

Nicole L'Huillier

Canción de Amor

Curated by
Yasmin Naderi Afschar
with Olga Popova

What does it mean to give without expecting anything in return? This question formed the starting point for Nicole L'Huillier's work on this solo exhibition. How does that even work, in a social and economic system that is based primarily on transactions and organises almost all areas of life according to a 'quid pro quo' approach and calculated benefit? Are there spaces beyond this logic? And what alternative forms of co-existence are possible?

Play could be one such alternative form, according to Nicole L'Huillier. For the artist, play means 'listening and responding, entering a dynamic field of resonance in which we become porous and elastic, and give without expecting anything in return.' Nicole L'Huillier therefore transforms the ground floor in the exhibition *Canción de Amor* into a space for play: an artistic, interactive installation comprising objects, striking colours, shapes, sound and movement. The exhibition changes with and through the visitors. Play is not presented as an escape from everyday life, but as a form of communication and an invitation to connect with each another.

Nicole L'Huillier, who is originally from Chile and currently lives in Berlin, has a background in architecture. Her artistic practice operates at the point where visual art, music, theory and research meet. The essence of her work comprises the artistic and academic exploration of sound and vibration as a means of examining questions of identity, collective consciousness and agency. Rather than a finished work, her concern is with the process: rehearsing and improvising, on the one hand; co-creative listening, on the other.

The sound installation in the first room – *The Dance Floor (calling and responding is the infinite architecture of the cosmos)* – can be understood as an instrument activated by places, objects and people, and interacts with them. The artist creates this interaction by use of membranes: as playful interfaces for giving and receiving. Eight silicone membranes in various shapes, including a heart, a crystal, an amoeba and a drop, rotate slowly in the room, driven by the motor of a disco ball. Contact microphones are embedded in the silicone, picking up vibrations directly from the material. Visitors can touch the membranes, sing or shout into them. A computer processes, samples and alters these sounds into a composition, which is played back into the space via four similarly rotating loudspeakers and in turn affects the membranes once again. Individual gestures, like a sung melody, are thereby completely transformed: they dissolve into the collective sound.

A ninth membrane is located in the building's exterior space: a red heart that rotates on what is known as the ramp. The contact microphones fitted there pick up the vibrations caused by sounds and movements in the surrounding area. The rotating object reacts to local residents and visitors, to deliveries, building works, wind and weather, or to the operation of the grain mill next door, incorporating these vibrations into the composition inside the building. Here, too, it is no longer possible to determine which sound originates from where. Nicole L'Huillier's apparatus causes the individual influences to merge into a constantly changing, unpredictable soundscape. The dance floor, which many experience as a place of encounter and

Read the labels on your smartphone:



The exhibition is accompanied by a diverse programme featuring guided tours, talks and performances. More information and event dates are continuously updated online on migrosmuseum.ch/agenda

Info / Agenda:



Stay informed with our newsletter:



Instagram:
[@migrosmuseum](https://www.instagram.com/migrosmuseum)
[#migrosmuseum](https://www.instagram.com/migrosmuseum)

connection, thus becomes a model for fleeting, shared communication; a new, unstable and yet communal language.

For the installation *Cancionero (interrelational vessels)* in the second room, Nicole L'Huillier takes up a well-known acoustic phenomenon: parabolic reflection. Curved bowls focus sound waves in such a way that a whispered message is transmitted from one bowl to the other without being audible in the space in between. To achieve this, the artist has repurposed two satellite dishes as 'whispering bowls'. Painted pink, they face each other in a room painted entirely in turquoise. Between them, Nicole L'Huillier's love song *Ayayay (cómo me duele)* ('Oh, how it hurts me') plays, which can only be heard near the bowls. In the run-up to the exhibition, the artist collected her friends' and acquaintances' favourite love songs. From this collection emerged a playlist that gave the exhibition its name and can be listened to in the museum's communal space, currently home to the Café Bourouissa.

What happens between the 'whispering bowls' illustrates Nicole L'Huillier's concept of the 'vibrational'. While sound is bound to the human sensory perception of hearing, vibrations can be felt physically. They are constantly transmitted between materials, spaces, people and nonhuman actors such as nature and, according to Nicole L'Huillier, form an invisible plane that connects everything and keeps it in motion. One insight is central to her work: although not all vibrations can be heard, one can still perceive them, feel them.

Nicole L'Huillier's installations are dynamic, interactive systems that are constantly changing. They develop from within and sustain themselves. Chilean biologists and philosophers Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela coined the term 'autopoiesis' to describe this principle. In the 1990s, Maturana also developed a theory of cognition that is of particular significance to Nicole L'Huillier's practice. He supported the theory that cultural developments and human achievements such as language or ethical sensibility do not arise primarily through rationality and competition, but rather through mutual acceptance, care and activities without a defined goal – more specifically through 'love and play.'

And it is precisely these two concepts that form the main themes of Nicole L'Huillier's exhibition. The artist invites visitors to dance, sing and swing, and views her installations as spaces for experience: places where resonance and connection become tangible. Her emphasis on emotions and playfulness is an integral part of her artistic approach.

The exhibition invites visitors to embrace this experience and to see play as a practice of listening, caring and being together – as giving without expecting anything in return.

Nicole L'Huillier would like to warmly thank Maria Ferrer (general production assistance), Juan Necochea (music collaborator), Alexej Alschiz (metal structures for vessels), Ina Ritter (assistance), Zuriñe Mariño (assistance).