

Rising star Eva Helene Pade presents her first museum solo exhibition at ARKEN

Danish artist Eva Helene Pade makes her institutional debut, presenting her first-ever museum solo show, Forårsofret, at ARKEN Museum of Contemporary Art, Ishøj, Denmark, opening on 10 April 2025. Pade is known for her figurative paintings that explore the complexities of human relationships and female embodiment.

In Eva Helene Pade's compositions, dreamlike, open-ended narratives fuse with the mythological as she draws from a lineage of Northern European artists, including Edvard Munch, James Ensor and Otto Dix. Starting as 'coordinates' on the canvas, figures emerge from layers of paint, forming clusters and crowds or become singled out amid complex configurations. Faces materialise from fluid brushstrokes, and full-length bodies seem to multiply and interlock, fracturing into rich, jewel-toned passages. The exhibition at ARKEN features new monumental works and is curated by Rasmus Stenbakken. Its title, Forårsofret – translates to 'The Spring Sacrifice', or 'The Rite of Spring' – in reference to the Russian composer Igor Stravinsky's eponymous ballet, which premiered at Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Paris, in 1913.

The works on view make up a single, interconnected narrative inspired by Stravinsky's story, in which a young virgin girl is sacrificed to the god of spring in a pagan ritual to herald the arrival of the new season. Pade takes inspiration from German choreographer Pina Bausch's 1975 interpretation of the Le Sacre du printemps. In this version, the dancer's bodies meld into one, becoming instruments capable of eloquently expressing the unspoken and the invisible. Merging historical references with contemporary modes of painterly expression, Pade's new works push towards the transcendental to a sense of the self beyond the body. 'In Eva Helene Pade's take on the theme, the narrative of sacrifice and victimhood is turned upside down,' says ARKEN curator Rasmus Stenbakken. 'Here, the female protagonist becomes a figure of strength, power and agency. The paintings possess a striking primordial power, poignantly expressive of yearning, loneliness, joy and suffering.'

The artist's first institutional solo exhibition at ARKEN follows her inclusion in a group show at Thaddaeus Ropac London in the autumn of 2024, which garnered international attention. Pade is co-represented by Thaddaeus Ropac in partnership with Copenhagen's Galleri Nicolai Wallner and will present her first solo exhibition with Thaddaeus Ropac in London in October 2025.

Curator Rasmus Stenbakken promises ARKEN visitors a very special exhibition experience:

The artworks featured in Forårsofret constitute a new development in Eva Helene Pade's ongoing exploration of human emotions and narratives through painting. The works are presented in a carefully staged setting specially created for this occasion, reflecting the artist's wish to rethink and reinvent how audiences approach and perceive painting.

In Eva Helene Pade's paintings, we find groups of people dancing, merging and almost dissolving into each other, causing the figures to take on a near-abstract feel. The works aim to convey a broader understanding of the concept of 'sacrifice' – at an individual level and in the broader context of communities and society. They also shed light on how we are all, as human beings, affected and shaped by the norms and expectations of the world in which we live. These are some of the issues that Eva Helene Pade takes up in her art.

About the artist:

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). The exhibition Forårsofret at ARKEN Museum of Contemporary Art, Ishøj, Denmark, marks the artist's first institutional solo show.