

LIVIE

**SARAH BOGNER
FREUNDE DES LICHTS**

**APRIL 5– MAY 30, 2024
OPENING | THURSDAY, APRIL 4, 6-8 PM**

The best way to approach one of Sarah Bogner's (b. 1980, Munich, lives and works in Vienna) joyful paintings, is to simply observe the anthropomorphic creatures populating her world: half horse, somewhat human, but fully formed they cavort around, dancing, smoking. Their mouths are open, wisps of smoke or speech-bubbles that curl in complex forms escaping: are they in conversation, or merely sharing a convivial moment smoking cigarettes? Similarly, the smiling little ambiguous head/ eye creatures, dapper in their cowboy hats, float against a calm lilac background. *Vielfreunde Wir Alle* ('Manyfriends, us all'), 2024, are not unhappy about their lack of bodies. The horse-creature and the "friend", as she calls the disembodied heads that appear serially in her works, are her companions in painting, metaphors for artistic and emotional states. Her protagonists act as ciphers to a personal mythology: neither horses, nor people, nor eyes, nor heads, they are nonetheless fully formed characters with intimate friendships that a viewer can only guess at.

Bogner's paintings insist on the primacy and immediacy of their aesthetic experience, much in the way that earlier generations of 20th century painters, beginning with Matisse and extending to the Abstract Expressionists, foregrounded opticality and resisted conceptual interpretations. In Bogner's works, colors, shapes, and light create this immediacy, as does the emotional resonance of the obvious *jouissance* of her "friends". This extends to her engagement with art history: "my concept of friendship is also a conversation with my painterly predecessors," she has said, and her explorations of light and form continue that dialog.

Her surfaces are flat, only the play of the light across the surface of the glossy egg-tempera and acrylics she uses adding contrast and depth to her translucent palette. Her use of color – lilacs, carmine reds, salmon pinks, beige, orange-tones – heightens the impression of entering a personal world, to which the titles of her works offer up clues. Her creatures are all friends, as in *Freunde des Lichts* ('friends of light') 2024, the titular painting, or donut friends (*Krapfen Freunde*, 2024). Her head-people are in fact "manyfriends" as in *Vielfreunde Wir Alle* (2024), perhaps alluding to their multitude. A smaller work, *Kleine Birne*, 2024, plays on the German double meaning of the word pear: it can be used to refer to both the fruit, and is slang for head. The importance of light to the artist is foregrounded in the work *Roter Licht Raucher* (Smoker in the red light, 2024), in which one of her lilac centaurs is starkly outlined against a dominant carmine-red background.

A secondary series, "Smoke Studies" consists of smaller monochromatic paintings, and gives both clues to Bogner's process – they are developments of the curliques exhaled by her horse-people, as well as demonstrating her affinity for word play. Through Bogner's descriptive use of titles, they come into being: a particularly elaborate curl is a *Doppelknoten* or double knot (2024), while other allusive shapes are either a *Madonna* (2024) or a variation of the goddess *Minerva* (2024). One of the narratives running through Bogner's rich universe is that of music: the artist studied electroacoustic music. Her creatures dance, her titles appear as lyrical fragments, and one of the monochromes is titled *Note* (2024). The immediacy of music, the compulsion of rhythm, her warm light, along with her joyous creatures: all these elements turn *Freunde des Lichts* into an experience that invites us to linger for a while.

Dr. Jeni Fulton

Dr. Jeni Fulton is an art historian and Head of Editorial at Art Basel. She teaches at Zurich University of the Arts and the University of Zurich.

LIVIE

Sarah Bogner (*1980 Munich, Germany, lives and works in Vienna, Austria) is a painter, part of the publishing house Harpune Vienna, and musician. In the years 2004-2006 she studied at the Institute for Electroacoustic and Composition at Universität für Musik und Darstellende Kunst, Vienna, and graduated from the Akademie der Bildenden Künste, Munich in 2008. Her most recent solo exhibitions include *Unter der Sonne wie im Schatten* at Kunstverein Heppenheim, Germany (with publication); *Arrière Garde* at Galerie Christine Mayer, Munich (with publication); *Contemporary Dialogue* with Tobias Hantmann and René Luckhardt, Galerie Bernd Kugler, Innsbruck, Austria; *Sein wie ein Stein, denken wie ein Pferd* at Milchstrasse 4, Munich (with publication); *Liebe und Blamage* at KiS, Seefeld in Tyrol, Austria (with publication); *Sarah Bogner, André Butzer* with André Butzer at Galerie Bernd Kugler, Innsbruck, Austria; *Parade* at MQ Art Box, Museumsquartier, Vienna. She has also been included in various group exhibitions at Secci Gallery in Florence, Ehrhardt Floréz in Madrid, Spurs Gallery in Beijing, Mauer in Cologne, Casa Manno in Alghero, Italy.