

Pontone Gallery

PRESS RELEASE

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Images are available [HERE](#).

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Angel of History by Elena Unger

10 October – 1 November 2025 | Private View: 9 October, 6 - 8pm

Pontone Gallery, 74 Newman Street, London, W1T 3DB



The Angel of History, 2025, Oil on canvas, 120 x 150 cm (47.2 x 59.1 in)

Elena Unger paints visionary, apocalyptic landscapes that are sites of both spiritual revelation and sublime terror. Her sumptuous handling, dynamic composition, and dramatic deployment of light and shade directly reference the emotional intensity of the Baroque. These paintings are similarly instrumental as vehicles for storytelling: setting out narratives, both antique and contemporary, that deal in ideas of faith, myth and philosophy.

The artist's process is a painstaking one. The paintings are built up in layers of glazes and scumbles into which a plethora of meticulous detail is incorporated. The viscid oil medium

is delicately manipulated to evoke a swirling, vaporous atmosphere, through which landscape, architecture, natural forms and figures loom into focus. Unger's method produces a densely woven pictorial surface whose complexity echoes the implied turmoil of her fabulous tales and allegorical scenarios. Recent images of fruit – succulent and delicious but overripe and sometimes fly-blown – make explicit symbolic reference to consumption and decay, reminiscent of Dutch still-lives of the seventeenth century.

The painter works from imagination, rather than observed motif, to invent topographically coherent sites, possible ethereal spaces that carry a heightened sense of magical locus. These are significant arenas where elemental forces concentrate and condense psychic power. A significant number of such pictures feature monumental classical architecture and modern 'brutalist' constructions that serve as formal anchors and overt references to 'civilisation', which Unger sees as under threat and on the verge of collapse. Vortices of energy whirl around these structures, suggesting that "the centre cannot hold". One immediately sees correspondence with John Martin's dark and portentous romanticism.

Unger works from a wide range of cultural prompts. She is particularly inspired by Walter Benjamin's 'angel of history', who experiences 'progress' as a storm of destruction. Her paintings are appropriately and emphatically turbulent. Clouds of tempestuous paint disclose a myriad of tiny angels caught in the maelstrom, illuminated by shards of celestial light, portents of redemption and the life of the world to come.

This selection of paintings, derived from such esoteric source material, sets out the artist's world view. It conjures images of ecstatic disaster, the divine force of creation and the light of revelation bearing witness to a world of wonder.

Artist Bio

Elena Unger (b.1997, Canada) is a London based artist. Unger is an alumnus of Fine Art at both Central Saint Martins and Goldsmiths, as well as a graduate of philosophy at the University of Cambridge. Unger paints meticulously detailed oil paintings on a miniature and monumental scale. Additionally, Unger combines, sculpture, sound, film, and installation to produce immersive, extra-liturgical installations such as those at Saint Bartholomew the Great, where she is artist in residence and curator.

Press & Enquiries

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