

ULTERIOR

Jen Mazza

Vicissitudes of Nature

January 10—February 22, 2025

Opening Reception: Friday, January 10, 6—8 pm



Jen Mazza, *Portent*, 2024
Oil on canvas, 67 x 87 x 2 in (170.2 x 221 x 5.1 cm)

Ulterior Gallery is pleased to present *Vicissitudes of Nature*, a solo exhibition by Jen Mazza, opening on January 10, 2025. This marks Mazza's first solo exhibition with the gallery. The opening reception will take place on Friday, January 10, from 6 to 8 pm.

Vicissitude, the quality or state of being changeable, is often used to describe the weather. The title is a tribute to philosopher Richard J. Bernstein, who wrote about philosophy's "quest for some fixed point, some stable rock upon which we can secure our lives against the vicissitudes that constantly threaten us."

Mazza's large-scale painting, *Portent*, on view at the gallery, comes with a kind of indescribable dizziness. This 67 by 87 inch painting absorbs the viewer into an unsettling yet mesmerizing scene, one that evokes a sense of vertigo. At first glance, the viewer may think they recognize what they see—a line, a color, the rippling surface of water... but do they really? *Portent* becomes a vast, absorbing expanse. Like the ocean itself it layers time, events, and emotions within it. The inspiration for *Portent* lies in Titian's *The Submersion of Pharaoh's Army in the Red Sea*, a 12-block woodcut from the 16th century. In both Mazza's and Titian's works, the water has already closed over the lost army, leaving only a calm, enigmatic surface. Mazza distills this historical reference into a landscape that meditates on absence, obscuring the line between past and present.

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The works in this show are united through their connection with nature; many are drawn from historical images and texts, sources include Virginia Woolf, Abraham Ortelius and particularly John Ruskin. For the installation of works on paper titled *Ruskin's Landscape*, Mazza culled texts from the manuscript of the British art critic's *Brantwood Diary* (1876-1884). Ruskin's record of nature's unpredictability also becomes the record of his internal landscape and psyche. "Worse and worse" he writes on September 27, 1877 and he writes the same again on Sept. 28; while these dark spells feel interminable to Ruskin, he also describes momentary encounters with the sublime: "Rosie light on snow," "Brighter," and "Beauty."

Jen Mazza (b. 1972, Washington D.C.) received an M.F.A. from Mason Gross School of the Arts at Rutgers University in 2001 and is currently based in New York, NY. A committed educator, as well as an avid thinker and writer, Mazza draws her inspiration across a range of disciplines which include philosophy, literature, and visual culture. Her work has been recently exhibited in a mid-career retrospective at The James Gallery at the Center for the Humanities, in a digital project for Artist Alliance Inc., and as part of her recent talk on art and nature at the Getty Museum. Mazza's work has been reviewed in *the New York Times*, *Art in America*, *Art News*, and *Hyperallergic*.

For inquiries, previews, and availability, please contact gallery director Takako Tanabe at takako@ulteriorgallery.com.