

T O T A H

MARA DE LUCA

Lilith and the Sun

Opening May 5th, 2021

TOTAH presents *Lilith and the Sun*, featuring new paintings by Mara De Luca, opening May 5th, 2021. This is the artist's second solo exhibition with the gallery.

Mara De Luca's recent body of work expands on the ideas she presented in *Talisman*, her first solo exhibition at TOTAH. Further developing her core concerns with the pictorial and the material, *Lilith and the Sun* implies the idea of opposites: light vs. dark, internal vs. external, contained vs. projected. In Kabbalistic literature, Lilith is associated with the creation of luminaries. She is the "first light," the light of Mercy, and appeared on the first day of creation when God said "Let there be light." Moving from darkness to light, De Luca positions the sky as a vehicle for projection, an expression of the tension between the physical and the intangible.

De Luca's skies are at once metaphors and landscapes, the positive origin of en plein air lighting and the heavenly negation of the secular. *The Lovers* (2021) reveals a celestial blue and sunset copper shimmer, where the sky behaves as a place of hope and possibility. In another work, *The Chariot (Tondo)* (2021), the layering of two canvases serves a more ambiguous end. An elongated tear in the midst of a circular canvas constitutes a simple gesture, but its effects fracture into multiple meanings. In a work like *Sky Scroll (Cielo)* (2020), the Biblical image of "sky snapping back like a scroll" is literalized toward the bottom edge of the work. This isolated gesture of rolled-up canvas lends the whole painting its pervasive effect, while also announcing itself as self-effacing. In light of the secondary canvas revealed beneath, the "heavenly" blue sky of the foregrounded painting appears as though in a perpetual process of unraveling.

Much like a spread of tarot cards, De Luca's works come together as a visual narrative. Activating color, image and materials; presenting cuts, scrolls, and side-by-side juxtapositions, she incarnates an individual idea specific to each painting. Playing off the elemental quality of sky as the origin of light, she transcends the materiality of paint and canvas toward a feeling, expanding the image of sky to announce its metaphysical grandeur.

Mara De Luca (born 1973) received an MFA from CalArts, Los Angeles, CA and a BA from Columbia University, NY. Her work has been displayed at the Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego and is included in the Buck Collection at UC Irvine, California; Alexander Plaza Berlin, Germany; New York Medical College, New York; and the University of Oslo, Norway. She has been reviewed in Artforum, Cultured Magazine, The Los Angeles Times, Artweek LA, and others. De Luca is a recipient of the 2019 California Community Foundation Fellowship for Visual Artists. She presently lives and works in Los Angeles, CA.

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