

GALERIA FILOMENA SOARES

Jubilee

Catarina Câmara Pereira, Craig Jun Li, Edin Zenun, Hugo Canoilas, Irit Batsry, Kris Lemsalu, Liza Lacroix, Rachel Fäth, Robin Waart, Sam Anderson, Ursula Mayer, Vasco Futscher, and Young Boy Dancing Group

Opening: Saturday, November 29, 4pm - 7pm

29.11.2025 - 17.01.2026

In *The Friend* (2003), historian Alan Bray reminds us that friendship was not always as underappreciated as it seems to be these days. He tells the story of a long-forgotten Christian ritual, dating back to the twelfth century, that bound two people together in “spiritual kinship.” This solemn, church-sanctioned bond was akin to a marriage of friends: it recognized friendship as a sacred commitment carrying both moral and material responsibilities in this world and bonding two souls for eternity in the next. Today, the idea of an official “friendship license” seems absurd. Bray shows that traditional norms of friendship declined with the rise of liberalism and the modern state. Indeed, much like the political philosophy from which it arose, the liberal regime dismisses friendship as fundamental to a life well-lived.

Meanwhile, 300 or so years since the last spiritual-kinship ritual was performed in the West, loneliness has become a public crisis. Public institutions, academics, journalists, pundits, and public intellectuals decry our “loneliness epidemic.” The very way we talk reveals the difficulty we experience relating to one another: expressions such as “social anxiety,” “commitment issues,” or the “fear of intimacy” have become part of the vernacular.

As individualism and self-sufficiency have grown, friendship has withered. Instead, modern society and culture exalt romantic love, encouraging us to demand everything from our partners: sex, companionship, intimacy, friendship and family. Even the sitcom *Friends*, which claims to celebrate friendship, ends with nearly all the main characters paired romantically, reducing friendship to a stage before marriage. True friendships now seem to exist only in the fantasy worlds of *The Lord of the Rings*, *Harry Potter*, or the *Avengers*. But if romance appears to us as the sole remaining oasis in our contemporary emotional desert, it also seems increasingly like a mirage. Not only is genuine commitment increasingly hard to come by, but in the pursuit of an impossible romantic ideal, we neglect and disparage other meaningful and fulfilling bonds. By elevating romance above friendship, we do a disservice to both.

Technology and late-stage capitalism have undeniably deepened our social crisis. The ease of remote work, geographic mobility, the convenience afforded by apps and the single-minded concern with professional advancement all contribute to draw people away each other and from in-person interactions. But the roots of our crisis lie deeper.

The turn away from friendship can be traced to the philosophical giants of the 16th through the 18th centuries who ushered in liberalism. Classical and medieval thinkers, for whom human beings were social and political animals, ranked friendship as one of life's greatest goods: Aristotle went so far as to argue that even if one had all of life's other goods, "without friends, no one would choose to live."¹ Pre-modern thought held that friendship between mature and virtuous individuals was the richest, fullest, and most worthwhile of human bonds. But the last great philosophic thinker to espouse such a view of friendship was Francis Bacon in the early 1600s. From Thomas Hobbes onward, friendship was largely dismissed as a meaningful human bond. To Bacon's judgement that "it is a mere and miserable solitude to want true friends, without which the world is but a wilderness,"² Hobbes responded that by nature "we are not looking for friends but for honor or advantage from them."³ Broadly speaking, early modern thinkers like Hobbes, Spinoza or Locke conceived of friendship transactionally, as merely a means to one's individual ends. In their view, human beings are not genuinely social by nature but vain, competitive and violent individuals whose primary drive is their own self-preservation and advantage. They devised the liberal state to protect individuals and their rights, and to preserve the private sphere. The resulting dominant moral posture is that we each have the right to live as we please so long as we don't interfere with the right of others, and in fact, free from an obligation to care actively for them.

Thus, it isn't just that liberal political philosophy dismisses friendship. In making security and self-preservation the foundation of our morality and our political regime, liberalism deprives friendship of its grounding. The passion for self-preservation has expanded beyond the concern for one's physical body: it now aims at securing one's moral and emotional integrity. Politeness has replaced obligation; emotional boundaries are prized over loyalty; and ending a friendship is no moral failure. Even equality, one of liberalism's greatest achievements, undermines friendship by discouraging the judgment and selectivity that are necessary for genuine friendship. Most of us have a hard time acknowledging that we rank our friends. It feels *wrong*. It comes as no surprise that we speak of "close friends" rather than "good friends." "Closeness" evokes something more circumstantial and neutral whereas calling someone "good" suggests a judgement of character. And yet, worthwhile friendship calls for both ranking and judgement.

But what about love? It doesn't come out of the liberal tradition. To understand our disproportionate concern with romance, we must turn to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the premier political philosopher of the 18th century. Rousseau's powerful attack on modernity launched the counter Enlightenment. After him, the ideal liberal man became the tainted bourgeois, who "will never be either man or citizen" and who is "good neither for himself nor for others."⁴ Rousseau resolved the dividedness of modern liberal man through the revival of romantic love and the family. In doing so, he argued for a new conception of marriage and the

¹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 8.1 1155a5

² Francis Bacon, "Of Friendship," collected *Essays*.

³ Thomas Hobbes, *De Cive*.

⁴ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile* book I.

family as built on love and free choice rather than on obligation, duty, or tradition. But he did not bring back other forms of sociality. In fact, Rousseau made friendship derivative from romantic love: "from the need for a mistress is soon born the need for a friend."⁵ In the absence of any other alternatives, romantic love has become the sole outlet for our private social hopes and longings.

