

# HAVERKAMPF LEISTENSCHNEIDER

## *reveries of a solitary muse*

January 30, 2025 - March 1, 2025

In Greek mythology, the Muses were thought to speak in whispers, inspiring those they blessed with their gifts. In some accounts, these whispers were carried on the wind, often from Mount Helicon, the sacred mountain where the nine Muses were said to reside. As divine patrons of the arts, each Muse presided over a distinct domain of knowledge—spanning poetry, dance, music, history, and astronomy—collectively embodying the vast spectrum of human inspiration, guiding artists, poets, and musicians as they retreated into the depths of thought.

This idea of whispers has transcended time, enduring as a metaphor for the muse's mysterious aura, a source of inspiration and personal enlightenment. Building on this notion, the exhibition *reveries of a solitary muse* brings together the work of nine women artists: **Nadja Abt, Annabelle Agbo Godeau, Solweig de Barry, Isabella Fürnkäs, Suah Im, Alex Müller, Eglé Otto, Sophia Süßmilch, and Sophia Tabatadze**. Spanning a wide range of mediums, their works offer multifaceted perspectives on the muse, unfolding a narrative imbued with a sense of dream, poetry, and humour.

In some works, the muse emerges as a guiding principle—a mediator between the physical world and the realm of ideas—manifesting, for instance, through the artist's dedication to a specific medium, where repetition becomes an inquiry into the essence and language of art itself. Others explore the concept through metaphors, allegories, mythological or cinematographic references, often placing the female figure or motifs traditionally associated with it at the centre of their iconography. Across their diverse practices, a common muse is grounded in the personal, in their roles as artists and women, while informed by varied cultural backgrounds.

Redefining the muse beyond its classical origins, the exhibition invites reflection on the enduring ambivalence surrounding its representation in contemporary culture. In Western art, the muse has historically been shaped by the male gaze—viewed as an object of inspiration rather than originator—and, since the late 19th century, often conflated with the 'femme fatale', an archetype of beauty, at once enchanting and threatening. In contrast, each artist reclaims the archetype for herself, subverting, directly or indirectly, the clichéd portrayal commonly tied to it.

Curated by Alexia Timmermans