

Sophie Schmidt

Luft zu Haut

January 30 – March 10, 2022

beacon is delighted to present *Luft zu Haut*, the first exhibition by artist Sophie Schmidt to focus exclusively on painting.

Sophie Schmidt's (b. 1986) artistic practice ranges across a variety of media. Her multilayered oeuvre encompasses painting, sculpture, performance, photography, and text. Schmidt interweaves these forms of expression into a densely enmeshed, narrative structure. Her leitmotif throughout is the human body and its potential openness to a state of 'being-in-the-world', thus permitting it, in its essence and experience, to overcome the ontological dualisms of material and immaterial entities such as feeling and thought.

Sophie Schmidt's work attests to a re-examination of the concept of human being and explores the body as a space of possibilities. In this approach, the visible material form of the person is not considered as physically complete: the artist expands corporeal envelopes, extends limbs, or entirely transforms the body. Fictitious hybrids appear, newly connected physical and emotional combinations, which can liberate utopian potential. Perception and appearance, set free from established norms and categories, come together in her works. As fantastical manifestations, they narrate their own hypothetical form(ul)ation and recount their liberation as energetic phenomena.

In the *Luft zu Haut* exhibition, which bears the same name as the artist's most recent cycle of work, the body is again her central thematic focus. The title references the notion that air can become a form of skin, that the atmosphere enveloping a body becomes an element of its physical sensation. Concentrating for the first time solely on painting and text, the exhibition speaks of internal body images searching for expression, of emotions and excitement, and always of dissolving the clearly defined boundaries of essential and material structures.

While the abstraction on canvas permits categorisation of recognisable motifs, it nevertheless completely defies explicit interpretation. The text integral to some works, an *écriture automatique* typical for Schmidt, is an element of the expressive performance on which the paintings are based. Physical boundaries dissolve to form visions. Time after time, the artist also transcends temporal barriers, encountering figures and narratives from the past in her dream-suffused present. The eponymous *Schneehuhnfrauen* [ptarmigan women] are just such time-travelling beings. In fiercely glowing images, the boundaries between avian plumage and aspects of the human body dissolve. These merge on the canvas into a simultaneous perception of physical realities open to multilayered and multifaceted interpretations.