large print guide

Carlos Amorales
The Factory

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Animation, video, film, drawings, installations, performance, and sound are the tools Carlos Amorales uses to investigate language, meaning, and identity. He even challenges the notion of his own authorship through frequent work with masks, illegible codes, and collages. Amorales operates at the intersection of politics and aesthetics, and many of the works in this exhibition explore the tense relationship between the individual and the masses.

Amorales was born in 1970, in Mexico City. In 1990 he moved to Amsterdam, where he studied fine art at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie and the Rijksakademie. In 2004, Amorales returned to Mexico City, where he built up his Liquid Archive, a collection of thousands of digital silhouettes that he has made freely available for anyone to use. The artist often uses images from this archive as the building blocks for works in a wide variety of media.

This exhibition is arranged not chronologically or thematically, but associatively; Amorales
himself compares it to a toolbox. The title of this exhibition is an allusion to Andy Warhol’s legendary studio of the same name, where Warhol and his entourage produced an overwhelming amount of images.

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Amsterdam, 2013
current-channel video projection, black and white, sound, 21 min.
courtesy of the artist and kurimanzutto,
Mexico City / New York

Screenplay for Amsterdam, 2012–2013
xerography
courtesy of the artist and kurimanzutto,
Mexico City / New York

Amorales describes his film Amsterdam as a “love story that’s taken a strange twist”. Having cowritten the script with Argentinian author Reinaldo Laddaga, he used a photocopier to transform the text into a screenplay with a new and abstract language of symbols, drawings, and photographs of the actors. This unconventional and indecipherable screenplay allowed the director and actors to work in an associative manner. Improvisation was key during filming, which took place in the
cellar of the building that houses Amorales’s studio. The written and spoken dialogue is incomprehensible, with the result that the actors’ facial expressions are the primary medium of communication. Amorales frequently incorporates personal experiences in his work. The film is titled after the city in which he trained as an artist, having left Mexico at the age of 19 speaking only his mother tongue. Many of these projects engage with subjects such as language, meaning, and signs—and the inability to understand them.
Black Cloud, 2007  
paper  
Collection of Diane and Bruce Halle

A swarm of paper moths has occupied the walls and ceilings of the museum’s galleries. Stories play an important part in the artist’s work, and he enjoys telling the anecdote of how this work came about: It began with a dream about a room full of moths, an image so powerful that he immediately wanted to materialize it as an artwork. He proceeded to cut out thousands of paper moths and attach them to the walls, ceiling, windows, and doors of his studio. In the end the invasion was so complete that Amorales and his team had no choice but to vacate the studio. Thereafter, the swarm followed the route taken by so many artworks: first they are placed in a gallery, then an art fair, then the home of an art collector, and, finally, museums all over the world. The form of this work adapts to the architecture
of each of its host spaces, much as water conforms to the shape of its containing vessel. The moths are active protagonists in this story, not passive bystanders, and they have even gone on to live their own life outside the world of art—to find out how, see *Black Cloud Aftermath* in gallery 1.28.
Life in the Folds, 2017
mixed media installation with video projection, black and white, sound, 50 min.
courtesy of the artist & Nils Stærk Gallery

Language is made up of not only written and spoken words, but also signs, symbols, sounds, and patterns. This project sees the artist explore what remains of language when it cannot be understood. At its core, this is a self-designed illegible alphabet of abstract cutouts that form the basis of a new audio-visual language. The arrangement of letters establishes what kind of text we have in front of us, be it a poem, correspondence or a list. Each letter is also a three-dimensional object in the form of an ocarina, a type of clay flute. Each letter of the illegible alphabet thus produces its own sound, allowing the visual, typographic component to be translated into an auditory component; now we can both see and hear the abstract language. What
we can’t yet decipher, however, is the story itself. That’s only possible after watching *The Cursed Village*, a film incorporating abstraction, figuration, text, and music. In the film, a migrant family enter a hostile village and are lynched—events such as this are sadly far from exceptional in Mexico, where frustrated citizens who believe that the state is failing them sometimes take the law into their own hands, at times with fatal consequences.
Orgy of Narcissus, 2019
silk
courtesy of the artist, kurimanzutto,
Mexico City / New York, and Nils Stærk Gallery
These works were developed in collaboration with the TextielLab, the professional workshop of the TextielMuseum.

