



Maria Wæhrens: Tradition #1

Exhibition period September 30 – November 12, 2022

For her solo exhibition "Tradition # 1", Maria Wæhrens (DK) presents expressive and raw paintings, where abstract beings, body parts, emotions, and landscapes are painted with powerful intuitive brushstrokes. Screaming mouths, internal organs, and genitals, as well as desperate and embracing hands, reach out from the dark and take form between unruly proportions and compositions. The works are both present and grotesque – poetic and punk – and derive from an inner force and insistence from Wæhrens of exposing her emotional life onto the surface.

The series of works is called "Walk Your Way Maria" (2019). It was created in 2019 for The Exhibition Space Sydhavnen Station and represents a significant point in Wæhren's artistic development, where she candidly depicts pain, love, life, and everything in between. They are painted on black and green chipboards with remnants of DSB train schedules, glue, tape, and paper, which become the background for the final paintings. In the work 'Walk Your Way Maria #3', the strong play of colors and dynamic paint strokes are in sharp contrast to the black, rough background. Between this tension, organic forms grow from the bottom of the work and take form for the human eye as yellow luminous flowers and long abstract tentacles. Above, the composition spreads out, gains more body, only to dissolve again -- perhaps into pure spirit. In the work 'Walk Your Way Maria #8', feelings of desperation and anxiety are depicted, as a screaming blue creature with a luminous halo opens its mouth to an outstretched, suffocating golden hand. Here the motif is clear against the sickly green-colored landscape and points to religious icons as well as sexual and violent scenes throughout art history. However, the figure does not simply appear as a victim, but as the recipient of a force that must be absorbed, eaten, and immersed.

The exhibition also presents a series of paintings on paper "My pain your Pain" (2017), where Wæhrens evokes the battle between control and freedom through simple and precisely drawn lines. Amorphous organic forms struggle with systematic lines and fixed elements and manage to break out and overflow the paper. Tears, blood, and body parts take shape and contrast the captive grid and the saying "Control" in 'Your Pain My Pain #8'. Wæhrens herself describes the series as part of a transitional phase "from struggle to acceptance" - from her struggle with existential questions about sexuality and identity to a practice based more on listening and trusting oneself and the world.

The works point to The Young Wild Ones and the American Expressionists, to Edvard Munch and Martin Kippenberger, all artists and expressive practices that Wæhrens has studied closely and from which she found inspiration for her artistic practice and own path. The exhibition's title "Tradition #1" stems from such inspiration, and points to Wæhren's investigation of traditions, constructions, and meanings.. Previously she opposed religious-, painting- and society's traditions, but today she also focuses on the positivity of sharing the traditions we carry with each other. The exhibition "Tradition #1" is part I out of II in Gas9Gallery within the next six months. The next exhibition opens in March 2023, and will present Wæhren's current practice, where the struggle for identity has just now given way to an equally vulnerable struggle about being fully present and able to receive.

In October 2022, Maria Wæhrens also present a solo exhibition at Chis Sharp Gallery, Los Angeles, USA.

Maria Wæhrens (b. 1976) graduated from the Jutland Academy of Fine Arts in 1998-1998 and from the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts from 1999-2005 under Professor and artist Ursula Reuter Christiansen. Wæhrens has previously exhibited at Møstings Hus, M100, Den Frie Udstillingsbygning, Kunsthal NORD, the Nivågaard collection, and Lviv National Art Gallery, Ukraine. She had a retrospective exhibition at Vejle Kunstmuseum in 2020/2021 and painted a site-specific mural for Overgaden, Institute of Contemporary Art. Her works are part of the collection at The Museum of Religious Art and the Danish Arts Foundation. She also received a three-year grant from the Danish Arts Council in 2021.