

# TOTAH

Mara De Luca  
*Western Gate*  
December 11th, 2024 – February 15th, 2025

TOTAH presents *Western Gate*, featuring new paintings by Mara De Luca. *Western Gate* will be on view from December 11th, 2024 through February 15th, 2025. This is the artist's third solo exhibition with the gallery.

Mara De Luca's recent paintings are storied meditations on the promise of utopia. Taking California as her inspiration, she translates its atmospheric light and littoral skylscapes into the language of abstraction. Light takes on a metaphoric value; the physical labor of painting is redressed as a sheer architecture of color and space. Moving past the observations which serve as her starting point, her paintings offer up a sheer constellation of forms for which there is no natural equivalent. Depicting skies that are more than skies, or light overwhelming sight, the works on view in *Western Gate* foster a specific quality of attentiveness that is equal parts experience and chimera.

A technical feature apparent throughout *Western Gate* is De Luca's facility for layering, which underscores the oppositions inherent in her work. Using graduated washes of color that move from warm tones to cool, subtle gestural shifts come into play. A painting like *Sun Gaze* (2024), for instance, is a diptych combining a systematic gradient on one side and an aleatory pour gesture on the other. Thematizing natural light, De Luca amplifies its presence to a nova-like brilliance. Across two canvases, light successively gives way to a spectral granulation of the act of seeing. As patches of canvas show through the yellow monochromatic wash, *Sun Gaze* analogically suggests a state of spiritual blindness, where excessive brightness is tantamount to the absence of light.

The segmented narratives discoverable in De Luca's work crystallize time as a dissolving force. In paintings such as *Western Gate 2* (2024), a tension emerges between the ethereal content of the image, and the stark materiality that gives it shape. Alluding to conceptualism as much as romanticism, spatial references of center and periphery become blurred. The ambiguity is less a trick of the eye than a visual gloss on the nuanced emotions registered by the viewer.

De Luca uses techniques that not only add layers of visual depth, but also enhance the emotional complexity of her methods. Each wash of color or subtle obscuration represents a nuanced idea or unconscious feeling. Even when her canvases are occluded in some manner, as when a fold curtains the surface of a canvas, this only serves to affirm her chosen theme. A seamless texture that is virtually endless if not visually infinite, where the perception of a scene shades into the imagination of it, unfolding over the facture of each work like a luminous penumbra.

*Mara De Luca's (b. 1973, Washington D.C.) work extends the celebration of illusionism, romanticism, and the sublime with a deeply informed response to modernist painting. De Luca received an MFA from CalArts, Los Angeles, California and a BA from Columbia University, New York. Her work has been displayed at the Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego and is in prominent collections, including the Buck Collection at UC Irvine, the 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 has taught Painting at UC San Diego, UC Irvine, UC Davis and UC Riverside, where she is currently a Visiting Professor. Based in Los Angeles for over two decades, De Luca now lives and works in New York.*

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