

Press Release

Ambera Wellmann. Darkling

5 September – 25 October 2025

Hauser & Wirth New York, Wooster Street



The mood here and now is apocalyptic, nuclear heat, climate cataclysm, the end. Death appears to be thrashing towards us, as opposed to us moving calmly and expectedly towards her, following in the footsteps of everything that's ever been alive. This sense of doom thickens time and its passage, sometimes it runs slippery, others it curdles, acting viscous and unpredictable—as Lenin put it, “there are decades where nothing happens; and there are weeks where decades happen,” our era is chock-full of the latter. Through that strange intermittence of crisis, images—no matter their provenance, whether art historical or social media rot—find a way of staying with us, metabolizing within us, individuating and transducing only to one day splatter back to the very center of our mind's eye: at once, three different things will clearly become one—past, present and future coalescing into a single visual plane. The revelation that originates the word apocalypse in Ancient Greek: painting as the key (or a key) to unlock the mystery of the universe.

Ambera Wellmann's paintings are speckled with instances in which figures bleed into one another, a hand becomes a fishtail, an ear becomes a mouth, defining edges become undone and with them the illusion of reality. Her works are descriptive, in the sense that Svetlana Alpers' elaborates in her study of 17th century Dutch Painting: they are virtuosically painted and expansive, hospitable and inhabitable for their viewer—but they reject the world as-is and instead they chase realism and representation down a hall of mirrors, jolting any obvious narrative or interpretative gaze into fleeing right behind them as well. Those blurred boundaries also hint at one available definition of hell: the Boschian one where humans lose their God-given primacy and grow hooves, bat wings, maws, running on all fours, consuming each other—the loss of selfness that is also the place of eros, of real sensorial transgression. That's what Wellmann does with space and the human subject, but in her work, she also wrangles with time.

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Different manipulations of paint co-exist on a single surface: swift versus fastidious, smudgy versus sharp, realistic versus unhinged. These paintings hold both the actual and the possible, one anchors you and the other lets you wander, lets you roam the rotated sky, the ocean slanting the wrong way, the multiple simultaneous sunsets, the perspective that falls apart—the snowy landscape of a pigeon's funeral, attended by the famous Death Knight from the tarot card, and a cult of Ensor-masked griever evoking those others at Ornans, portrayed by Courbet.

If the tone is funereal, it's also about insides, excess, consumption, ritual, demise. The omnipresence of death but also a rebuttal of its universality: all deaths are not the same—not felt the same, not acknowledged the same, not grieved the same, not ritualized the same—in this lopsided world of ours. All of these extravagant, eschatological ideations are anchored here by some self-portraiture: they provide a human scale, entryways into a more treatable dimension, of the you and the me. They are not about protagonism, no, in fact the gestures are intimate, a brief baring, a cheeky disclosure. There are actually two of them although one chooses to be less explicit if no less revealing. They are about disappearing the self: one thinks of the black velvet vizard, the mask worn by Elizabethan women wanting to get rid of their freckles, their faces and themselves—become black void for a rostrum.

The painting as key is also, obviously, a magical device: a tarot card, a spell for infinitude amidst impending doom, a charm for endurance, a catalyst of unexplainable power, the awakening of unforeseen agency. The fluid sorcery of moving and arranging paint on a surface, a cunning play with color and light that knows how to detonate the pleasure zones of the contemporary dopamine-addled brain, the visual trickery that would throw a medieval child into apoplexy. A glamour casted on your wretched soul. — Gaby Cepeda

About the exhibitions

Opening 5 September, Ambera Wellmann debuts two new bodies of work simultaneously in New York—in the exhibition titled [One Thousand Emotions](#) at Company Gallery on Elizabeth Street and in this presentation at Hauser & Wirth on Wooster Street, marking her second solo presentation with Company and first with Hauser & Wirth. Both exhibitions will be on view through 25 October 2025.

For additional information, please contact:

Andrea Schwan, Andrea Schwan Inc., andrea@andreaschwan.com, +1 917 371 5023

Christine McMonagle, Hauser & Wirth New York, christinemcmonagle@hauserwirth.com, +1 347 320 8596

Caption and courtesy information:

Ambera Wellmann
People Loved and Unloved
2025

Oil on linen; diptych
213.4 x 365.8 cm / 84 x 144 in

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Courtesy the artist, Company Gallery and Hauser & Wirth

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