

# Sara Haas

## SAGA

9 May–14 June 2025

artKIT

### The Captured Time of Timelessness

Sara Haas' paintings evoke numerous references and connections in us. First of all, they connect her painting, which she completed at the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb, with her work as a set designer for puppet, drama and opera productions in Croatia, where she is able to enhance and enrich the audience's experience of the productions with her distinctive, diverse and fairy tale-like visual poetics, which in turn also inspires her painting, which contains numerous theater and film references and quotes from pop culture. Her paintings encompass not only space but also time, as her art hovers between the past and mythology, touching the present and looking to the future and fantasy.

Not only the iconography as well as the brushwork and color palette that are characteristic of her work and form her artistic "signature", but also figures such as elves and other creatures, animals and humans as well as fictional characters are comprehensively linked in a unified environment of the painting as one piece on the artist's highly unique continuum of expression. Even in today's diverse world of contemporary art, her work cannot be seen as a trend, but must be considered and perceived as completely independent and author-specific.

Sara Haas conceived the exhibition in Maribor by evoking the imaginary world of a "saga", which she builds through a visual narrative and takes us to a place of fantasy, where images of elves, floral patterns and dream gardens tell stories between memory and fantasy.

She says: "The fantastic sagas of *Snorri Sturluson* were perhaps the first model for the creation of these works. They gave rise to the idea of a phantasmagorical world called a 'saga' or story; a place dedicated to the imagination, the cultivation of memory and one's own inner reflections, through works in which memories live in a fictional world.

All memories are captured in images, forming a narrative of past, long forgotten moments and memories manipulated in a highly imaginative way. The use of limited forms in a realistic sense creates delicate figures that shape nature and frame the figures in the paintings.

A daydream in a fictitious garden full of fairies, swirling patterns and floral shapes form a flowing, organic background as in a dream. The images follow each other as if in a half-dream.

Just like the title Saga itself, with my works I tell stories about what I experience. With feeling and thought, playfully, I write with my brush on the canvas like a diary of memories."

**Snorri Sturluson** (1179 – 22 September 1241) was an Icelandic historian, poet and politician. He was twice elected speaker of the Icelandic parliament, the Althing. He is generally credited with having written or compiled parts of the *Prose Edda*, an important source for what we know today about Norse mythology and alliterative verse, as well as the *Heimskringla*, a history of Norse kings that begins with the saga of the legendary dynasty of Ynglinga and extends into early medieval Scandinavian history. For stylistic and methodological reasons, Sturluson is often

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regarded as the author of *Egil's Saga*. He was murdered in 1241 by men claiming to be agents of the Norwegian king.

Certain elements and inhabitants of the images are reminiscent of *A Trip to the Moon* (*Le Voyage dans la Lune*), a French science fiction adventure trick film from 1902, written, directed and produced by **Georges Méliès**. The film, inspired by **Jules Verne's** novel *From the Earth to the Moon* (1865) and its sequel *Around the Moon* (1870), follows a group of astronomers who travel to the moon in a cannon-propelled capsule, explore the lunar surface, escape from a subterranean group of Selenites (lunar inhabitants) and return to Earth with a captive Selenite. Méliès leads an ensemble cast of French theater actors as the main character, Professor Barbenfouillis.

The painting style of Sara Haas fits perfectly into the space of the theater, not only because of its authentic visual appeal, but also because her paintings tell stories and are not only focused on motifs. The stories in her paintings are sometimes soft and soulful, sometimes dark and expressive, and mostly inspired by the Gothic and Pre-Raphaelite styles. Sara Haas refuses to be a slave to trends, refuses to be squeezed into a particular mold and insists on her fabulous, fairy-tale-like, playful, shifting artistic style that avoids many of the pitfalls of the artistic path.

Sara Haas' art is fresh and playful. At the same time, a unique visual language simmers on the horizon of her art, which can also be dramatic in its inner dynamics, composition and color relationships, but which she by no means restricts, but instead uses a variety of combinations of complementary, pastel and contrasting bright colors that sometimes seem as if one of them is uninvited in the picture. "I try to transfer my personality onto the canvas. It's nice to have role models, I have a few, but when someone stands in front of my painting, I want them to somehow feel how I 'breathe'."

Authenticity is what she finds most important in art. For every idea she wants to realize, she first draws up an aesthetic plan. As a painter, this is very important to her, even if she sometimes finds it difficult to find ideas and inspiration for paintings due to her heavy workload and finds it easier to create a scenography because it involves a real space. When it comes to colors and materials, when she adds fabrics or embroidery and other things to her paintings, she draws inspiration from different periods, although her "Maribor" series could be placed somewhere in the Baroque and Rococo, i.e. the 18th century, as well as in the late Renaissance Mannerism of the late 16th century, which she expands with various artistic interventions both into the (science)fictional future and into the distant, mythical and fairy-tale past. Although scenography is an inexhaustible source of creativity for her, as it opens up new horizons of creative expression, it is of course something quite different from her painterly work.

Sara Haas' exhibition in Maribor is her fourth solo exhibition of paintings. She presents a new series of works created as a reflection of past memories and shaped through the prism of imagination, personal narratives and subtle inner reflections that reflect her expressive vehemence, intimate emotions and passion for painting. Caught in the turbulence of artistic inspiration, they traverse the meanders of the artist's consciousness and subconscious, history, stories, myths, sagas and original artistic style as the paintings enter the space and bring it to life. In the theater this happens with real actors and actresses and in the artKIT exhibition space with Sara Haas' figures and spaces in the paintings, inviting you to enter into a dialog and perhaps even play out a scene in your own constellation of artistic infinity.

– Peter Tomaž Dobrila

# BIOGRAPHY

**Sara Haas** was born in Zagreb on 20 October 1994.

She graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb in September 2018 in the class of Professor Zoltan Novak. She holds a master's degree in painting.

Her solo exhibitions include *Unknown Self-Portraits* (Cekao Gallery, Zagreb, 2017), *Grotesques* (Zabok City Gallery, 2019) and *Promplasi* (Mali Centar Kulture Gallery – MICEK, Zagreb, 2020). She has also participated in several group exhibitions, namely *Arty Party* (Klovičevi Dvori Gallery, Zagreb, 2016), *Retrospective of Slavic Mythology* (Ulupuh Gallery, Zagreb, 2018), *With Art and Beauty against Prejudice* (Veliki Tabor Manor, Košnički Hum, 2018), *With Art and Beauty against Prejudice* (Oršić Manor, Gornja Stubica, 2019).

As a set designer, she is involved in the puppet show *Sleeping Beauty* (Zagreb Puppet Theater, 2021), the drama *The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole* (Žar ptica City Theater, 2022), the opera *Susanna's Secret* by Ermann Wolf-Ferrari (Croatian National Theater, Zagreb, 2024) and the puppet show *The Frog Prince* (Zagreb Puppet Theater, 2025).