

# Esther Schipper

## L'INVITATION AU VOYAGE

Sarah Buckner, Cui Jie, Cordula Ditz, Almut Heise, Hannah Höch, Leiko Ikemura, Tala Madani, Isa Melsheimer, Sojourner Truth Parsons, Paula Rego, Shahzia Sikander, Tsai Yi-Ting, and Yeesoonyung

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Esther Schipper is pleased to announce **L'Invitation au voyage**, presenting an exhibition of painting on the long history of travelling in your imagination, through fantasy or dreams, and ideas of the body as site of projection, conduit and personal discovery.

At a time when travel in real life has become fraught and the ease, even recklessness, with which we took this liberty for granted has come into question, this exhibition—its title, **L'Invitation au voyage** is taken from a poem from Charles Baudelaire's **Les Fleurs du Mal**—invokes the freedom of imaginary travel. The poem, in which the author invites his mistress to travel with him in their imagination, suggests a parallel between Flemish painting, the landscape of the Netherlands, and his lover's body. Its famous closing lines gave the title to Henri Matisse's 1904 painting: *Là, tout n'est qu'ordre et beauté, Luxe, calme et volupté.*

**L'Invitation au voyage** spans multiple generations and artistic approaches, inspired, influenced, and expanding on representations of dream and fantasy. Beginning with pioneering avant-gardist Hannah Höch, and established figures such as Paula Rego, Almut Heise, Leiko Ikemura, and Yeesoonyung, the exhibition continues into the practices of younger generations with works by Sarah Buckner, Cui Jie, Cordula Ditz, Tala Madani, Isa Melsheimer, Sojourner Truth Parsons, Shahzia Sikander, and Tsai Yi-Ting.

Historically, the image world of dreams and fantasies has peopled heaven and hell—its mythical, religious or secular equivalents. At the beginning of the twentieth century, more specifically since dreams and their interpretations became framed as scientific inquiry with the publication of Sigmund Freud's *Traumdeutung* in 1900, art began to more overtly explore how daily life and nightly sleep were connected. Dreams could be experienced as liberation from the rules of law, and from time and space.

**L'Invitation au voyage** begins with the invocation of music, setting the mood for the soothing and troubling effects dreams can evoke: the image of a lone piano greets visitors. The notion of the uncanny is further invoked by the stillness of the mannequin in Almut Heise's **Schaufenster**, which shares the first room with three works by Paula Rego. Drawing on the motif of Roman charity, Rego's monumental **Caritas** from 1993 depicts highly charged scenes of parents and their children in a fantastical wooded landscape.

Travel, adventure, and the negotiation of cultural identities are the subject in a room of large-scale paintings by Leiko Ikemura, four works by Shahzia Sikander from her series **Empire Follows Art: States of Agitation**, and five works by Hannah Höch. Fusing figures and landscape, Ikemura's three-part work obliquely refers to Hiroshige's groundbreaking series of woodblock prints capturing the journey along Japan's Tokaido road. Sikander's abstracted winged figures symbolize a state of struggle, of being caught variously between competing cultures and histories. Höch, who was an avid traveler, is represented by watercolors produced during trips in

the pre-war years, a major painting from 1937, and a later collage, **Garten** from 1948. The latter two works document the artist's turn to nature, as she was reduced to "travel in her garden" during World War II.

Sojourner Truth Parsons and Sarah Buckner present works that distill their lives into strikingly graphic and atmospheric works. Parsons paints the psychic life of the everyday and its fantasies, translating feeling and emotion through color, form and figure. The world and all its experiences — real-life encounters, the dreams that sprang from them, books, and films — functions as a poetic springboard for Buckner.

With Tsai Yi-Ting, Cordula Ditz, and Tala Madani, the fourth room brings together images of distress, obsession, and trauma. Tsai Yi-Ting's harrowing painting draws on the trauma of childbirth, while the collaged images printed on Ditz's paintings investigate the parallels between the Spiritualist and the early Suffragette movements in mid-19th century America. Madani's luminous work depicts with wry humor two figures entangled in humiliation.

