



## Galerie Barbara Thumm

Valérie Favre  
Unpolitische Works  
11.03 - 15.04.2023

Opening: 10.03. 2023, 6-9 pm



Valérie Favre: Pferd 2022/2023, Oil on canvas, 30x40 cm. Courtesy the artist and Galerie Barbara Thumm

Barbara Thumm Gallery is pleased to present the fifth solo show in Berlin by Swiss artist Valérie Favre. The exhibition *Unpolitische Works* involves recent pictorial oil paintings of the artist.

Nowadays, it's easy to forget the close bond that existed for centuries between humans and horses. It was horses that made the industrial revolution possible, thanks to their physical strength. And in the two world wars, they were slaughtered in their millions. In her earlier series (e.g. „Cockroach“ (2008–16), „The Prayer“ (2008)), Valérie Favre depicted horses as suffering, tormented creatures. But now, unexpectedly, she has turned her gaze back to nineteenth-century oil painting, which sought to capture horses' strength and beauty and presented them as expressions of wealth, power and cultivation, symbolising human control over and refinement of the natural world.

Galerie Barbara Thumm  
Markgrafenstrasse 68  
D-10969 Berlin

Opening hours:  
Wednesday – Saturday  
from 12pm – 6pm

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In the small and medium-sized oil paintings that make up Favre's „Horses“ series, this way of depicting horses comes to signify a calamitous, ludicrous striving for omnipotence. The mighty steeds that long ago disappeared from humans' day-to-day lives return as shifting, spectral, untrustworthy beings wearing strange masks. They recall the horses, or rather the horse costumes, from the series „The Third Grimm Brother“ (2006). There are numerous references to Favre's own oeuvre, which alongside horses is populated by many restless animal and hybrid spirits whose metamorphoses subvert hierarchies and oppositions – between human and animal, nature and culture, male and female – and present alternative configurations of reality. In the exhibition *Unpolitical Works*, oil paintings are brought into conversation with ink works. The series „Horses“ and „Perimeters“ are connected by the contradictory relation between oil and water: they repel each other, they do not mix – and yet in another sense they do. Their delicate balance can be interpreted in myriad ways: as an artistic process of exploring balance between head, hand and material, or as a statement about the current fragile state of world politics.

In the series „Perimeters“, structures composed of paint splashes extend across the coarse cotton canvas, much of which remains visible. These structures cannot be pinned down into a definite form, just as Favre's horses shake off the forms dictated by art history. They are polyvalent, tickling at the unconscious, defying attempts to control their meaning – except where, by applying two dots and a line, a face is imposed onto them. At the same time, they recall microscopic images of the earth and telescopic images of the sky – as in Favre's cosmic paintings („Fragments/Cosmos/Universe“), which deal with the relativity of human conceptions of reality and painting's capacity to reveal phenomena that otherwise remain invisible.

Ever since her work in Paris in the late 1980s, and most recently in her series „At the Table“ (2018), Favre has subtly and enigmatically explored the question of perimeters – the boundaries of an image, the limits of representation and the visual field – by means such as charcoal smudges or white borders. In times of war and pandemic, the existential character of these explorations, their critique of ideology, becomes especially apparent.

„New Earth“ is a globe painted with tea on Kleenex, which over time will fade and eventually disappear completely. It could be merely a fantasy, an unattainable utopia, or it could be a memory of our planet before it was ravaged by war and ecological destruction. This same ambivalence is evident in the apocalyptic, visionary skylines of Favre's series „Bateaux des Poètes“ (2020). It also characterises the two images of large horse heads behind tree trunks, in which the canvas appears to become simultaneously burial shroud and latticed window.

Brecht famously wrote that in dark times, it is 'almost a crime' to create art about nature, because it 'implies silence about so many horrors'. But when Favre paints horses – natural beings that seem to lack any political significance – she is by no means silent about the dark times we are living through today; the brokenness of our world is on full display.

