

Paradosis
by Henrik Uldalen

4 October – 1 November 2022
507 West 27th Street, New York



Henrik Uldalen, *Surge*, 2022, oil on linen, 70 7/8 x 47 1/4 in, 180 x 120 cm

JD Malat Gallery is delighted to announce the opening of *Paradosis*, a solo exhibition by London-based Norwegian expressionist artist Henrik Uldalen (b. 1986). Exploring the thorny path for unearthing the true self through the act of surrender, the show introduces Uldalen's newest oeuvre to New York City's art scene. Sourcing his inspiration from the writings of Danish philosopher and theologian Soeren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), Uldalen encourages the audience to participate in a thought-provoking reflection upon the meaning of life.

Paradosis stems from the Greek *παράδοσις*, i.e. the act of giving up; to surrender. The onyx black background symbolises the dread for the world which attempts to consume the troubled mind from within. In this brand new series, the expressive thickly-layered oil paint brushstrokes – impasto technique – are concentrated on the upper part of the depicted bodies. This highlights the fragility of the unsteady mind which surrenders to the darkness. The chiaroscuro technique intensifies the dramatism of internal wanderings, each body depicted on the brim of dispersion in the darkness. Reaching up to three metres in height, Uldalen's artworks invite the viewers to fully immerse themselves into the soul-searching abyss.

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Midway through the exhibition, one starts to notice a striking contrast: the lower parts of the bodies seem to be frozen in time, more structural, while the faces are distorted, painted with airy brushstrokes, producing a highly dynamic painterly surface. The titles of the artworks act as symbolic hints, unravelling the details of each scene. For example, *Surge* depicts a young woman with a timid hand-over-face gesture. The wave-shaped dispersing impastoed lines are reminiscent of the power with which the tide of emotions crushes one's being. The title acts as a compass, directing the viewer's visual perception of the piece.

Through his unique and recognisable technique, Uldalen calls for the feelings of sublimity and tragedy, evoking 'the ideas of getting swept by the sea, dissolving into the abyss, losing oneself.' The appearance of raw canvas is a striking element in some of the paintings such as *Spill*, *Pour* and *Surge*. The contrast between a highly textured surface and the evident raw nature of the linen fabric saturates these artworks with even greater dramatism. As the fleshy tones disperse in energetic streams from the centre of the figures to the external environment, Uldalen blurs the lines between the human body and the arresting dark backgrounds. Triggering the idea of surrender, the painterly subjects are giving up on the battle with themselves, their fears, and, consequently, achieve comfort and peace.

Looking at *Swept*, the largest canvas in *Paradosis*, the viewer observes four figures with entwined limbs, immersed in each other's entity. The absence of heavily impastoed brushstrokes symbolises Uldalen's continuous reflection on the subject of existentialism. The bodily chain depicted in *Swept* mirrors the act of seeking comfort within a group of similar mindsets – the movement towards self-preservation and escapism. As Uldalen highlights, 'The show is about giving in to the comfortable and safe, assimilating myself into social, institutional, or familial networks. Losing oneself to the finite as opposed to the infinite.'

Reflecting on his previous solo exhibitions *Metanoia*, *Lethe* and *Love in Exile*, it comes as no surprise that the anxiety and terror go in parallel with Uldalen's practice. However, the dread for the world is not the endpoint at *Paradosis*. Instead, the show attempts to extend the limits of human consciousness, breaking through the shackles of imposed darkness, then eventually, freeing oneself. JD Malat Gallery is extremely proud to exhibit the newest artworks by Henrik Uldalen – for the very first time – in New York. The show will be open from 4th October to 1st November 2022.

For images or further comment, please contact:

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