

## The Portrait of the Artist as a Painter (Watermelon)

by Fiona McGovern

The poster's title skates around a seeming paradox; Frauke Boggasch, after all, is primarily a painter. Why then present herself in such a way? And why do so with a picture that only refers to painting indirectly?

Only the truncated corner of a painting in the upper-right edge of the picture gives an indication of it and the paint-spattered boots of the artist squatting in front of a wall in her studio. With her black clothes and a woolly hat concealing her hair, she plays the "tough painter", simultaneously toying with the clichéd image of a still-widespread male-coded art form. Boggasch's forbidding facial expression is taken up again by the record to the left of her of the band WOLD, known for their sound combining techno and metal, whose gloomy cover carries the title *postsocial*. At the same time, the black toy cat to the right of her – a souvenir from her venerated Japan and a studio mascot – breaks with this image, as does the sole, centrally placed colour element: a watermelon iced lolly that she holds somewhat defiantly in front of her instead of a brush.

Since beginning her artistic activities, photos such as this one have accompanied Frauke Boggasch's exhibitions, either as posters or else as postcards. They offer her – comparable to Amy Sillman's fanzines, for instance – the possibility of taking a stance at a point at which abstract painting reaches its limits. They are thus both an extension and a part of the painterly practice of an artist who, with a good dollop of defiance and a Japanese-pop-infected penchant for the infantile, will continue to remain faithful to her medium. In this respect, *The Portrait of the Artist as a Painter (Watermelon)* is not only a portrait of the artist but in fact a humorous, self-deprecating commentary, studded with a dense structure of references, on what it means for her to continue to paint today.

Not least, the motif of the iced lolly itself leads back to one of her earliest series of paintings, in which Boggasch added to each of three pre-existing paintings with impetuous brushwork a comical iced lolly, baring its teeth and with a thumbs-up. For the first time since completing her studies, she thus returned to figuration. In so doing, these paintings preserved their self-commenting function, and manifest themselves as painting on painting more powerfully than hitherto. The cheekily grinning icemen thus not only serve Boggasch as a motivating counterpart, but also as her ally in the art world whose system of rules is not always sympathetic to all, and which indeed requires a tireless will and an occasional flash of teeth.