Text by Axel Ruoff



## Galerie Barbara Thumm



Pferd, 2022  
Oil on canvas  
30 x 40 cm

Courtesy the artist and  
Galerie Barbara Thumm



Pferd, 2022/2023  
Oil on canvas  
30 x 40 cm

Courtesy the artist  
and Galerie Barbara  
Thumm



## Galerie Barbara Thumm



Pferd, 2022/2023  
Oil on canvas  
30 x 40 cm

Courtesy the artist  
and Galerie Barbara  
Thumm

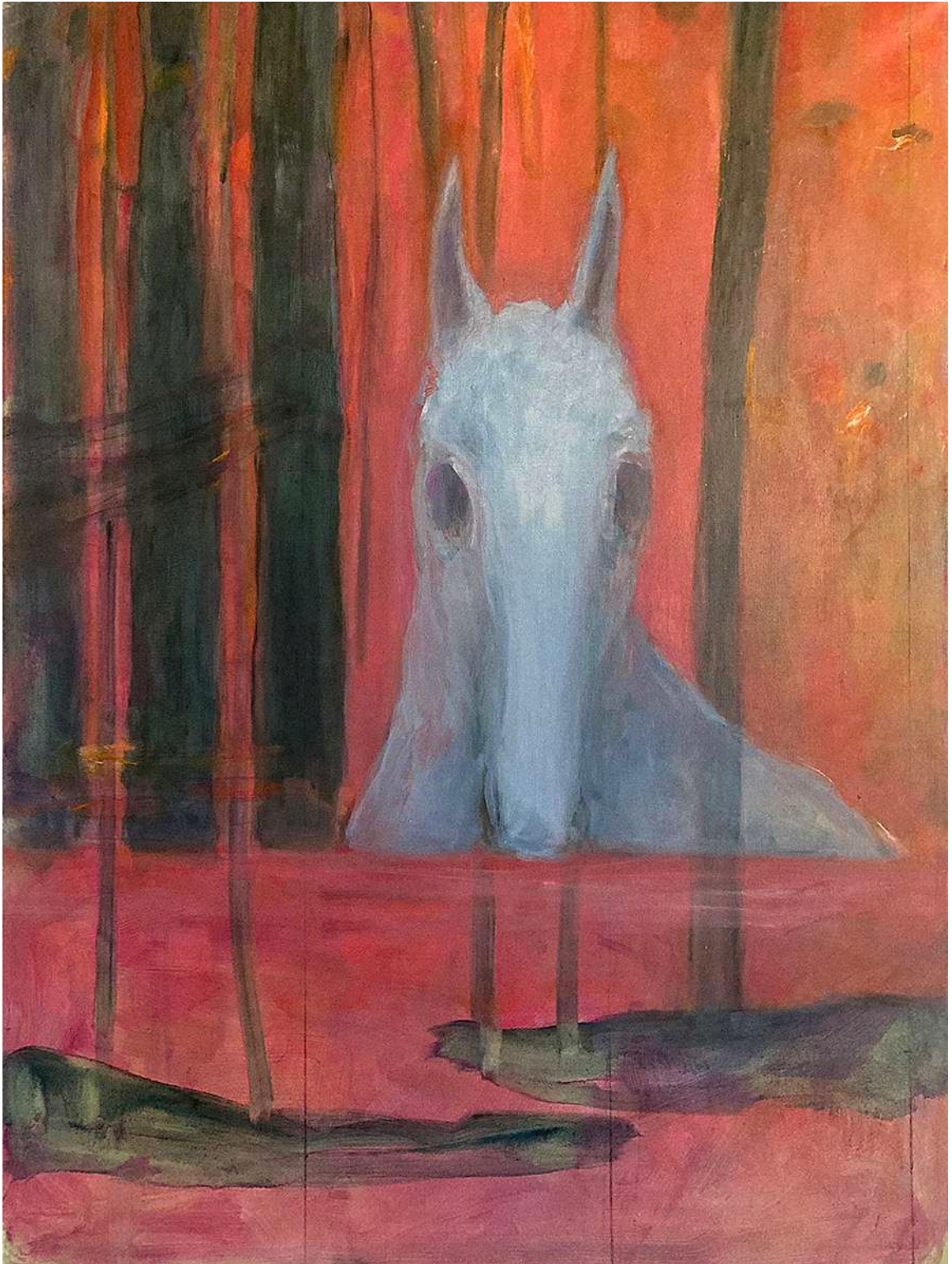


Pferd, 2022/2023  
Oil on canvas  
30 x 40 cm

Courtesy the artist  
and Galerie Barbara  
Thumm



Galerie Barbara Thumm



Pferd, 2022 / 2023  
Oil on canvas  
150 x 110 cm

Courtesy the artist and Galerie  
Barbara Thumm

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## Biography:

Valérie Favre was born in 1959 in Evilard, in Switzerland. Since 1992 she has held various teaching positions and holds a chair in painting at the University of the Arts since 2006. Her work has received attention in numerous solo and group exhibitions, especially in Germany, France and Switzerland. It has been shown, for example, at the Kunstmuseum Luzern, Von der Heydt-Museum Wuppertal, Sprengel Museum Hannover, as well as the Musée d'art moderne et contemporain de Strasbourg, the Carré d'Art Nîmes, Aargauer Kunsthaus and the Kunstmuseum Appenzell. Favres' works can be found in the Contemporary Art Collection of the Federal Republic of Germany and the collection of the Musée national d'Art moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, among others.

Valérie Favre's paintings allow for new narratives and conceptual perspectives, moving between figuration and abstraction. Her works are dominated by a fictional world composed of contrasts, contradictions, resistance and restlessness. Favre paints scenes that she develops over the course of several years in large series and work cycles. She works openly and experimentally with a repertoire informed by art history. She makes high demands on the medium and radically questions both painting and artistic work processes.

Favre lives and works in Berlin and Neuchâtel.



## Upcomming exhibitions with Valérie Favre in 2023:

March 18 - August 20  
PRINT IS A BATTLEFIELD  
Museo Villa Cedri / Bellinzona Switzerland

13 May - until November 2023  
HEALING  
Fondation WhiteSpaceBlackBox  
Neuchâtel - Switzerland

From September  
Tree  
Museum Jenisch Vevey  
Switzerland

Valérie Favre, Neue Welt, 2022 / 2023, Tea and pencil on Kleenex, each 42 x 30 cm  
Courtesy the artist and Galerie Barbara Thumm