

LAUNCH F18



AGNES WALDEN AURORA CONSURGENS

Press Release

LAUNCH F18 and Uprise Art are pleased to co-present a solo exhibition of drawings and paintings by Agnes Walden. Agnes' work explores the potentials and limitations of portraiture and the ways in which attempts to describe transgender life are conditioned by allegory. *Aurora consurgens* opens on April 2, 2022 and remains on view through April 30, 2022.

If you ask Agnes Walden about art, just as I did at her Gowanus studio in February, you will undoubtedly hear her reference "the vocab," that is, the vocabulary of her images: its lines, its colors, its textures and shapes. For me, a writer who deals in words and sentences, such language for the visual feels heady and conceptual. For Walden, however, it's all very intuitive, as is her literal desire to paint. "Non-painters almost don't get that painting is about the literal stuff, the physical properties of the paint," she explains after referencing a lecture on this very subject by Amy Sillman. "The excitement of experimenting, of moving slime around in this

LAUNCH F18

really pleasurable way." She laughs, apparently caught off guard by her own blunt and vulnerable-making admission that 1) painting is, at the end of the day, kind of gross, and 2) it is sometimes this aforementioned grossness that makes her want to pick up her brush in the first place.

In creating the work featured in *Aurora consurgens*—Walden's solo exhibition of drawings and paintings, on view at LAUNCH F18 in collaboration with Uprise Art from April 2 through April 30, 2022—the artist has leaned into her intuition and away from overthinking it. The portraiture on display still reflects her long-held fascination with trans subjectivities: the threat that representation poses to her subjects and the ways in which she, as the author of that representation, might attempt to safeguard them from an ungenerous gaze. But her newer work diverges in terms of its, well, vocabulary. Where we once saw only what Walden observed firsthand, albeit warped and obscured to defend her subjects' integrity, we now see non-observed objects: a pair of transparent starfish, a scrim of circling flowers. Their inclusion speaks to the artist's increasing fascination with Catholic artwork found in early modern Europe—a return of sorts to the kind of imagery that flooded her youth, as she was raised Catholic. She borrowed the exhibition's title, Latin for "rising dawn," from a medieval alchemical manuscript, which, she tells me, is filled with "lots of really insane illustrations with lots of gender stuff happening in them." Having Googled it: can confirm.

The figures in some of her newer portraits remind me of centuries-old depictions of saints and saviors. They're slack, all tension having gone from their limbs. Their eyes gaze upwards as if they're possessed, or perhaps they're receiving a vision from on high. But a vision of what?

- *Written by Harron Walker*

BIOGRAPHY

Agnes Walden (b. 1994) lives and works in New York. She holds an MFA in Painting from Rhode Island School of Design and a BA in Studio Art from Colorado College. Previous solo exhibitions include "Favors" at An Sylvia Exhibitions and "Laundry Day" at AMFM Gallery, both in Chicago. The artist has participated in group exhibitions at venues such as the RISD Museum, 1969 Gallery, Paperback Gallery, and the Summer Street Collective. In 2020, Walden received an Elizabeth Greenshields Foundation Grant, and more recently she was included in Saatchi Art's Rising Stars Report for 2021. She currently teaches as a Visiting Assistant Professor of Drawing at Rhode Island School of Design.

For more information please email the gallery at: info@launchf18.com or visit us on social media @launch_f18