

Matthew Brown

Tomas Leth

The Suns of Half Sleep

633 N La Brea Ave

September 16–October 28, 2023

Matthew Brown is pleased to announce *The Suns of Half Sleep*, an exhibition of recent works by Danish artist Tomas Leth. Inspired by nocturnal walks through Copenhagen, the dense, multilayered paintings on view offer pulsating, ever-shifting perspectives on the city's natural topography, invoking the sedimentary processes by which the material world comes into being.

Leth methodically builds up layers of pastel to produce textured surfaces that beckon the viewer with a seductive tangibility. Starting from a single, instinctual motif taken from nature, Leth works and reworks the composition in an iterative process of remaking, often applying the thick pastels with his own fingertips to produce burgeoning organic forms.

Like layers of sedimentary rock deposited over the ages, or like the dust and silt that obscure ancient relics, Leth's pastels on canvas assume geologic force. Obscured and transformed by the sands of time, archaeological artifacts are imbued with auratic presence through processes of accumulation and layering, of engulfment and excavation. Foregrounding this natural process of becoming, Leth achieves the same textural intensity and mystical potency, suggesting an abundance of hidden meanings, waiting to be unearthed.

Thick impasto, heavily-abstracted natural imagery, and densely-layered color fields present an ambiguous excess. Amidst the cornflower blues and burnt ochres, an enigma. We strain to find a decisive form, or absolute meaning. At first glance, perhaps, a mushroom. And then a flower. And then a biological network of cells. And then a cosmological expanse that harkens to the birth of the universe itself. This rich multiplicity creates a fecund terrain to be surveyed.

Leth probes the conventions and constraints of vision, challenging the biological mechanisms through which we understand reality in order to expose the gaps and slippages involved in human perception. The works in the exhibition emulate night vision, which requires the viewer to strain their senses to decipher forms amidst the darkness. Drawing from his experiences traversing Copenhagen at night, Leth captures the abstruseness of the nocturnal landscape to revel in the malleability of perception.

In the dark, reality bends and blurs. The lines between object and environment become vague and undefined. Perception is in a constant state of flux. The eyes hastily attempt to lock down meaning while grappling with uncertainty. The struggle to unify visual information into a cohesive whole parallels the confusion that often attends encounters with the unknown. Leth underscores the indeterminacy of perception, highlighting how reason fills in the gaps, shaping our understanding of the often incoherent world we inhabit.

If reason enables us to see objects within darkened surroundings, then ritual enables us to see significance within objects. For Leth, rituals serve as stabilizing agents, capturing and anchoring meaning in a world perpetually in

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flux. Throughout the exhibition, Leth draws our attention to the generative processes of creation and interpretation that affix meaning to objects. With these processes arrayed on the works' surfaces, history and perception become immanent to form while meaning becomes topology embedded within an intricate topography.

An archeological discovery, a well-worn rosary, a damp forest floor, or perhaps even a painting, then, can be a talisman that harnesses the mystical powers of time, repetition, and perception to capture the world in all its complexity.

Tomas Leth (b. 1981, Denmark) lives and works in Copenhagen. He received an MFA in painting from the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in 2021, and the Akademie der bildende Künste Wien in 2016.

Recent solo exhibitions include *Ekstatisk pollen*, Paulina Caspari, Munich, Germany (2023); and *Orfila*, ADZ, Lisbon, Portugal (2022).

Recent group exhibitions include *In the Shadow*, White Cube, online (2023); *Doll-Soul*, ADZ gallery, Lisbon, Portugal (2023); *Fragments*, ADZ, Lisbon (2021); *Degree Show*, The Royal Academy of Fine Arts, Copenhagen (2021); Galleri Tom Christoffersen, Copenhagen (2020); *Arcways Nightland Connector*, Copenhagen, Denmark (2019); and Galleri Tom Christoffersen, Copenhagen (2018).

The Suns of Half Sleep, currently on view at Matthew Brown, Los Angeles is the artist's first solo exhibition in the United States.

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