

# Oscar Murillo transforms energy into dynamic art

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Oscar Murillo's "Pulsating Frequencies" is on view at Kukje Gallery in Seoul.

Courtesy of the artist and Kukje Gallery

## Murillo transforms energy into dynamic art

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Oscar Murillo is an artist of energy. He encapsulates the instability of his contemporaries living in the 21st century, who cannot truly feel a sense of belonging or stability.

The artist is holding "Catalyst," his first solo exhibition in Korea, at Kukje Gallery in downtown Seoul.

"Catalyst is a word I use to explain myself and the dynamics of my work. This show becomes a platform to exercise that," he told The Korea Times during an interview on Nov. 30.

The 32-year-old artist, originally from Colombia, immigrated to London with his family at the age of 10.

"My physical environment was incredibly important. I did not have art education in Latin America, so not in terms of art, but growing up in a certain tropical context. It was coming to London that began to shape a focus on the possibilities of art in my life," Murillo said.

For Murillo, art is a therapeutic process that keeps him living and functioning.

"I don't choose to be an artist, but art was with me throughout my life even from a very early age. Art was a tool to survive for me," he said.

"The moment I got displaced from my previous cultural context and life, I became isolated in art, or the act of drawing, became kind of a refuge to me. I was already a lonely person anyway, so it was perfect for me."

Murillo borrows a variety of iconographies from different cultures. For instance, in his "Pulsating Frequencies," the artist used imagery of a Korean stamp featuring the logo of the Korean Red Cross.

However he didn't create the piece specifically for the Korean exhibit. Murillo feels he is entitled to use anything from any context.

"There is no longer a sense of belonging and I've become a free agent and I feel completely comfort-



Oscar Murillo poses in front of his painting at Kukje Gallery in downtown Seoul.

Courtesy of Kukje Gallery

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able with appropriating and borrowing from any cultural context," he said.

"The idea of belonging in the contemporary moment is a privileged position. There is no awareness and everything is taken for granted without any critical filter. So I can move from one part to another without any consequences."

Murillo's iconic black canvas work "Institute for Reconciliation," on view at the gallery's K2 and K3, excites the five senses as visitors walk into the gallery.

Canvases are colored with layers of black oil painted and sewn into unique patterns by the artist and his family and friends. The strong scent of oil paint and the large size of the canvases overwhelm visitors.

"I started as a way to offload a certain kind of burden — the burden of being too conscious about the world, the burden of people who surround me. Then it became a symbolic placeholder, like a crucifix," he said. "These canvases are part of the collective burden, so I sew them with my family and friends. However, I don't want to make it about being performative, but it's more of a symbolic gesture. It is a kind of an abstract platform where these feelings can be offloaded."

The pieces, once created, travel around the world as Murillo exhibits them in different places as if they become witnesses of thoughts. The first "Institute for Reconciliation" presented in Korea was for the Anyang Public Art Project in 2016. He collaborated with a "mudang" (shaman) and displayed the black canvases in a forest, bringing in spiritual elements. That exact canvas is on view at K3.

"It was instinctive and I felt this sense of exchange. The mudang could interpret it in her own way, but from my point of view, it was connection of energy and frequency that could not have been identified."

As an internationally coveted artist, Murillo travels across the globe often and he turns the tedious flight time into something creative.

"I take on average three long-haul flights a month, so I spend about 35 hours in a plane a month. A lot of people travel, but most do not find anything special about the flight time," Murillo said. "The time on a plane is a time of complete focus, isolated from the world. I thought it has a lot of potential to be fruitful."

Murillo started pouring his energy into a pen and it came out as powerful and dynamic freehand drawings. The drawings from the "light" series are displayed on strings in the gallery, slightly fluttering as visitors move around the space.

The exhibit runs through Jan. 6. Visit [kukjegallery.com](http://kukjegallery.com) for more information.