

DENK

HELEN REBEKAH GARBER

THAUMATURGY

EXHIBITION DATES:

DECEMBER 2 - JANUARY 6 , 2018

RECEPTION: SATURDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2017 6-8 PM



(Los Angeles, CA) - DENK gallery is pleased to announce *Thaumaturgy*, the gallery's first solo exhibition of new paintings by Los Angeles-based artist Helen Rebekah Garber. In her new body of work, Garber is in search of utopian alternatives to the dominant ideological landscape. In an attempt to visualize some form of cultural recourse and to present healing philosophical counterparts to the noxious tenets of the status quo, Garber has turned to figuration in a gesture towards embodied specificity. The proposition of her alternative civilization, in stark contrast to the current state of our own, is one predicated on life, maternal nurture, inclusivity, and collective interest rather than divisive conquest.

Garber's past works have explored visual abstractions as a vehicle for non-denominational spiritual themes. Distilling systems of meaning from a complex emblematic shorthand, she has channeled formal mark making as a sacred and redemptive practice of inference. Looking to ancient symbology as a source of inspiration, and drawing collective connections across different histories and cultures, her imagery has felt simultaneously ancestral and hieroglyphic while also idiosyncratic and singularly contemporary. The repeated patterns and motifs throughout

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her work suggest an interest in protolinguistic systems of meaning that transcend the mores of our own inherited languages.

Historically, abstraction has long held a connection to spiritualism and theosophy in art. Garber cites late nineteenth and early twentieth-century artists Hilma Af Klint, a Swedish artist and mystic whose spiritual abstraction predates Kandinsky's, and Emma Kunz, an artist and healer known for her sacred geometries, as influences, among others. These early proponents of abstraction among figures such as Wassily Kandinsky, Piet Mondrian, and Kazimir Malevich, sought a freedom from language and the existing visual vernaculars of the time to express an interest in mysticism and cosmic confluence. This new "formless" and transcendent expression emancipated the pictorial from figuration and objects, appealing to a more mutable set of visual possibilities in search of the discarnate.

In an early 1911 triptych by Mondrian, *Evolution*, the female body appears prominently as a symbol of spiritual exaltation and immateriality. Sharing some affinities with Garber's current depiction of the feminine, both exist somewhere between figuration and spiritual abstraction. Among her other influences are Marjorie Cameron, an early twentieth-century American artist with an interest in the occult and a penchant for surreal psychedelia, and American, Berlin-based artist Dorothy Iannone whose richly dense works explore themes such as female sexuality and "ecstatic unity," drawn from pan-cultural references to theology and mysticism.

In a self-conscious move away from this abstract spiritualism towards a more concretized set of representational depictions, Garber is forcing this relativism into an accountable set of literal rather than abstract forms. The life-giving female body appears throughout as an extended metaphor for this alternative society, a symbolic refuge from the violence and trauma of our own. Formally lush, sensual, ornate and vibrant, these deliberately seductive images present women as guardians and sentinels in this first iteration and ongoing evolution of Garber's utopia. Referencing historical depictions of deities from early fertile crescent civilizations, and constructing an experimental ideography and diagrammatic language from existing sources to encode within the work, Garber seeks a sacred human continuity and primordial spark in the re-visitation of ancient archetypes.

As the title suggests, Garber is invoking a utopia built in total opposition to our current sociopolitical condition: a society of generative, life-giving, miracle workers, where the miraculous work of supporting life trumps the compulsion to ruin and consume.

image credits: Helen Rebekah Garber, *Sentinel Spring*, 2017. Oil on canvas, 84h x72w in.

ABOUT HELEN REBEKAH GARBER

Helen Rebekah Garber completed a B.F.A at the California Institute of the Arts. She has shown extensively throughout the United States in both solo and group exhibitions, and has exhibited internationally.

Her work is included in the West Collection, and has been acquired by several high-profile private collections.

ABOUT DENK GALLERY

Founded in January of 2017, DENK is a newly established gallery in Downtown Los Angeles' thriving arts district. Its founding mission is to present a diverse program of local and international contemporary artists working across a variety of mediums, including sculpture, installation, painting, photography, works on paper, and interdisciplinary media. The gallery's goal is to curate engaging exhibitions by artists who are creating relevant, substantive, experimental, or timely work. By providing an adaptable venue that will allow artists to develop their concepts and have them realized, DENK hopes to foster a generative curatorial space.

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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT GALLERY DIRECTOR CARL BERG AT
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