

Estefania Mondaca

Firemakers

4 – 31 August 2026

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. <i>Totemic</i>
oil on stretched canvas
250x250mm, 2026
\$400 | 6. <i>Antumbra</i>
oil on stretched linen
500x400mm, 2026
\$700 | 11. <i>Every man wears
a symbol</i>
mixed media on paper
210x297mm, 2026
\$300 |
| 2. <i>Head of Hypnos</i>
oil on stretched canvas
300x300mm, 2026
\$500 | 7. <i>The Firebird</i>
oil on stretched linen
500x400mm, 2026
\$700 | 12. <i>After Rauschenberg</i>
mixed media on paper
210x297mm, 2026
\$300 |
| 3. <i>Shadow Horse</i>
oil on stretched canvas
300x300mm, 2026
\$500 | 8. <i>Flower of Temperance</i>
oil on stretched canvas
900x1000mm, 2026
\$1800 | 13. <i>Born on a cloudy day</i>
mixed media on paper
210x297mm, 2026
NFS |
| 4. <i>Umbra</i>
oil on stretched canvas
500x400mm, 2026
\$700 | 9. <i>Alma (soul)</i>
mixed media on paper
210x297mm, 2025
\$300 | |
| 5. <i>Penumbra</i>
oil on stretched linen
500x400mm, 2026
\$700 | 10. <i>Leo</i>
mixed media on paper
210x297mm, 2026
\$300 | |

UP
STAIRS

CITY
ART
DEPOT

M–F 8:30am–5:00pm
Sat 10:00am–2:00pm
96 Disraeli Street, Chch

www.cityart.co.nz
info@cityart.co.nz
03 365 3811

FIREMAKERS
Luminous Bodies
Curatorial text
by Eugenia Viña

“When two shadows approach each other, their penumbras extend, seeking to merge, as if drawn by an invisible force. Shadow, antumbra, penumbra. It is the unbearable longing to touch.”
— Benjamín Labatut, “After the Light”

“Every angel is terrifying.”
— Rainer Maria Rilke

Estefanía Mondaca’s painting does not represent light: it hosts it. It receives light in the depth of its matter to return it transformed. What we see is not an illuminated surface, but a body traversed by light.

The construction of each work begins long before the image. In the preparation of the stretchers, in the successive layers of gesso, in the whites that remain hidden beneath the oil, an invisible architecture is prepared. There, a phenomenon occurs that belongs as much to physics as it does to metaphor: refraction. Light does not simply bounce off the surface—as happens in reflection—but passes through the layers of paint, bends, gathers the colour accumulated in each stratum, and returns converted into something else. The painting breathes. It preserves the memory of all its layers and makes them vibrate simultaneously.

Each work functions, then, as a light box. An organism where shadow also shines.

That radiance is not a technical effect, but a spiritual condition. The painting absorbs darkness to make it visible. It turns blackness into presence, the threshold into apparition, chiaroscuro into a space where the visible and the invisible cease to oppose each other. Matter invokes. The image embodies.

The horses, the feathers, the mirrors, the suspended figures, the bodies in transformation do not belong to a closed narrative. They are ancestral forms that survive time. Mondaca

works with a symbology that never ceased to be alive: an iconography where antiquity does not appear as the past, but as a contemporary force, always active, capable of igniting once again that which seemed forgotten.

Because memory is not a theatre where images wait motionless to be contemplated. Memory is a factory of meaning. An incessant practice of updating. Each painting sets back into motion mythologies that remained latent, like embers beneath the ashes.

In that gesture, the artist becomes a firemaker: someone who does not invent fire, but knows how to keep it. Who protects an ancient flame so that it continues to illuminate the present.

Perhaps that is why these works produce a strange feeling of recognition. They do not seem to speak of another era, but of a deeper time, where all eras coexist. There, angels remain terrifying, horses continue to cross worlds, feathers are bone and flight at the same time, and shadows seek to touch each other, expanding their penumbras over one another.

All of Estefanía Mondaca’s painting happens in that instant: when matter begins to emit light and we understand that, even in the darkness, the world has never stopped burning.

Estefanía Mondaca (b. Chile) is a visual artist and architectural designer based in Ōtautahi Christchurch. A graduate of the School of Fine Arts at the University of Chile, her practice spans oil painting, charcoal drawing and collage.

Eugenia Viña is a philosophy graduate from the University of Buenos Aires, visual artist, writer, art therapist, astrologer and tarot reader.



UP
STAIRS

CITY
ART
DEPOT

M-F 8:30am-5:00pm
Sat 10:00am-2:00pm
96 Disraeli Street, Chch

www.cityart.co.nz
info@cityart.co.nz
03 365 3811