which are

stubbornly repeated, in a practically identical fashion.”

In 2006, Muñoz founded lugar a dudas, a cultural center and residency program for artists. Located in Cali, lugar a dudas (space for doubts) has become a center for young artists to work through ideas and participate in a dialogue and public debate about art and politics.

Oscar Muñoz’s works are represented in several major collections including Quai Branly Museum, Paris, France; Biblioteca Luis Ángel Arango, Bogotá, Colombia; Blanton Museum of Art, Austin, TX, USA; Daros Latinamerica Collection, Zürich, Switzerland; Fundación “la Caixa”, Barcelona, Spain; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC, USA; Los Angeles County Museum (LACMA), Los Angeles, CA, USA; Pérez Art Museum Miami, FL, USA; Philadelphia Museum of Art, PA, USA; Tate Modern, London, UK; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (MFAH), TX, USA; Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY, USA; and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA), San Francisco, CA, USA.