

gas 9 gallery

Ash Wednesday by Maria Wæhrens

Exhibition period: April 21 - June 3, 2023

We are proud to present Maria Wæhren's (DK) second solo exhibition in the gallery, this time with the title *Ash Wednesday*. The paintings, which alternate between large-scale series of violent gestures and smaller works that are intimate, all enclose the viewer in a wealth of abstractions and contrasting colors and depths. The works can be perceived as a sensory precision of Wæhren's dreams that questions human complexity, imagination, and identity.

Wæhrens special ability for composition through balance and prioritizing of the image surface is surprising. She creates new imagery through her wild expressionism and precise coloring, that varies both in pace and distance. Sometimes suggestive figures appear and other times everything dissolves in quick brushstrokes. One example of this is the five meters wide painting *The Engle* (2023), where the curious eye and mind will find wings, hands and possibly much more. The title *Ash Wednesday* derives from the Catholic solemn reminder of man's mortality and the need for reconciliation with God. However, Wæhrens paintings are not a visual representation of a specific religion, but rather a visual and sensuous pressure wave that directly confronts our notions of what a painting is and can do. Wæhrens' immediate contact with her subconscious leaves clear traces on the canvas, and so does the heavy movements of the body. Sometimes violent – other times gentle and poetic.

Ash Wednesday is Maria Wæhrens' second solo exhibition in gas9gallery and can be seen as part II of her prior exhibition *Tradition*, on show October last year. Here Wæhrens presented previous works from 2018, that showed her interest in absolute presence, intimacy and grotesque/anxiety-filled imagery. These works are aligned with CoBrA and punk and exist in between the poetic and violent. The paintings gave the audience a feeling of being in the presence of an inner force that exposed Wæhrens' emotions directly on the canvas.

Maria Wæhrens (b. 1976) graduated from the Jutland Academy of Fine Arts in 1998-1998 and from the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts 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. In 2020/2021 she had a retrospective exhibition at Vejen Kunstmuseum and painted a site-specific mural at Overgaden, Institute of Contemporary Art. Her works are part of the collection at The Museum of Religious Art, The Danish Arts Foundation and HEART - The . She also received the three year grant from the Danish Arts Council in 2021.