

SARAH BUCKNER



ESTHER SCHIPPER

Frieze London  
October 15-19  
2025

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OBSTINATELY SINGULAR IMAGES:  
ON THE PAINTINGS OF SARAH BUCKNER

Noemi Smolik

Sarah Buckner's pictures are strange. But why? Is it because of the motifs? Is it the muted colors, the mysterious settings? Or is it the impossibility of placing the events depicted in her pictures in time? It is as if the pictures were caught in a state of becoming, unfolding simultaneously into the past and the future, not in the present, and yet somehow contemporary. But how? A woman dressed in a blue-violet raincoat enters the picture from the left with a determined, long stride. Her head is covered with a headscarf, her dark strands of hair and her coat are windswept by the strong tailwind. In her outstretched right hand, she carries a closed umbrella as if it were a weapon. Is she defending herself against someone? Or is she just pointing at someone? The whole scene is somehow detached, both temporally and spatially. And yet the threat is palpable; the wind whistles from the picture, a damp cold spreads throughout the room. The picture from 2025 is titled BONNE NOUVELLE.

In her well-known essay *Les Temps des Femmes* (EN: *Women's Time*) from 1979, French philosopher Julia Kristeva sees women as representatives of a temporality that opposes the linear passage of time. "As for time," she writes, "female subjectivity would seem to provide a specific measure that essentially retains repetition and eternity from among the multiple modalities of time known through the history of civilizations."<sup>1</sup> Kristeva

attributes women's preference for the modalities of *repetition* and *eternity* to the specifically female experiences of "cycles, gestation, the eternal recurrence of a biological rhythm which conforms to that of nature."<sup>2</sup>

Exactly. Buckner's images are characterized by repetitions and gestures of returning, which nevertheless move forward. She repeatedly paints over entire parts of the painting, making changes in order to return to where she was before, to paint over it again... Such an approach, which extends into the past as well as into the future, evokes eternity.

The motifs in the paintings are also curious. They often depict young women, sometimes even children, with archetypal appearances, as in the painting FOLLOWING A THREAD, 2025, in which a girl and a boy watch a boy emerge from bushes with a rat on his head. Where do these images come from? These strange figures? Buckner often uses photographs, memories, or even literary texts as sources. By trying to give them form in the painting process, she approaches her own self: "Painting," says Buckner, "is a shadowy activity that arises from one's own experiences, moods, moments, visions, sensations, and that matures from various pools, from one's own gut. Like a spider?" With such an approach, it's no wonder that it takes her a long time to declare a painting finished. But is the painting truly finished? Somehow, the paintings always remain enigmatic. Buckner speaks of the magic of images.

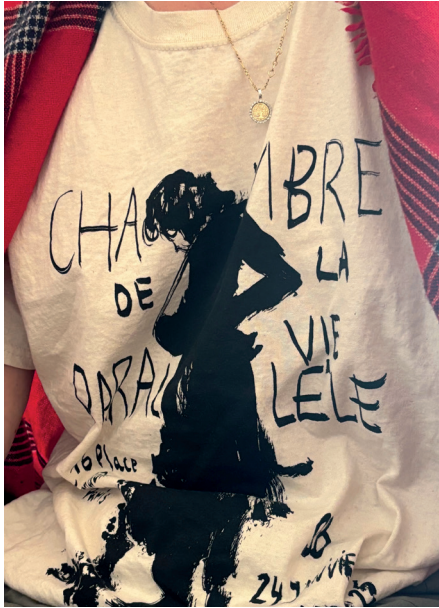
In the painting BONNE NOUVELLE mentioned at the beginning of my text, the woman walking against the wind is not only carrying an umbrella. With her left hand, she is holding a cell phone to her ear. This makes the image contemporary, yet the manner in which it was executed refuses assignment to a specific time period. Without the cell phone, the scene could just as easily be set in the 1920s. And this dynamic, this refusal to be classified in terms of a specific time period while simultaneously being positioned within a temporally determinable order, makes the image topical in two respects.

