Press Release

Eva Helene Pade
Søgelys

14 October—20 December 2025
Opening Tuesday 14 October 2025, 6—8pm

Thaddaeus Ropac Ely House, London
37 Dover Street, London, W1S 4NJ



Den fundne (The found one), 2025.
Acrylic, oil, pastel and oil stick on canvas. 300 x 300 cm (118.11 x 118.11 in).

With my figurative painting, I create blurred lines or gaps that become the language for the things we can't put into words. That's what I envy so much about abstraction, it's already working in a realm for which language does not exist. — Eva Helene Pade

Thaddaeus Ropac London presents Eva Helene Pade's first solo exhibition in the UK. Following the Danish-born, Paris-based artist's institutional debut at ARKEN Museum of Contemporary Art in Denmark earlier this year, the exhibition, titled *Søgelys*, brings together a significant new group of paintings in which Pade continues to explore the violent and seductive forces that exist between bodies in space. Her monumental and small-scale canvases are suspended on floor-to-ceiling metal posts, set away from the walls to create dynamic spatial configurations. Much like choreography, 'it forces people to move within them,' she says, 'but also to connect the paintings together. I create them together, like an ensemble; they



Skygge over mængden (Shadow above the crowd), 2025.
Acrylic, oil, pastel and oil stick on canvas. 300 x 450 cm (118.11 x 177.17 in).

talk together.' The exhibition will be accompanied by a catalogue, including an essay by Hendrik Folkerts, Curator of International Contemporary Art and Head of Exhibitions at Moderna Museet, Stockholm.

Pade is drawn to the commotion of the ensemble – how, within a crowd, a single figure might begin to lose distinction, morph into another, or distort as it surges and contracts. In her paintings, casts of jewel-toned bodies gather in thrumming, indeterminate spaces that recall nightclubs or theatres. The female body is central to Pade's practice, making up the majority of the figures in her crowd scenes. Departing from art-historical traditions, it is depicted not as an object of gaze or individual identity, but as a vehicle of collective expression and embodiment. 'I approach figures more like a colour palette, vessels for emotions,' she says. For Pade, the body forms part of a primal, instinctive language, like a brushstroke, a gesture or a dance. In her works, it becomes a volatile thing, as though oil paint is not only a medium with which to render flesh physically – a face, smudged lips, breasts and thighs – but the substance by which it might ultimately be dissolved.

Increasingly, smoke weaves through Pade's paintings, threatening to obfuscate narratives into hazy recollections and bringing with it a sense of lingering danger. 'I've become fascinated by smoke and shadows as poetic objects which aren't objects,' she says, 'they aren't tangible and they became a vessel to abstract the characters in these paintings'. In *Skygge over mængden (Shadow above the crowd)*, the largest painting on view and the anchor of the exhibition's main themes, figures smoulder in the aftermath of chaos. As the eye drifts upward from scorched feet and trampled embers, a winged silhouette takes shape in the smoke, backlit against a blazing yellow sky. Meanwhile, faint beams of searchlights roam like watchful eyes. These searchlights, which lend the exhibition its title, amplify drama in Pade's paintings. In *Knækkede stråler (Broken rays)* they become fluorescent currents that perforate the crowd, repelling figures like magnetic poles, and in *Rød nat (Red night)* they refract off bodies and scatter into shards, clashing like lances in a medieval charge and recalling the battle scenes of Italian Renaissance painter Paolo Uccello.

