



ASCENDIA | JUSTINE OTTO | GIUSEPPE GONELLA | 6 SEPTEMBER - 4 OCTOBER 2025

Gallery Sara Lily Perez is pleased to present 'Ascendia', a duo exhibition by the acclaimed contemporary painters Justine Otto and Giuseppe Gonella. The exhibition articulates the collective rise, transformation, and visionary potential of humanity through the diverse but resonant practices of Justine Otto and Giuseppe Gonella. The title, derived from "ascend", to rise, move upward, or achieve a higher state, serves as a powerful metaphor for transcending boundaries both personal and universal. "Ascendia" encapsulates the journey of art and the human spirit striving for elevation, meaning, and unity. At its core, "Ascendia" revolves around the idea of shared ascent: individually, spiritually, and as a society. The exhibition sets up a dialogue between Otto and Gonella, two painters who, through figuration and abstraction, explore the tension between inner transformation and outward movement. Their works, when brought together, act as visual metaphors for collective aspirations and the desire to surpass the ordinary.

Justine Otto (b. 1974, Poland)

Otto's dynamic, multilayered work navigates the space between figuration and abstraction. Trained at the Städelschule in Frankfurt, Otto has developed a distinctive visual language that combines expressive brushwork with stamping, scraping, and geometric fragmentation. Otto's work often explores the layered complexities of identity, memory, and the interplay between the human figure and abstract spaces. Known for her expressive depictions of human figures, often mythic or militarized, and appearing fragmented, her layered oil paintings depict ambiguous figures ranging from youthful protagonists to archetypes of authority, rendered in vivid, jewel-toned palettes that evoke both intensity and dissolution. Her paintings challenge traditional representations of power, identity, and emotion. Otto's process embraces tension and contradiction: forms emerge and vanish, realism collides with ornament, and narrative is suspended in psychological ambiguity. Her work offers a critical lens on power, gender, and vulnerability, and has been exhibited extensively across Europe and the U.S.

Giuseppe Gonella (b. 1984, Italy)

Gonella is a contemporary artist based in Berlin, having graduated from the Accademia di Belle Arti in Venice in 2008 he has since developed a rich international career, living and working in cities such as New York, Leipzig, Berlin, and Lisbon. His work often explores themes of memory, identity, and transformation, drawing on both classical painting traditions and contemporary visual culture. Gonella's paintings reflect on modern human rituals, dreams, and fears through dystopian and mysterious landscapes that blend memory with modern allegory seen through his expressive brushwork and fragmented narratives that invite viewers into emotionally charged, dreamlike worlds where time and space collapse.