Because it says a lot about the challenges of our time. A time in which we are downright overwhelmed by a ceaseless flow of images on our screens. And this is where Kristeva, back in the 1970s—what foresight!—sees great opportunities for the visual arts: "It seems to me that the role of what is usually called 'aesthetic practices' must increase not

only to counterbalance the storage and uniformity of information by present-day mass media, data-bank systems, and, in particular, modern communications technology, but also to demystify the identity of the symbolic bond itself, to demystify, therefore, the *community* of language as a universal and unifying tool, one which totalizes and equalizes."<sup>3</sup> Kristeva therefore calls on the visual arts and literature to emphasize not only the "multiplicity of every person's possible identifications" but their "singularity."<sup>4</sup>

Buckner's refusal to tell stories that ignore subjective experiences and therefore do not submit to the logic of a linear, forward-moving time is what makes her painted images not only contemporary within the multiplicity of possible identifications, but also, in Kristeva's sense, above all singular.





Top: Agnès Varda, *L'une chante, l'autre pas*, 1977, the artist © ADAGP, Paris / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2025;  
 Bottom left: Sarah Buckner, *Chambre de la vie parallèle*, Screen Print Artist Edition (C.D.V.P.);  
 Bottom right: Sarah Buckner

→  
 Sarah Buckner, *Moodboard Studio Wall*



Hans Jochen von der Wense, *Portrait des Künstlers als sein Schafherd*, 1934.



cm		
8	41 x 33	41 x 33
10	46 x 38	46 x 38
12	55 x 46	55 x 46
15	61 x 50	61 x 50
20	65 x 54	65 x 54
25	73 x 60	73 x 60
30	81 x 65	81 x 65
35	92 x 73	92 x 73
40	100 x 81	100 x 81





SKETCH FOR LITTLE SAINT  
2025  
Felt pen on tracing paper  
50 × 45 cm



STUDY FOR LITTLE SAINT  
2025  
Oil and charcoal on canvas,  
mounted on linen and wood  
47 × 22 cm  
(18 1/2 × 8 5/8 in)

SAINT  
2025  
Oil on linen  
155 × 70 cm  
(61 × 27 1/2 in)



FOLLOWING A THREAD  
2025  
Oil on linen  
175 × 200 cm  
(68 7/8 × 78 3/4 in)





BONNE NOUVELLE  
2025  
Oil and charcoal on linen  
145 × 115 cm  
(57 1/8 × 45 1/4 in)



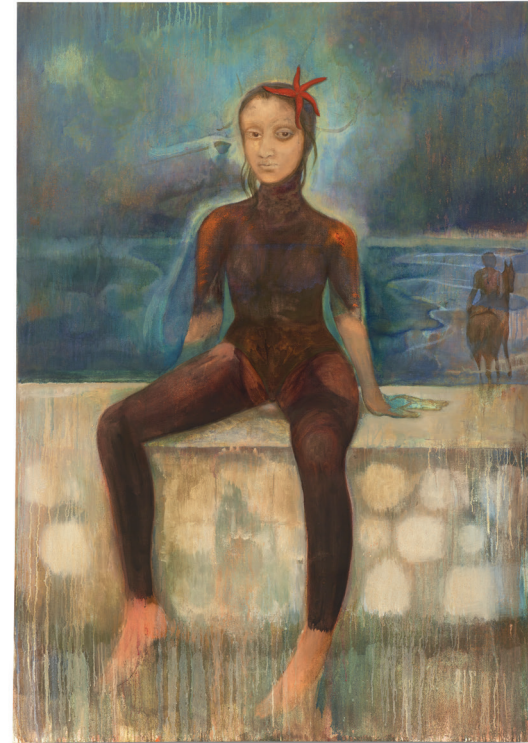
CHARDON  
2025  
Oil on linen  
30 × 33 cm  
(11 3/4 × 13 in)



ANDANTE  
2025  
Oil on linen  
33,2 × 40,2 cm  
(13 1/8 × 15 7/8 in)



STELLA GUIDA  
2025  
Oil on linen  
165 × 115 cm  
(65 × 45 1/4 in)





TALK TO THE WIND  
2025  
Oil on linen  
40,5 × 33,3 cm  
(16 × 13 1/8 in)



