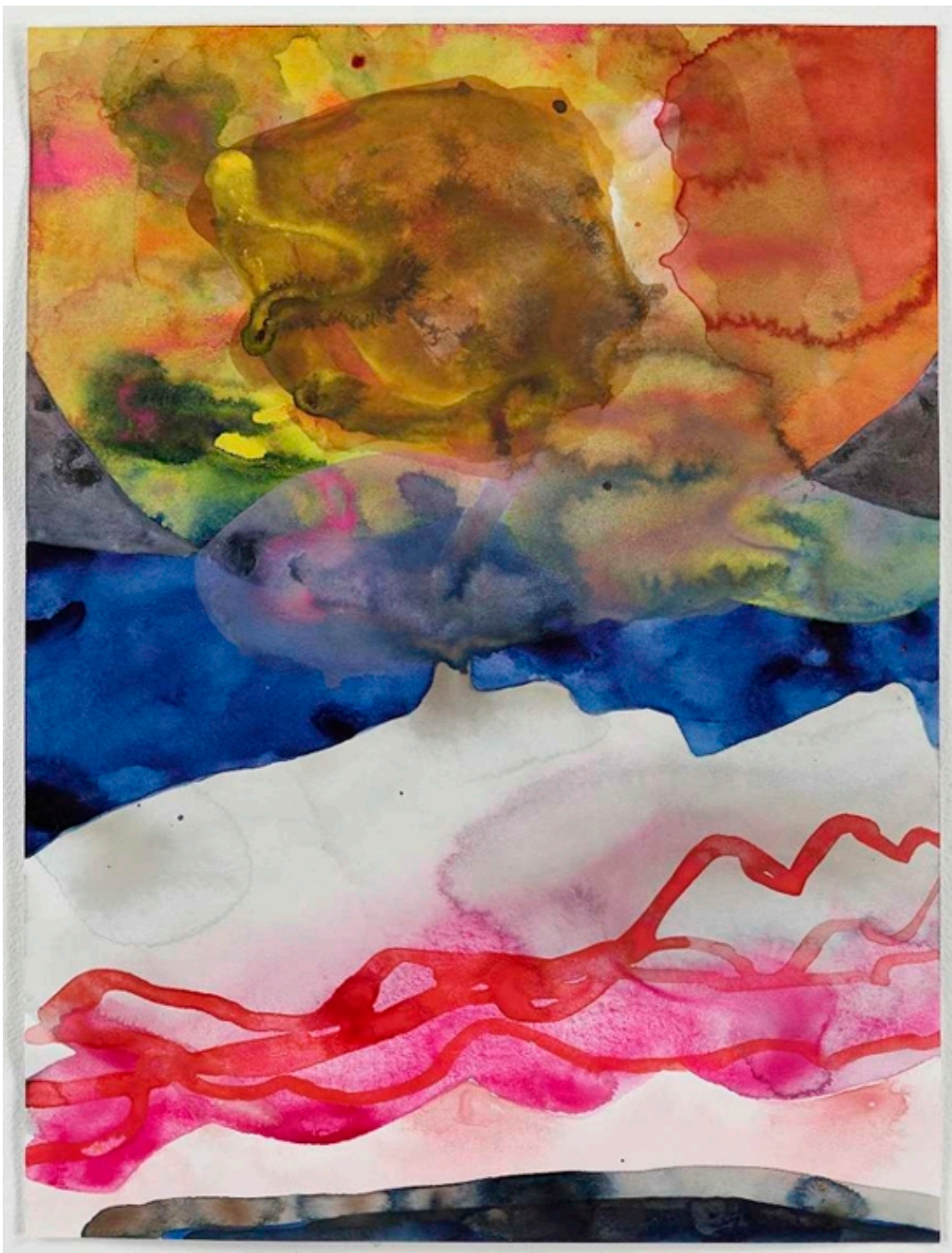


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Eva Lundsager: Portfolio
by Jessica Baran
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Eva Lundsager, *Ascendosphere 23*, 2009, watercolor on paper, 12×9". All images courtesy of the artist and Greenberg van Doren Gallery, New York. Photos by Jean Paul Torno.

It is difficult to make work about joy. Eva Lundsager's watercolors (articulated with sumi ink) manage to do it, capturing, as she describes them, acts of "hysterical ecstasy." The delicately explosive works exude an elemental joy in the most fundamental properties of paint—its liquid tactility, its plasticity and vibrancy—whose fluid perfection pushes at the very edge of muddled disorder. Each piece represents a fresh attempt to invent a picture using an abstract language. That language seems to be composed of the erotics of materials, the emotive froth that comes of simply pushing paint around, watering down a pigment, seeing color drip and seep through paper pores. Immediate, responsive, lush—this work begs that one strip oneself of all headier desires for conceptual explication. Rather, it falls in the tradition of inutterability—the awe-inducing weather of devotional painting, as in the cloud-smearred skies of Tiepolo and El Greco, and even the cloudy corpulence of Rubens's handling of flesh. These references, for Lundsager, are about longing.

A longing for meaning, because in this work's forecast is the mushroom cloud, representing both the most violent iteration of desire and the epitome of logical consciousness; the elegant, dead-silence of disaster. In this sense, Lundsager's is also an art of losing, or the intense beauty of desperation—that moment when something is wildly celebrated as it will soon cease to exist. In the strokes of white over wavering lines of blue, one can see the abstract equivalent of a saint's face in anguished prayer—that kind of lustful suffering that elicits a searching gaze, solicitous of the ambivalent no-place of utopia.

Strata of color wash over each page, creating images that slip between landscapes and pure abstraction. Color lays on top of color, or just adjacent to it. That Lundsager has long since accepted the presence of the horizon line, its way of invoking a sense of depicted space which thereby dismantles, to an extent, the purity of non-objective painting, speaks to a mature confidence in the work as it is. It demands that one resign oneself to experiencing it on its own terms.

The process evidenced in these watercolors is something entirely not of our era, preceding, even, the Abstract Expressionists, who may seem like the work's most immediate forebears. Ab-Ex work was born of more distinct a project, more anger, more rapidity of response, and more heedlessness to nuance. Lundsager, instead, holds dear our child-like impulses. This is work done for the discrete moment itself—the then and there that was, at the moment of making. A uniting conceptual apparatus does not hold the work together; an exhibition is not in mind while it's being made. Rather, each piece is a page of notes on the vicissitudes of the mind, acts of painterly lyricism where the *I* is uttering something much like music but in tangles of incendiary reds, an aggravated swath of pale rose, rashes of toxicity and warmth.

—Jessica Baran



Eva Lundsager, *Ascendosphere 42*, 2009, watercolor on paper, 12×9".



Eva Lundsager, Ascendosphere 26, 2009, watercolor on paper, 12×9".



Ascendosphere 24, 2009, watercolor on paper, 12×9".

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