

Valérie Favre

Un billet pour quatre pièces (A ticket for four pieces/rooms)

November 8 – December 19, 2025

Opening reception: Saturday, November 8, 6pm – 8pm

11-13, rue des Arquebusiers, Paris

Galerie Peter Kilchmann is delighted to present Valérie Favre's (1959, Switzerland; lives and works between Berlin and Neuchâtel) new solo exhibition, *Un billet pour quatre pièces*, marking her inaugural presentation at the gallery's Paris location and her fifth exhibition with the gallery. For this exhibition, the artist has continued several of her recognizable series, bringing them into dialogue with new, previously unpublished works. Across the gallery's four rooms, approximately twenty works are presented in various formats: paintings and works on paper, which are interconnected in ways that are at once unexpected and yet intuitively coherent.

The title initially evokes Favre's intimate connections with theatre and literature. At the same time, it hints at how she – as a passionate reader – plays with words. A lively, buoyant title, it suggests that she approaches painting with the same playful spirit. *Un billet pour quatre pièces (A Ticket for four pieces/rooms)* is an invitation to a performance and to dialogue, for no work exists without an audience. By conjuring new *Lapine(s) Univers* while simultaneously presenting two *Petit(s) Théâtre(s) de la Vie* – on canvas for the first time – she seeks to reconnect with a sphere in which she lived for nearly twenty years (1982–1999). At the same time, the artist creates the conditions for these figures to encounter other hybrid beings, which unfold within stage-like settings or like stellar constellations.

In an interview conducted by Angela Lammert on the occasion of her nomination for the Prix Meret Oppenheim 2024, Favre discusses the origins of her *Lapine Universe* series. Created in Berlin in the early 2000s—at a time when she abandoned theatre to devote herself entirely to painting—the now exclusively painting-focused artist entered a space largely dominated by male figures. It was in this context that she brought into being an alter ego that allows her simultaneously to explore her position as a woman and as a woman within the pictorial space—and to assert her legitimacy by taking possession of her own instrument: “She too (*lapine*—doe; *la pine*—colloquially: penis) has a brush.” A double entendre that ironically subverts the phallic claim inherent in the act of creation. The *Lapine*, often dressed in a short dress or a green bodysuit, and wearing either black leather over-the-knee boots or red ankle boots, typically appears in self-assured poses: poised to leap, hands on hips, arms crossed, playing an electric guitar... Whatever she does, this hybrid, amplified being—evoking in the collective imagination figures such as Lara Croft, Playboy girls, and Alice in Wonderland—embodies an unbridled vitality, a desire to inhabit the space fully and assert her presence within it. Broad brushstrokes, vibrant colors, and heightened contrasts construct this realm—both for this mythological creature and for the artist herself. Neither operates behind the scenes; both are decisively on stage, ready to claim the world as their own.

The work *La cuillère* (“Spoon”) brings together several of Favre's iconic investigations. The boat assumes a central position in the composition, as in her series *Le Bateau des Poètes*—a homage to writers who glide from one shore to the other. The piece is inspired by an ancient Egyptian ritual in which deceased pharaohs were offered a spoonful of honey after embalming, to grant them strength and courage for their final journey. The nectar, in Greek mythology the food of the gods, here is presented by a dog, who—like a human—sits at the edge of a camp. This, of course, recalls the notion of “becoming-animal” (G. Deleuze), which Favre regularly explores. A whole bestiary invites the painter and makes tangible that the modes of existence of her protagonists are in no way determined by fate. Often captured in a moment of metamorphosis, her figures carry multiple potentials, incarnating themselves through the ongoing process of painting. Nothing is tamed in this work; for Favre, the beginning or end of time can only be rendered in a kind of ecstasy of matter. One thinks of Pygmalion—what literature-inspired artist would not claim similar intentions—and one delights in the fact that he dips his hands into the clay to enable her birth. Favre, in turn, immerses herself decisively in color; she experiments with openness, allowing the surface to vanish beneath the richness of layers—beneath the multitude of worlds. The audience is left with nothing but to approach her work almost like archaeologists, uncovering layer by layer a fractured sky of infinite colors, stars, and destinies.