UNTITLED  
2025  
Oil and charcoal on linen  
28,2 × 35,3 cm  
(11 1/8 × 13 7/8 in)



PHÉNOMÈNE

2025

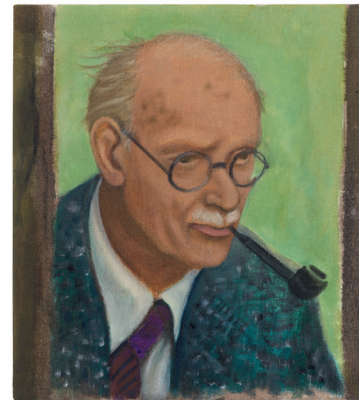
Oil and charcoal on linen, thistle and nail polish

135 × 50 cm

(53 1/8 × 19 3/4 in)



AFTER JUNG  
2025  
Oil and charcoal on linen  
45 × 40,5 cm  
(17 3/4 × 16 in)



## SARAH BUCKNER

Born 1984 in Frankfurt am Main  
Lives and works in Cologne

### EDUCATION

2014  
California College of the Arts San Francisco  
2009–2017  
Kunstakademie Düsseldorf (Professor Peter Doig)  
2006–2008  
Accademia delle Belle Arti di Palermo

### RESIDENCIES

2020 – 2021  
NRW+, Kunsthalle Münster

### SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2025  
*Chambre de la vie parallèle*, Esther Schipper, Paris  
2024  
*Sarah Buckner: Inferno Rosa*, Longlati Foundation, Shanghai  
2023  
*Jeden kleinen Finger, sogar*, Esther Schipper, Berlin  
*Sarah Buckner*, London Arts Club, London  
2021  
*Head Over Heels*, LWL-Museum für Kunst und Kultur and Westfälischer Kunstverein, Münster  
2019  
*Sarah Buckner: chances are*, Hermes-Hermes c/o Michael Trier Studio, Cologne  
2018  
*Sarah Buckner*, Residence and Solo exhibition, Edward Ressler Gallery, New York  
2015  
*Petto*, L'Ascensore, Palermo  
*Paintings*, Hermes-Hermes, Rome

## SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2025  
*Trip Down Memory Lane*, La Gaya Scienza, Nice  
2023  
*nun lässt uns am Rhein zusammen treffen, um gemeinsam zu vergessen, dass ein Fluss auch eine Grenze sein kann*, Kunst im Hafen e.V., Düsseldorf  
2022  
*when it's at the tip of your tongue*, Kunstverein Bad Godesberg  
*Summer '22*, Esther Schipper, Berlin  
2021  
*En la casa de Marqués*, Esther Schipper, Casa Museo Can Marqués, Palma de Mallorca  
*L'Invitation au voyage*, Esther Schipper, Berlin  
2020  
*Il Lenzuolo Viola*, Hermes-Hermes, Vienna  
2018  
*Signori prego si accomodino – Lia Pasqualino Noto*, Casa Studio Lia Pasqualino Noto, Manifesta 12, Palermo  
*Guanto*, Institut für Bienenzucht, Cologne  
*Hängung Total*, sonneundsolche, Düsseldorf  
*Salon des Amateurs*, Tramps, London  
*1001 Bild*, Villa de Bank, Enschede  
2017  
*Eggy and Seedy*, Munchies, London  
2015  
*Ort und Zeit*, Kartell Kollektiv, Düsseldorf  
*Moltofil*, Düsseldorf  
2014  
*Tuesday Afternoon*, Anna Klinkhammer Galerie, Düsseldorf  
*Class Exhibition*, Jordan Kantor, CCA, San Francisco  
*Klasse Doig*, Display Gallery, London  
2013  
*Mondo*, Bilker Allee, Düsseldorf  
*Beyond the Stage*, Canongate Venture, Edinburgh



←  
VIVA  
2025  
Oil on linen  
13 × 18 cm  
(5 1/8 × 7 1/8 in)

PHOTOGRAPHY  
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GRAPHIC DESIGN  
Agata Biskup

*Ether Schipper*