



LUIS DE JESUS LOS ANGELES

MARA DE LUCA

saltus fidei | Leap of Faith

October 22 - November 26, 2011

Opening Reception:

Saturday, October 22nd, from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m.

Titled the *Sipario* series (Italian for theatrical curtain or scrim), **Mara De Luca's** exciting new paintings are a reflection on a contemporary sublime that is profound in its absolute superficiality and theatricality. The *Sipario* paintings are inspired by the aesthetic and emotional experience of daily life in Los Angeles, a city of visual contrasts and contradictions: stunning natural beauty coexisting in a cultural climate of facile content, saturated digital aesthetics and air-brushed, synthetic effects. The works address the existential through a romanticized and hyper-analog translation of digital media and contemporary imaging tropes particular to mass media and visual culture.

In the *Sipario* paintings, constructed landscape and atmospheric imagery present a mirroring of process and content—their exaggerated artifice reveals and disguises the processes by which they have been made, and a relationship between picture and craft is evident. Ranging in color from bright, glowing artificial to a natural and grayscale palette, the picture planes are vast and vacuous, evoking the emotional emptiness of unflinchingly optimistic, success-oriented Hollywood values and self-improvement ideology. Iconographic elements—appearing as recurring texts, rainbows, moon and stars—point to themes of faith, hope and desire. Visual “faith”, or suspension of disbelief, is required of the viewer throughout and is a thematic thread connecting the diverse works.

Paintings such as *Albertine* and *Odette* are generated through paint pours onto unprimed canvas; the poured image is then overlaid with a *ready-made fade*—a two-tone semi-transparent fabric. This innovative technique mimics the digital “pour” and “gradient” editing features common to Photoshop, yet achieves a dramatically low-resolution and analog effect, calling to mind an enlarged or “actual-size” print out of skies and clouds. Other monochrome works such as *Dusk Clouds* and *B/W Gradient* are the result of an entirely different technical approach: a hand-generated gradient achieved through repeated layering of thin acrylic washes.

The resulting effect is one of seamless perfection evoking the digital fade backgrounds prevalent in mainstream media advertising (internet, cell phone and billboard graphics) or the subtle and vast gradient of a Los Angeles sunset. The paintings make a direct reference to California *Light and Space*, sharing concerns of subtle light plays, monochromatic surfaces, and atmospheric effects. De Luca paradoxically cross-breeds this influence with a more conceptually-driven Modernist program: ruptured pictorial illusionism by way of heightened technical processes (pours, stains, sprays, collage), resulting in a critically self-referential picture plane.

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Mara De Luca is a Los Angeles-based artist. She received a BA in Visual Arts from Columbia University in 1995 and her MFA from CalArts in 2004. De Luca's work is a reflection on contemporary mass media expressed through the diverse pictorial, conceptual and technical conventions of abstract and representational painting. Recent exhibitions have included *CERCA Series: Mara De Luca*, a solo exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, in March 2010. Her work has also been exhibited in the U.S. and Europe at venues including Galerie Chromosome, Berlin; AbstruseSpace, London; and Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions (LACE), among others. From 1998 to 2003, she lived and worked in Berlin, Germany. De Luca has received critical press in publications such as the Los Angeles Times, Time Out London and Tip Berlin, and she was recently the recipient of a Durfee Foundation Artist's Grant.

MARA DE LUCA: *saltus fidei* | Leap of Faith will be on view at **Luis De Jesus Los Angeles** from October 22 through November 26, 2011. An artist's reception will be held on Saturday, October 22nd, from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. The Gallery is located at 2685 S. La Cienega Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90034. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday, 10 am to 6 pm, and by appointment.

For further information, including hi-res images, please contact the Gallery at 310-838-6000, or email gallery@luisdejesus.com.