Favre evokes another form of transition and myth in *Métamorphose, devenir étoile*, while still drawing inspiration from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Here, the transformation is no longer horizontal but vertical, as it depicts Callisto being elevated to the heavens by Jupiter. Hera, the jealous goddess, turns Diana's nymph into a bear after discovering her husband's infidelity. The divine lover barely manages to resolve the tragedy he himself has provoked—an occurrence familiar throughout myth. The mountains and the intense, vivid, almost biting hues in the background allude to the artist's Helvetian origins. This moment of metamorphosis, that fleeting instant of transition from one state to another, is celebrated by the painter as an explosion of energy—a veritable fireworks display. The nature of her protagonists, as so often, remains fluid; it is precisely from this suspension that they draw a cosmic, radiant vitality.

Even the glasses in the still lifes *D'or et d'argent* appear to hold a promise. In these new paintings, the vessels encounter the viewer as actors. This is less an academic exercise than a political manifesto. Sometimes filled, sometimes empty, with the loaf of bread positioned before or behind them, this modest, discreet pair of water and bread—essential sustenance—means more to the artist than gold or silver. This sense of calm is further enhanced by the grey or blue background and the decor reduced to its essentials. In this way, the viewer is presented—with a touch of nostalgia—with the image of a breakfast, lunch, or dinner table: a natural, comforting table, entirely in keeping with the ethos of her work.

Valérie Favre's work has been exhibited internationally since the late 1980s. Solo exhibitions have been held, among others, at the following institutions: Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain de Strasbourg (2015); Kunstmuseum Luzern (2009); Von der Heydt Museum, Wuppertal (2016); Museum Franz Gertsch, Burgdorf (2016); Musée d'Art et d'Histoire de Neuchâtel (2017); Académie de Meuron (2025); Carré d'Art Contemporain, Nîmes (2009); Epper Collection, Ascona (2025); Kulturhaus Helferei, Zürich (2021); Neuer Berliner Kunstverein, Berlin (2013); Galerie Pankow, Berlin (2020); und Neue Galerie, Gladbeck (2018).

She has also participated in numerous group exhibitions at major institutions, including the Musée National d'Art Moderne – Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris (2009); Aargauer Kunsthau, Aarau (2018); Sprengel Museum, Hannover (2020–2021); Musée de Pully, Pully (2025); MAC VAL, Vitry-sur-Seine (2025); Musée Jenisch, Vevey (2025); Albertinum, Dresden (2016); Tel Aviv Museum of Art, Tel Aviv (2012); K21, Düsseldorf (2010); Hyogo Prefectural Museum of Art, Kobe (2014); Philara Collection, Düsseldorf (2024); Kunsthau Grenchen (2023); Museo Villa dei Cedri, Bellinzona (2023); Centre Dürrenmatt, Neuchâtel (2022); Tretyakov Gallery, Moskau; MARTa Herford, Herford (2019); Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern (2015); Museum on the Seam, Jerusalem (2012); as well as in the touring exhibition *Diversity United: Moscow. Berlin. Paris.*, which was presented at the Palais de Tokyo, Paris.

Valérie Favre's works are part of major public and private collections, including the Musée National d'Art Moderne – Centre Pompidou, Paris; the Contemporary Art Collection of the Federal Republic of Germany; the Centre National des Arts Plastiques, Paris; the Fonds National d'Art Contemporain, Paris; Kunstmuseum Luzern; Musée Cantonal des Beaux-Arts de Lausanne; Musée d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain, Nice; Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain, Strasbourg; MAC VAL, Vitry-sur-Seine; and the Carré d'Art – Musée d'Art Contemporain, Nîmes. Her works are also represented in several FRAC collections (Île-de-France, Auvergne, Poitou-Charentes), in the FDAC du Val-de-Marne, as well as in the Fonds Municipal d'Art Contemporain of the City of Paris; additionally in the Musée Jenisch, Vevey; Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, Neuchâtel; and the Musée de Picardie, Amiens. In 2012, Valérie Favre was nominated for the prestigious Prix Marcel Duchamp in France. In 2024, she received the highly coveted Meret Oppenheim Prize, the Swiss Grand Award for Art, in recognition of her entire artistic oeuvre. From 2006 to 2025, she served as Professor of Painting at the Universität der Künste, Berlin.

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