These colorful panels tell the story of a hero who appears to be trapped in a narcissistic orgy of insatiable clones of himself. At first sight, our hero seems to be rather enjoying himself, but on closer inspection clearly nobody is really enjoying themselves. In fact it looks more like some bizarre nightmare than a pleasurable orgy. In this work Amorales is investigating the contemporary cultural phenomenon of “memes” distributed over the Internet in the form of images or video clips. In this way, their meaning can change very rapidly and become wholly incomprehensible to outsiders. The manner in which memes and
biological viruses proliferate are very similar, and there are also parallels in the development of gossip and myths: each time the story is retold, it changes a little, and ultimately goes on to lead a life of its own. Subjects such as replication, anonymity, and loss of authorship have long been important subjects in Amorales work, and these subjects have gained powerful new relevance with the rise of memes. The artist chose the most analogue of media: woven fabric. He made *Orgy of Narcissus* especially for this exhibition, in collaboration with the TextielLab in the Dutch city of Tilburg.
We’ll See How All Reverberates, 2012
steel, copper and epoxy
courtesy of the artist and kurimanzutto,
Mexico City / New York

This installation is based on mobiles, the abstract hanging sculptures for which the American artist Alexander Calder (1898–1976) is well-known. Rather than Calder’s colorful floating shapes, however, Amorales has used [cymbals](#), which means the mobile also functions as a percussion instrument. The music produced by the mobile reflects the mood of the visitors. Will they produce subtle harmonic rhythms or cause anarchic aural mayhem?

Visitors are free to interact with the artwork using the mallets.
Dark Mirror, 2008  
resin and automotive paint  
Collection Vanhonsebrouck

The sculpture has its origins in a combination of two images from the Liquid Archive, Amorales’s extensive collection of digital silhouettes, which he uses and reuses. The silhouette of a bird is based on a sticker placed on windows to prevent birds flying into them. The other image is of a spider’s web. By processing the images using a computer program, the artist has depicted the spider’s web as a cutting tool slicing through the bird. This evokes a sense of tension between the rules of the physical and virtual worlds: in the real, physical world, it looks as if the bird has fallen and broken into pieces.
Learn to Fuck Yourself, 2019
gouache on wall
courtesy of the artist and kurimanzutto,
Mexico City / New York

This work combines obscene texts with illustrations from a book on the body language of medieval iconography. The immersion of the figures in a charged, aggressive environment is a reference to a world where there is no clear distinction between private views and public statements. The Internet is teeming with coarse tirades unleashed by anonymous and known figures. But you’ll also find obscenities in the margins of medieval manuscripts. The artist uses both English and Spanish profanity, two examples of languages that can be seen as forced into the mouths and minds of people throughout history. By doing so, he is referring to the roughness of an ongoing process of colonization—a process that marks the past as much as contemporary society today.
The Eye-Me-Not, 2015
single-channel video projection, color, sound, paper collage on three walls, 50 min.
courtesy of the artist and kurimanzutto, Mexico City / New York

An Inuit myth is recounted in an opium smoker’s dream. The story’s central figure is a seal hunter whose father was killed by European whalers after trading goods with them. A spell has made him invisible to Europeans. The film is steeped in the idea of collage, through which Amorales refers to the costumes and sets designed by the Russian artist Kazimir Malevich (1879–1935) and to the theories of the German artist Joseph Beuys (1921–1986). The actors are Philippe Eustachon and Amorales’s own sons.
Amorales vs. Amorales (Tijuana), 2000
single-channel video projection, color, sound, 33 min.
courtesy of the artist and kurimanzutto, Mexico City / New York

Amorales Interim, 1997
video, color, sound, 3 min., 42 sec.
courtesy of the artist and kurimanzutto, Mexico City / New York