Cui Jie's **International Space Station** then represents, together with Isa Melsheimer's new gouaches, an element of science fiction and dystopia. Looming large above earth in a black expanse, the ISS can represent scientific cooperation but also remoteness. Melsheimer's new works take as point of departure the rotating Villa Girasole near Verona and a striking Brutalist church in Rome, where a lone wolf devours his prey.

Yeesoonyung's work, based on narratives of past life experiences recovered under hypnosis, leaves us with an expanse of small pink flowers, a painting from the artist's meditative, conceptual practice.

In the last year, dream and fantasy have taken on a renewed importance as liberation from the strains of the persistent uncertainty of everyday life. With their representation of dreamlike or fantastic figures, bodies, scenarios, or landscapes, **L'Invitation au voyage** brings together works that tear at the boundaries of reality, giving us a glimpse of worlds existing at the threshold of the real.

## BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Sarah Buckner (b. 1984 in Frankfurt am Main, Germany / lives and works in Cologne) studied at the Accademia di Belle Arti in Palermo from 2006 to 2008 and at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf with Peter Doig from 2009 to 2017. In 2020–21, she was a resident at the NRW+ program at the Kunsthalle Münster. Recent exhibitions include: **Chances Are**, Ermes Ermes, Cologne, 2019; **Manifesta 12**, Palermo, 2018; **Salon des Amateurs**, Tramps, London, 2018; and **Petto**, l'ascensore, Palermo, 2015.

Cui Jie (b. 1983 in Shanghai, China / lives and works in Shanghai) studied painting at the China Academy of Art, graduating in 2006. Recent solo exhibitions include: **Cui Jie: From Pavilion to Space Station**, Centre for Chinese Contemporary Art, Manchester, 2019–20; **The Enormous Space**, OCAT Contemporary Art Terminal, Shenzhen, 2018; and **Latter, Former**, mother's tankstation, Dublin, 2016. Her work was also included in the 12th Taipei Biennial, Taipei, 2020.

Cordula Ditz (b. 1972 in Hamburg, Germany / lives and works in Hamburg) studied at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, graduating in 2005, and holds an MA from the University of Hamburg, which she completed in 2008. She was a guest professor at the Academy of Fine Arts in Munich (AdBK) in 2019–20. Recent exhibitions include: **MIND the GAP #1**, Bieberhaus, Hamburg, 2020; **Your Silence is Very Disturbing**, Galerie Marstall, Ahrensburg, 2019; and **BEING LAID UP WAS NO EXCUSE FOR NOT MAKING ART**, Kunstverein in Hamburg, 2020.

Hannah Höch (b. 1889 in Gotha, d. 1978 in Berlin, Germany) was a German artist associated with the Dada movement. She studied in the graphics class of Emil Orlik at the National Institute of the Museum of Arts and Crafts in Berlin. Höch participated in the groundbreaking exhibition First International Dada Fair Berlin, 1920. Numerous museums have held posthumous retrospectives of Höch's body of work, among them the Berlinische Galerie, Berlin, 2007; Museum Tinguely, Basel, 2008; and Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, 2014. In her honor, the city of Berlin awards the biannual Hannah Höch Prize for an exceptional artistic life's work.

Almut Heise (b. 1944 in Celle, Germany / lives and works in Hamburg) studied at the Hochschulinstitut für Kunst- und Werkerziehung in Mainz from 1965 to 1967, at the Hochschule für Bildende Kunst in Hamburg from 1967 to 1970, and at the Royal College of Arts in London from 1970 to 1971 as part of a DAAD scholarship. She went on to do a residency at the Villa Massimo, Rome, in 1978–79, and has been awarded art prizes such as the Edwin-Scharff Preis and the Kunstpreis Finkenwerder. She was a professor at the Hochschule für Angewandte Wissenschaften (HAW) in Hamburg between 1978 and 2005. Solo exhibitions include: Kunstverein Freiburg/Breisgau, 1990; Kunsthaus Hamburg, 1975; and Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden, 1974.