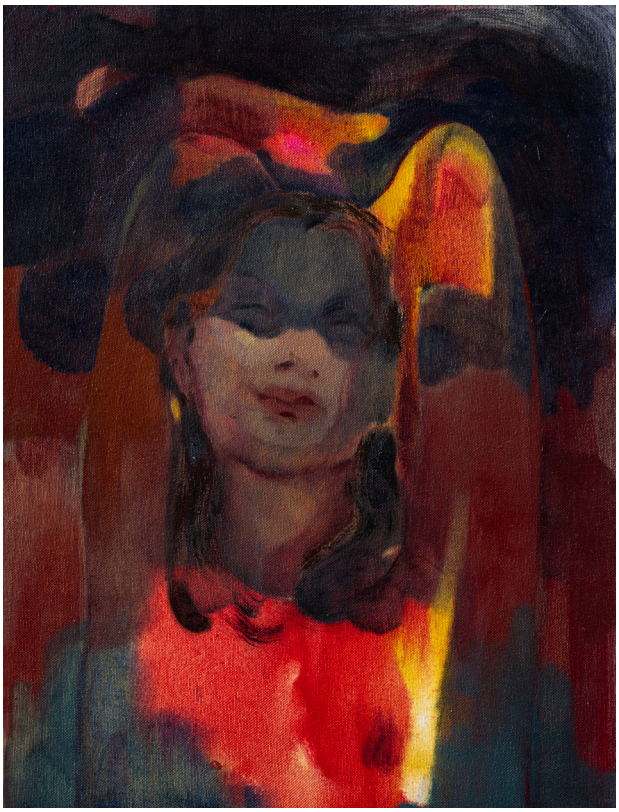


Rød nat (Red night), 2025.
Acrylic, oil, pastel and oil stick on canvas. 240 x 210 cm (94.49 x 82.68 in).

Floating free of the specifics of time or place, the figures in Eva Helene Pade's paintings are united in mysterious common enterprise. It might be ecstatic dance, orgiastic rites, occult practices, or perhaps the enforced companionship of paradise or damnation.
— Hettie Judah

Pade's work draws on a tradition of history painting – its sweeping war scenes and portrayals of religious and mythological events – as well as the murals of Mexican painter Diego Rivera. In *Den fundne (The found one)*, a woman salvaged from the crowd collapses into the Pietà pose, echoing one of art history's most recognised iconographies. Elsewhere, such as *Midt fald (Mid fall)*, Pade conjures ancient tales of metamorphosis – of Persephone, dragged into the depths of the underworld, Jupiter and Io, or Daphne as she flees Apollo, limbs contorting into the branches of a laurel tree. Intimating cycles of temptation and redemption, expulsion and resurrection, Pade casts her figures in states of suspension, where beginnings and ends become brinks and edges. She explains, 'I want it to stay in the collapsing part all the time. I wanted to keep the tension.' The smaller paintings in the exhibition become apertures in Pade's storytelling, capturing glances, touches and other fleeting exchanges. Like the history painters who enlivened their scenes through complex configurations of poses, Pade, too, twists narratives into dance. And yet, her stories exist beyond place, time or subjectivity. 'I became increasingly interested in the aesthetic of violence, not only in the act itself but in how it's remembered, retold and interpreted,' she says.

Installed in the round, Pade allows fragments of her images to overlap so that throngs of characters appear to flit from one scene to another, vanishing and then recurring as they do in dreams. Her crowds begin with a series of rough circles and dashes, what she refers to as 'coordinates' that plot faces and movement. These marks are deliberately minimal so that she can approach each canvas freely and, without overplanning, allow herself to become lost as she paints. Pade is as interested in rendering anatomical form as she is in exploring the spaces between bodies. 'You could say that these are sort of gaps in life,' she explains, 'or spaces where little abstractions and poetry can sneak in.' Light filters through the canvases, revealing these shadows of underpainting on the reverse like charred brushstrokes, while exposed frames and stretcher bars further reveal each painting's construction. As Folkerts writes: 'In staging painting as both a citation of art-historical antecedent and a performative encounter, she transforms style itself into a dynamic, networked force – an expanded field in which certain art-historical precedents become newly animated in the present.'



I mørket (In the dark), 2025.
Acrylic, oil, pastel and oil stick on canvas. 48 x 35 cm (18.90 x 13.78 in).

About the artist



Eva Helene Pade in her studio, Paris, 2024. Photo: Petra Kleis.

Eva Helene Pade received her BFA and MFA from The Danish Royal Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen in 2024. Early recognition for her work includes the prestigious Young Talent Prize from the Carlsberg Foundation in 2017. Since then, she has exhibited her work both in solo and group shows across Europe and the United States, and has participated in significant curatorial projects including Uno, Nessuno, Centomila at Palazzo Capris, Turin (2021) and Forårsudstillingen at Kunsthal Charlottenborg, Copenhagen (2021). In April 2025 ARKEN Museum of Contemporary Art, Ishøj, Denmark, staged the artist's first institutional solo exhibition, curated by Rasmus Stenbakken.