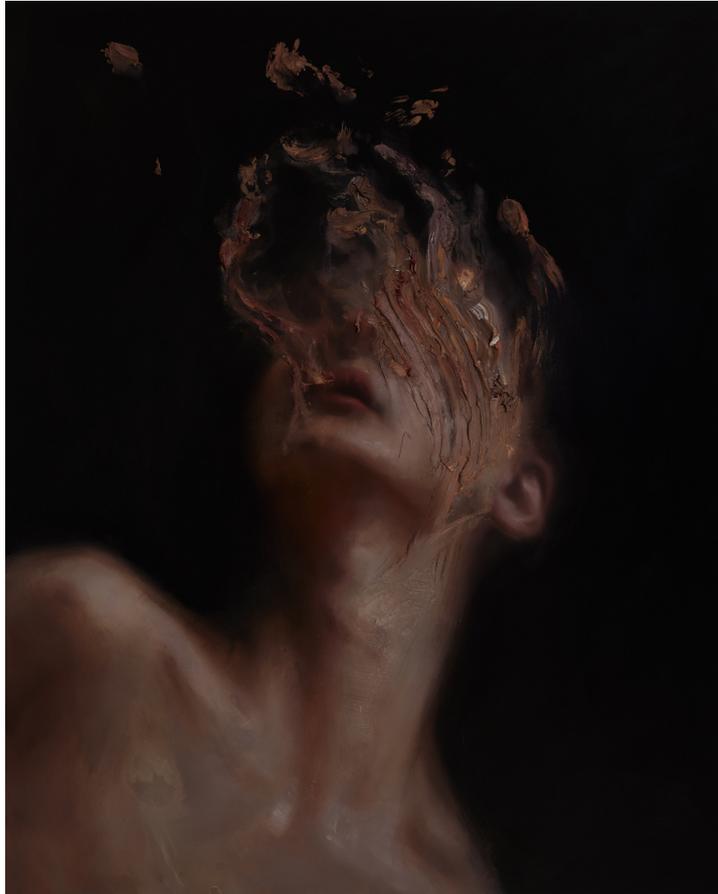


Henrik Uldalen

*Love in Exile*

18<sup>th</sup> November – 8<sup>th</sup> January



Henrik Uldalen, *Enfold*, 2021, oil on canvas, 150 x 120 cm

JD Malat Gallery is delighted to present a solo exhibition by Henrik Uldalen, 'Love in Exile', on view from 18 November 2021 to 8 January 2022. Featuring a new body of work, including striking new portraits, 'Love in Exile' marks Uldalen's third solo exhibition at JD Malat Gallery. The show reflects Henrik's change and progression as an artist, striving to build on his neo-classical roots.

The London-based Norwegian artist is internationally recognised for his thick impasto portraits that illustrate the deeper and darker spectrum of human emotions alongside a thorough investigation of the human body and face. The exhibition features new paintings that address the feelings of loneliness, suffering, fear, and uncertainty. Powerfully conveying a sense of the artist's internal world, these works also evoke the question of the meaning of human existence.

Through this new group of paintings, Uldalen seeks to process and accept an exceedingly absurd experience of existence. Reflecting on his private experiences, Uldalen moves away from a more self-destructive Nihilist stance he endured early in life to Existentialism. *Love in Exile* marks the artist's arrival at Absurdism, where he takes on a new approach to embracing reality. *Love* here represents hope and wellbeing, whilst the idea of *Exile* is derived from Albert Camus' ideology of a universe's intrinsic lack of meaning which clashes with our own struggle to find one. Within this convoluted universe is where Uldalen finds peace: *Love in Exile*.

A striking departure from *Lethe* and *Metanoia*, his first two exhibitions at JD Malat Gallery, *Love in Exile* is the artist's finest exhibition to date. With over twenty new paintings, the artist has surpassed himself with skill and innovation. Paintings such as *Cling* and *Enfold* demonstrate his ability to capture human emotion so delicately in both single-figure portraits and group portraits alike. Figures are lost in waves of ecstasy and devotion, immersed with personal truths and this 'absurd' new energy. Similarly, in *Yield* and *Dispel*, we are faced with human nature as it is most raw and intimate, drawing us into the figure's universe. A painting such as *Hurl* shows a figure drowning in a deep black sea of rich paint, typical of Uldalen's Caravaggesque backgrounds, which showcases his astounding use of chiaroscuro, for which he is most renowned.

Uldalen's ability to capture light with thick paint oozing from the canvas is outshone in this exhibition. Figures bathe in waves of light, enhanced by dark backgrounds, which illuminate the finely rendered contours and facial features lost in flames of paint. This similar technique and composition is apparent in *Dispel*, which introduces us to a naked figure with its face hidden in this wave of paint. The figure subtly holds its body with beautiful hands that show its timidity and sensuality, another indication of love in exile, the exhibition's title. In paintings such as *Expulse*, the figure seems lost in contemplation, a blend of meditation and dream, at once searching for an answer yet with no need for an outcome. This demonstrates Uldalen's current state beautifully.

Uldalen draws inspiration from many philosophers such as Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Sartre to arrive at this current approach. The paintings in *Love in Exile* demonstrate this newfound mindset by celebrating the human body and face in all its aspects and forms, fluidity and grace. *Attach*, for example, shows two figures intertwined, bursting with passion and angst at the same time, brilliantly demonstrating the artist's outlook on life and the newfound freedom he wishes to express. Faces are masked in this painting as Uldalen moves from traditional portraiture into a more nuanced rendering of figures and human bodies. Overall, the colours are more profound and deeper in this latest series. The brushstrokes are freer but the technique is more concise. Contours are looser, but expressions are more pronounced.

It seems that Uldalen has arrived at a new chapter. Instead of abandoning hope and finding solace in the fact that life has no meaning, he seeks to accumulate a greater number of personal "meaningful" encounters and experiences. Uldalen realises that love, community, and the real-life connection matters the most when faced with crisis and isolation. The artist declares this real-life connection is the foundation he needs to build a life and create sincere artwork that people can understand and relate to. 'We are together in this universe devoid

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of reason, let's surrender to it and embrace', the artist explains. 'There is no greater meaning, but that life can be lived to the fullest, to create subjective 'meaning' and happiness.'

For more information, images, and comment, please contact: [press@jdmalat.com](mailto:press@jdmalat.com)

Exhibition opening hours; Monday to Friday, 10am – 6pm; Saturday 12pm – 6pm