Amorales Mask, 1996–2009
lycra and vinyl
courtesy of the artist

Design for the Amorales Mask, 1996
marker on xerography
Collection C. van Enckevort, Maastricht
For many years, Carlos Amorales has been experimenting with his identity as an artist through his Amorales Project. His first act was to combine the surnames of his parents to form the name Amorales (Spanish for “amoral”). He then created his Amorales character, before issuing the Identity Loan Certificate to enable other people to temporarily adopt the identity. Numerous individuals have taken his place, under his name, for discussions, lectures, and even art training. The artist then got involved in Lucha Libre, a type of professional wrestling that is hugely popular in Mexico. Lucha Libre wrestlers wear masks entirely covering their faces, and Amorales had a mask made of
his own face, so that anyone who puts it on automatically adopts the ‘Amorales’ identity. To confuse matters even more, he got the Amorales character to fight another version of himself in *Amorales vs. Amorales*, transforming this usually fairly straightforward form of mass entertainment into a strange and complex spectacle. This bewildering battle was fought many times, in traditional Mexican wrestling venues as well as museums all over the world. The project saw Amorales intertwining the art world and the world outside of it.
The Tongue of the Dead, 2012
screenprint
courtesy of the artist and kurimanzutto,
Mexico City / New York

In 2006 the Mexican government declared its “war on drugs”. The situation quickly spiraled out of control, and extremely violent murders are still commonplace in the country. Many Mexican artists have attempted to find ways of engaging with the disrupted state of the country. Amorales made a photo novella that incorporates horrific tabloid photographs of the murder victims. The speech bubbles are filled with words written in an illegible alphabet; the senselessness of this violence transcends any attempt to comprehend it.
Black Cloud Aftermath, 2007–2016
ink on paper
courtesy of the artist and kurimanzutto,
Mexico City / New York

*Black Cloud*, which can be seen in galleries 1.18 to 1.21, took on a life of its own when a well-known fashion brand rather blatantly drew inspiration from it for the interior of a shop. Soon, the motif of the swarm of moths started appearing on the catwalk, after which cheaper brands started copying it on a massive scale. In this way Amorales’s work was sucked into the vortex of global capitalism without him having any control over the matter. In creating this piece, the artist claims the story about the aftermath of *Black Cloud* as his own work. After all, he has been playing with the notions of anonymity and authorship throughout his career.
Vertical Earthquake, 2010
steel and graphite on wall
Collection MUDAM Luxembourg—Musée d’Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean
Collection De Bruin-Heijn
Collection B.J. van Egteren
Inge & Philip van den Hurk

In 1985 a major earthquake struck Mexico City. Many Mexicans regarded their government’s response in the aftermath of the earthquake as inadequate, so ordinary citizens stepped up to take responsibility for themselves. This work commemorates the earthquake, which was a decisive moment in the artist’s political and aesthetic development. The lines he has drawn on the walls using a ruler are jagged and erratic, like cracks in buildings. And from this chaos, an organized pattern emerges, just as a new order can arise out of social anarchy.
Psicofonias, 2008
three-channel video, black and white and color, sound, 3 min.
courtesy of the artist and kurimanzutto,
Mexico City / New York

This work transposes visual signals into aural signals. The images come from the Liquid Archive, Amorales’s collection of digital silhouettes, which he uses and reuses. A computer program is used to translate the contours into music: a tone is produced when they touch the bottom edge of the screen. The result is a complex, non-harmonious composition. *Psicofonias* is a homage to Conlon Nancarrow (1912–1997), the American-Mexican composer who wrote music for the pianola, a self-playing piano with a mechanism that operates the piano action using rolls of perforated card. The third projection starts with the image of a world map that subsequently bursts apart. The separate
countries float like abstract shapes against a dark background, after which they regroup and ultimately form a whole once again.
Peep Show, 2019
neon lights
dition produced by Galería Albarrán Bourdais, courtesy of the artist

Internet phenomena can quickly take on a life of their own. An innocent cartoon figure, for example, may be anonymously copied countless times and then be appropriated by the extreme right, so that it ends up being best known as a hate symbol. The original maker has absolutely no influence over this type of transformation. Amorales reasserted control over the process by drawing a character and copying it so often that its meaning was rendered ambivalent. The many repetitions gave rise to a decorative pattern, which in this case takes the form of a neon light installation. The character within the installation is trapped in an ambiguous voyeuristic spectacle: looking at itself in a situation that is both pleasurable and uncomfortable.