Leiko Ikemura (b. 1951 in Tsu, Mie Prefecture, Japan / lives and works in Berlin and Cologne) studied at the State University of Osaka from 1970 to 1972, and the Escuela Superior de Bellas Artes de Santa Isabel de Hungría, Sevilla, from 1973 to 1978. Professor at the Universität der Künste, Berlin, from 1990 to 2016, and at the Joshibi University of Art and Design in Kanagawa since 2014. Recent exhibitions include: **Leiko Ikemura im Dialog mit Donata und Wim Wenders**, Stiftung Brandenburger Tor / Max Liebermann Haus, Berlin, 2018; and solo presentations at the National Art Center, Tokyo, 2019; the Kunstmuseum Basel, 2019; and the Kunsthalle Rostock, 2020.

Tala Madani (b. 1981, Tehran, Iran / lives and works in Los Angeles) received her MFA from Yale University School of Art in 2006. Solo exhibitions include: Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, 2019; Vienna Secession, Vienna, 2019; La Panacée, Montpellier, 2017; Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo, Seville, 2014; and Nottingham Contemporary, Nottingham, 2014. A major retrospective of her work is forthcoming at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles.

Isa Melsheimer (b. 1968 in Neuss, Germany / lives and works in Berlin) received an MA from the Universität der Künste, Berlin, where she studied under Georg Baselitz. Recent institutional solo exhibitions include: **Der unerfreuliche Zustand der Textur**, KINDL—Centre for Contemporary Art, Berlin, 2020; **Psychotropische Landschaften**, Städtische Galerie Delmenhorst, 2018; **The Year of the Whale**, Fogo Island Gallery, 2018; **DER TOTE PALAST ZITTELTE—ZITTELTE!**, Mies van der Rohe Haus, Berlin, 2017; and **Kontrastbedürfnis**, Ernst-Barlach-Haus, Hamburg, 2015.

Sojourner Truth Parsons (b. 1984 in Vancouver, Canada / lives and works in New York) studied at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design in Halifax. Recent exhibitions include: **This is America**, Kunstraum Potsdam, 2021; **The Sacred Vessel (PT. 1)**, Arsenal Contemporary, New York, 2020; and **Holding Your Dog at Night**, Oakville Galleries, Canada, 2017. She did an international residency sponsored by the Canada Council for the Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico, in 2014.

Paula Rego (b. 1935 in Lisbon, Portugal / lives and works in London), trained at the Slade School of Fine Art from 1952 to 1957. Rego has exhibited widely in Britain and internationally, including her most recent solo presentations: **The Cruel Stories of Paula Rego**, Musée de l'Orangerie, Paris, 2018–19; **Paula Rego: Obedience and Defiance**, premiered at the MK Gallery, Milton Keynes, 2019, and was shown at the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh, 2020, before traveling to IMMA in 2021. A major retrospective opens at Tate Britain in 2021.

Shahzia Sikander (b. 1969 in Lahore, Pakistan / lives and works in New York) holds a BA from the National College of Arts, Lahore, and an MFA from the Rhode Island School of Design. Recent solo exhibitions include: **Disruption as Rapture**, Weatherspoon Art Museum, Greensboro, 2019; Aga Khan Museum, Toronto, 2017; and **A Journey into the Great Unknown**, Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, 2017. A traveling exhibition titled **Shahzia Sikander: Extraordinary Realities** opens at The Morgan Library, New York, in June 2021, at the RISD Museum, Rhode Island, in November 2021, and at the MFA in Houston in the spring of 2022.

Yeesookyung (b. 1963 in Seoul, Korea / lives and works in Seoul) holds a BA and MFA in painting from Seoul National University. Recent institutional solo exhibitions include: **Whisper Only to You**, Museo e Real Bosco di Capodimonte, and MADRE, Museo d'arte Contemporanea Donnaregina, both in Naples, 2019, and **When I Become You**, Daegu Art Museum, Daegu, Korea, and Museum of Contemporary Art Taipei, Taiwan, both 2018.

Tsai Yi-Ting (b. 1980 in Hsinchu, Taiwan / lives and works in Taipei) received a BFA from the Taipei National University of the Arts in 2004, an MFA from the Central Saint Martins College of Art, London, in 2006, and an MFA from the National Taipei University of Arts in 2020. Solo exhibitions to date: **Newborn, Confinement**, Beyond Gallery, Taipei, 2018; **Tsai Yi-Ting**, Jin-bian-tang, Shin-chu, Taiwan, 2018; and **Nanliao**, A Gallery, Taipei, 2012.