



Over the Influence Presents

Camilla Engström

UNDERCURRENTS

18 November 2022 to 6 January 2023



Camilla Engström, *Peaceful Napper*, 2022, oil canvas, 152.4 by 121.9 cm, 60 by 48 in, Photo courtesy of the Artist and Over the Influence

Over the Influence Bangkok is pleased to present *Undercurrents*, an exhibition of 16 paintings by Camilla Engström. This is the first time the artist has shown in Thailand.

Camilla Engström paints the seasons. In the summer her work is exuberant and cheerful, demonstrative of a spirit embracing the exterior world, overflowing with abundance and energy. In winter, the artist says she goes inward. She hibernates. Her usual technicolor palette cools, her sun is eclipsed by a moon, and the energy slows to a near stillness. Or least that's how it appears on surface. But beneath the visage of darkness, and stasis, new life and revelations continues to burn brightly. *Undercurrents* explore the profound transformation that occurs beneath the surface of the earth, and the human body, during times of perceived stillness and rest. A theme that mirrors the artist's own practice, who during her *blue* (and emerald green) period, generated sixteen paintings capable of capturing the whole of the human condition in chromatic luminosity.

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The first painting Engström made for the exhibition, *Saffron Hills*, serves as a portal, a transition from the elation of summer to the introspection of winter. By physically adding the autumnal tinge of fall, in the form of ochre paint, to a vibrance of summer, a yellow-orange paint, she renders a landscape in the golden cast of a sunset. A sinking sun is mirrored by a burgeoning moon in a painting that preserves, as if in amber, the liminal space between day and night. Orbs and circles figure heavily in the exhibition taking the forms of celestial bodies, wombs, lakes, and irises. Full, organic, and biomorphic, they call attention to the cyclical nature of life and death; the unity of all things; and the wholeness of the self, body and mind, conscious and unconscious, visible and invisible.

In *Protector* and *Remembered Lands* the artist gives mother nature a human corporality. In *Protector* the bulbous belly of an abstracted female form holds in gestation the blooms of the spring to come, while in *You are the Earth* the land itself is attributed anthropomorphic qualities such as erect nipples and a full derriere. In *Sweet Stillness* and *Sweet Stillness at Dusk* the figure's boundaries are entirely erased rendering it impossible to locate where the face ends and the sky begin. Beyond exploring the intrinsic connection between the feminine and the natural world, the fusion of the organic and the human calls attention to man's interdependence on the earth and generates a level of empathy that is often exclusively reserved for the human species. If not our mothers, who then are we willing to save?

The artist explains that while she does retreat to nature when looking for inspiration, the world rendered in her paintings is less a depiction of a particular place and more a manifestation of a feeling she experiences while there. "Nature is already so beautiful, I don't need to recreate it," says Engström. A testament to the artist's remarkable ability to convey tone with specificity and immediacy, one would be hard pressed to walk through the exhibition, and not feel an indelible wave of comfort, peace, and gratification. The voluptuous curves, undulating lines, and lush palette all but envelop the viewer into the artist's wonderment.

Engström's alter-ego, HUSA, a familiar character in Engstrom's oeuvre, makes numerous appearances in a multitude of forms. "They're all HUSA," says the artist, who goes on to explain how HUSA has transformed along with her over the course of the last several years. Within *Undercurrents* she manifests as a child or as a mother and other times as a young woman somewhere between the two, not unlike the artist herself. In *Inner Sight*, HUSA lays daydreaming, her hair floating like a cloud above her, hand dipped in a blue iris doubling as a limpid lake, while in *Mountain Blanket*, she pulls a mountain range over her face in preparation for a night full of dreaming. Both works, as with many in the exhibition, offer symbolic nods to the surrealists, such as Rene Magritte's clouds, Salvador Dali's flames, and Man Ray's eyes. Allusions that underscore the artist's metaphysical ideas about the practice and process of art making, self-reflection, and the mystical/meditative nature of inspiration.

Glowing orbs, blazing fires, and luminescent clouds float from painting to painting, a poignant reminder of what is only visible at night, and perhaps, a call for us all to continue to seek the light, literally and metaphorically, as the days grow shorter and the temperature lower. –Tara Anne Dalbow



Artist Bio

Camilla Engström's practice encompasses painting, drawing, sculpture, and poetry. She explores autobiographical topics through humor, surrealistic landscapes, and figurative expression. Based on real life experiences and often portraying her alter-ego Husa, Engström uses her work as a diary and outlet for processing life's events. Husa is confident, gender-bending, amorphous character who offers a humorous take on the issues face by the millennial generation.

Engström's work is influenced by popular culture, sitcoms and iconic female artists such as Yayoi Kusama and Marie-Louise Ekman.

Born 1989 Örebro, Sweden, Engström is a self-taught painter. Her work has been exhibited in group and solo shows in Los Angeles, CA, USA and New York, NY, USA. She currently lives and works in Los Angeles, CA, USA.

Exhibition Dates

18 November 22 to 6 January 2023

Location

Over the Influence Bangkok
81 Tri Mit Road
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