We live in liberal democratic societies shaped by Hobbesian and Lockean principles. But our cultural heritage and collective imagination are just as much shaped by Rousseau. We are at once encouraged to be thankful for society and to despise and rebel against it. We fantasize about love and romance, and desperately seek it, all while living under a regime premised on and thereby promoting a view of human nature that makes little to no room for love. But if liberalism has little room for friendship, it grants us the freedom to reclaim it. Rousseau's revival of love shows us that all is not lost. In giving love a new lease on life on the basis of a modern understanding of human nature he showed liberalism's flexibility.

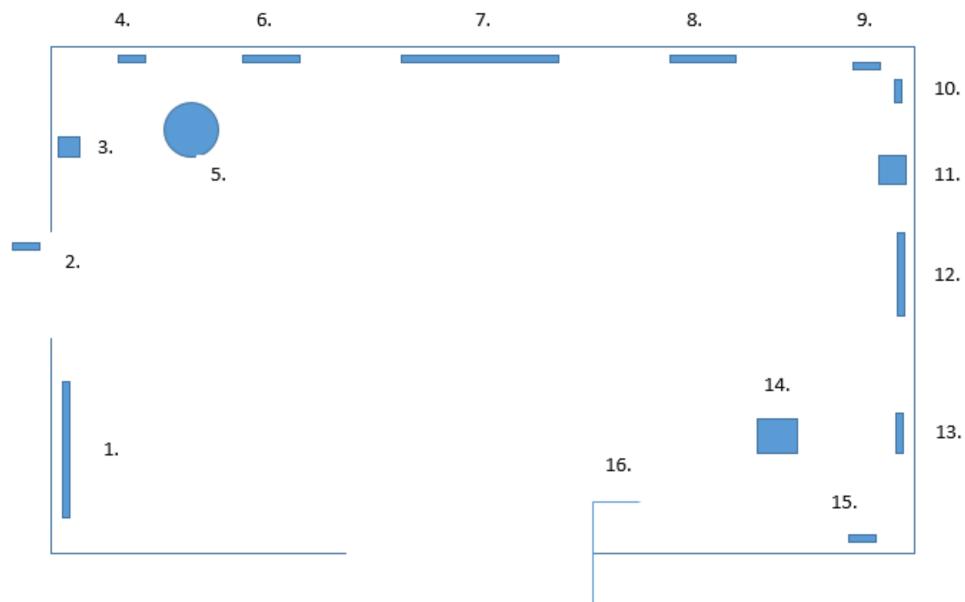
Recognizing the limits of the opinions that underlie our social habits is the first step toward change. We can still learn from Aristotle and others who saw friendship as vital to human happiness. In fact, we need not even go as far back as Aristotle: as late as the XVIth century, the French philosopher Montaigne argued that, in the best friendships, "souls mingle and blend with each other so completely that they efface the seam that joined them."⁶ Friendship does not burn as brightly and strongly as love, but once one has experienced the steady warmth of a good friend, its value is unmistakable.

Abridged version of *The Crisis of Friendship* by David Futscher

<https://harperreview.com/the-crisis-of-friendship/>

⁵ *Emile*, book IV,

⁶ Montaigne *De l'amitié*.



1. Young Boy Dancing Group
YBDG 2/2023, 2023
 Textiles, varnish, epoxy, technical
 gelatine
 150 x 100 cm

2. Edin Zenun
Sylvester Anfang 5, 2025
 Oil Acrylic and Rabbitglue with
 Pigment on Canvas
 26 x 21 cm

3. Kris Lemsalu
Dolce Vita, 2025
 Ceramics
 10 x 30 x 24 cm

4. Sam Anderson
Study from a Comic (2 of 2), 2018
 Charcoal on paper
 27.9 x 21.6 cm

5. Catarina da Câmara Pereira
La prière plus one, 2022-2025
 Mannequin, chair, iron, wood, foam,
 fabric
 Variable dimensions

6. Ursula Mayer
Fallen Imperial, 2001
 Digital prints
 20 x 30 cm (x9) 77 x 102 cm (Overall)

7. Vasco Futscher
 Untitled, 2025
 Welded steel
 23 x 12 x 5 cm

8. Craig Jun Li
Yvonne, Liza's Cover, 2025
 SX-70 films, altered SX-70 films, linen
 mounting tapes, artist's frame
 64.5 x 52 cm (Overall)

9. Edin Zenun
Pascalis 14, 2025
 Oil Acrylic and Rabbitglue with Pigment
 on Canvas
 26 x 21 cm

10. Edin Zenun
Sylvester Anfang 6, 2025
 Oil Acrylic and Rabbitglue with Pigment
 on Canvas
 26 x 21 cm

11. Kris Lemsalu
 Untitled 3, 2025
 Ceramics
 32 x 21 x 28 cm

12. Hugo Canoilas
*A figment of the imagination with a
 Tibetan Mastiff*, 2025
 High-flow acrylic on cotton
 90 x 75 cm (unframed) 93 x 78 cm
 (framed)

13. Craig Jun Li
 Untitled (*employment #5*), 2023-2025
 Restored antique 120 hour bank vault
 time lock, wall-mounted aluminum
 cigarette and ash receptacle
 33 x 9 x 11.5 cm

14. Irit Batsry
Snake Skin, 2021
 Altered 35MM Film and black acrylic
 board
 Variable dimensions

15. Liza Lacroix
 Untitled, 2025
 Graphite on paper
 15.2 x 15.4 cm (sem moldura / unframed)
 69.5 x 21.5 x 1.5 cm (com moldura /
 framed)

16. Rachel Fäet
Clamp, 2025
 Steel
 90 x 30 x 1.5 cm