

carlos amorales

*words of mouth
and hands*

june 23— july 28, 2023

opening:
june 23, 6 — 8 pm

*Fragments disperse, states in flux,
Mountains rise, then crumble to dust,
Spirits wait, dismembered and scattered.
Unlock the voice, let sound be free,
Secrets released, noise unbridled,
Traces seek, mythical lines undone.
Shattered force, entwined in chaos,
Disjointed chords, no melody to bind,
Power beyond noise, each word a spark.
Fragmented voice, call and break,
Breaking power, beyond the word,
Mythical lines, no longer restrained.*
-Carlos Amorales, *Fragmented States*

Carlos Amorales presents *Words of Mouth and Hands*, his first solo exhibition in New York at kurimanzutto. It comprises a video installation with a set of original music scores and works on paper that take as their point of departure a creation myth the artist imagined in which a serpent created the underworld by burrowing through the earth with its voice. Together, the artworks follow the transformation of the written word into choral music and the subsequent translation of music into graphic symbols.

Amorales' six-channel video installation evokes ideas of the sublime through chants. This major work portrays musician, composer, and performer Sarmen Almond singing two poems and the myth of the serpent. As a counterpoint, percussionist Diego Espinosa performs a series of dancefloor rhythms with his hands and body. In another video the hands of the artist are shown browsing through a notebook in which he developed an idiosyncratic system of signs and symbols for conducting choirs. The drawings in this notebook were inspired when seeing a choir director gesticulate with her hands, arms and body. The artist imagined these movements as drawings in the air.

Voices, sounds, traces, gestures, claps, signs and symbols collide as the fragmented elements composing a series of drawings, *Motion Clapping* (2023), in which the artist uses the contour of his hands to trace the motion of music. The voice and body percussion compositions, commissioned by Amorales

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for his videos, directly correlate with this body of work. A second series of works on paper, *Iztaccihuatl* (2023), depicting a succession of supine profiles suggest both a landscape and a pentagram. A large-format installation of Japanese paper banners, *Silent Choir*, depicts a sequence of spray-painted profiles suggesting the presence of a massive choir in the gallery.

Words of Mouth and Hands continues the artist's transdisciplinary inquiry into the relationship between contemporary art and different cultural practices, which in previous works have ranged from wrestling to the music industry, fashion, literature, and cinema. These various areas have interested him for their potential to manifest the sense of existential fragmentation in contemporary life. Through the act of repetition, formal experimentation and conceptual questioning, Amorales offers new perspectives into such practices and displaces them into art.

“During the process of my research, seeing the renown choir director Wilma Ten Wolde conducting the Nationaal Vorouwen Jeugdkoor at a choir festival in Utrecht was something sublime. Out of that experience I keep reflecting about the relationship between the body of the conductor, the choir and the public who listens; how sound is perceived and the language that can be created from it. Observing the conductor's practice allowed me to connect to the music as a visual artist, consequently developing a language that took the form of a handwritten coded notebook.”

Occupying the gallery space, simple elements such as hands, profiles, colors, dots and lines allow the artist to enter the musicians' language and shape the direction of the performative aspect of the project, creating a formal and a conceptual link between the videos and the graphic artworks.

In an oscillating motion of translation that goes back and forth, *Words of Mouth and Hands* delves into the ancient and sublime connection between vocal and hand gestures, into their graphical representations. By symbolically presenting an anonymous singing mass, Amorales opens a political stance on the unifying power of singing together and its potential to invoke the will and power of the people for a common cause; hence, pausing the individuals' existential fragmentation

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through the act of communion. The choir, through vocal and hand gestures, is an expression of a unified whole.

about the artist

In his artistic research, Carlos Amorales is interested mainly in language and the impossibility/possibility of communicating through means that are unrecognizable or not codified: sounds, gestures, and symbols. Amorales experiments at the limits between image and sign with an array of platforms: animation, video, film, drawing, installation, performance, and sound. His practice is based on different forms of translation: instruments that become characters in his films, letters that become shapes, and narratives unfold as non-verbal actions. As the basis for many of his explorations, Amorales has used Liquid Archive: a project composed of shapes, lines and nodes instead of words that he started in 1998 and continued to nourish for over ten years. In addition to Liquid Archive, he has developed other alphabets and systems that he uses to translate texts that range from museum labels to short stories. The works of Amorales exist in an alternate world of their own making, parallel to ours; constantly evolving at the same rhythm that they are produced.

Carlos Amorales was born in 1970 in Mexico City. He studied in Amsterdam at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie (1996–97) and Rijksakademie van beeldende kunsten (1992–95). Among his numerous solo exhibitions we can mention: *The Factory*, Stedelijk Museum (Amsterdam, Holland, 2019–2020); *Axioms for action*, MUAC, UNAM (Mexico City, 2018) and MARCO (Monterrey, 2019); *Herramientas de trabajo*, MAM and Museo de la Tertulia (Colombia, 2017); *Black Cloud*, Power Plant (Toronto, 2015); *Germinal*, Museo Tamayo (Mexico City, 2013); *Working Class Today... Mañana Nuevos Ricos!*, Fridericianum, Kassel, Germany (2009); *Four Animations, Five Drawings and a Plague*, Philadelphia Museum of Art (2008); *Discarded Spider*, Cincinnati Art Center (2008).

He has participated in group exhibitions such as: *Under the Same Sun. Art From Latin America Today*, Guggenheim Museum (Nueva York, 2014); *Mexico City: An Exhibition About The Exchange Rate of Bodies and Values*, MoMA PSI (Nueva York, 2002).

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He represented Mexico in the 57th Biennale di Venezia with the project *Life in the Folds* (2017), and Holland in the 2003 edition of the same biennale. His work has also been included in other biennials such as the 10th Shanghai Biennale, China (2013); the 2nd and 8th Berlin Biennale (2001 and 2014); Sharjah Biennial 11, UAE (2013); the 10th and 12th Havana Biennial, Cuba (2009 and 2015), and the 5th Biennale Mediacity Seoul, South Korea (2008). He has also presented a series of performance pieces at the Tate Modern, Centre Georges Pompidou and SF MoMA between 2001-2003.

Carlos Amorales lives and works in Mexico City.

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