

# C & G

# Costanza Candeforo

# & Gritli Faulhaber

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## C & G Costanza Candeloro & Gritli Faulhaber

Istituto Svizzero presents in Milan C & G, an exhibition by Costanza Candeloro (1990) and Gritli Faulhaber (1990), two emerging artists who belong to a young art scene characterised by numerous connections between Italy and Switzerland, also thanks to a dense network of independent and self-organised art spaces. Developing works specifically for the exhibition and using different mediums from each other, the two artists share a strong research approach that feeds on references to art history, pop culture, as well as feminist and Marxist theories.

Drawing from the thinker Silvia Federici, Costanza Candeloro's ceramic installation, titled *Living currency*, addresses the issue of women's bodies and their reproductive labour meant as unpaid workforce and how similar economic dynamics occur in the art system alike.

Gritli Faulhaber's paintings draw from the digital image archive in which the artist collects personal and non-personal photographs to create pictorial compositions with seemingly distant references, including the erotic illustrator Gerda Wegener, the impressionist painter Berthe Morisot or the hip-hop star Cardi B.

For Costanza and Gritli, reflection on the role of female artists in the art system is therefore fundamental and question the placement of their own artistic practice.

How can one live as an artist in a world geared only to profit? Can we imagine alternative models of community? Is it possible to establish new economies based on mutual care and support? These and other questions run through the works of the two artists presented in the exhibition.

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For one of her large-format paintings, *No Title (II)*, Gritli Faulhaber reproduced three medallion-like drawings of erotic scenes by Gerda Wegener (1886–1940). One way the Danish painter earned her money was with illustrations for the erotic magazine *Fascination*. Gerda Wegener's paintings are quite in demand today, and she is relatively well known—especially as the partner of Lili Elbe, whose story as a painter and one of the first people to undergo gender reassignment surgery is told in the film *The Danish Girl* (2015). Nevertheless, she struggled throughout her lifetime and died largely forgotten in 1940. I believe these three drawings taken up by Gritli and their context touch the core of Costanza Candeloro and Gritli Faulhaber's double exhibition, *C & G*, in many ways. The exhibition raises questions such as which social, economic and cultural contexts artistic works (can) emerge; how we can live as an artist, as a painter, in a capitalist, market-oriented art system; and which systems of collectivity, support, friendship, and care can be established as alternative mechanisms. It is also about embedding one's artistic practice in a wider context of life that is also personal and in a horizon of intentionally selected references.

Costanza Candeloro and Gritli Faulhaber, who have both developed new works for this exhibition, belong to a young, well-connected art scene that is also characterized by many links between Italy and Switzerland, between Milan, Zurich and Geneva, and thrives on a relatively dense network of self-organised art spaces and other initiatives that function as an alternative and complementary structure to official institutions. Contextualising one's practice and position is central to Costanza and Gritli and runs through their works as an underlying theme. In Costanza's installation *Living currency*, the round form—I'm thinking of the medallions in Gritli's painting—is central. It alludes to money, to (oversized) coins. Using a special intaglio printing process, the artist printed ceramic plates with stills from videos she shot or sourced specifically for this purpose. We see bodies in motion. The presentation of the ceramic works is reminiscent of an oversized coin cabinet and, at the same time, takes up the dimensions of the body: the plates refer to the size of a human head and are mounted at body height. The empty spaces between them allow insights and outlooks, directing our gaze into the exhibition space and onto Gritli's paintings. The ceramics

*Living currency* draws on Costanza's personal experiences inside and outside the world of artistic production, where the artist's body is subject to a more or less voluntary 'making available' of her work and skills to the economy in which precarious conditions often prevail.

In her feminist re-reading of Marx, Silvia Federici—an important reference for Costanza—describes women's bodies as central to the establishment of capitalism: women are compelled to undertake reproductive labour and consequently the production of labour power as the basic capitalist commodity. As a consequence, the female body becomes the primary site for the exertion of power and discipline. In this context, the (female) body is a kind of living currency that can be shifted and moved: it is a body in motion, as in the images on the ceramics. In the 1970s, Silvia Federici was among the first feminists to call for the remuneration of domestic and care work. Her statement «They say it's love, we say it is unwaged work» still resonates today.

And what does that have to do with the art system? Well, quite a few things. With the series *Living currency*, Costanza questions the economic modes of operation in the field of art, where even today, paying artists for their work is not a matter of course. Not infrequently, their work for institutional exhibitions is—in contrast to the exhibition technicians, curators, and graphic designers—merely 'symbolically' remunerated or offset through 'visibility'. The argument persists that the artist (and the freelance curator) does these things out of passion (out of 'love', in analogy to the housewife and mother) and, in this sense, does not need to be (adequately) paid. Campaigns such as *Wages For Wages Against* by the Geneva-based artist Ramaya Tegegne have contributed to the gradual reassessment of this practice in recent years. In parallel, a barter economy has developed, especially in non-institutional contexts, in which not money but 'things' tied to the body in the broadest sense are exchanged—a drawing for a text, a small ceramic work for the design of a homepage. The large drawings on the floor show *Valentina*, from the Italian comic strip series of the same name that was popular in the 1970s and '80s. *Valentina* is a sexualized female character tailored to the tastes of a middle-class or also bourgeoisie audience. Costanza is particularly interested in *Valentina*'s clothes, which she sees in relation to her own role in the art world and the costumes and conformity sometimes imposed on her in that context.

Gritli Faulhaber's large-scale paintings and smaller works reflect on women painters, their social and cultural working conditions, painting history and pop culture and their canons, and systems of references and genealogies. The large paintings Gritli has been working on for several years as a loose series are informed by her (digital) archive of images, where she compiles found images and her own photographs—often of paintings. The composition of these images on the canvas follows a kind of «choreography of emotions», Gritli tells me. Feelings, movements, and looks are important to her. For Gritli, painting these images is not merely an act of copying but rather imitation in a process of learning and reliving. The painting references are carefully chosen and include famous and lesser-known women artists. Besides Gerda Wegener's drawings, we see, among others, a drawing on an envelope by Paula Modersohn-Becker (1876-1907), *La Mandoline* (1889) by Berthe Morisot (1841-95), the painted reproduction of the signature of Louise-Élisabeth Vigée-Le Brun (1755-1842), a detail from a notebook belonging to Lee Lozano (1930-99), and a quotation by Maximiliane Baumgartner (b. 1986). Placed on equal footing are Gritli's paintings of a photograph of hip-hop star Cardi B, her own work—one of her dot paintings (from the 2019/20 series *Militant Joy*), and a drawing she gifted a friend. Then there are images referring to the context and circulation of artworks—for instance, a screenshot of an etching by Berthe Morisot on an online sales platform, and *Moorlandschaft mit Brücke* (Moorland Landscape with Bridge, 1900) by Paula Modersohn-Becker, accompanied by the colour strip used for the reproduction. Gritli has also re-painted a photograph of herself on each of the three large paintings. Meanwhile, the three small paintings again reproduce drawings by Berthe Morisot and Gerda Wegener, as well as a child's drawing. In this sense, Gritli's works are not only a reflection on the history of painting and what is included in the Western canon and what is excluded, what is remembered and what is forgotten; they are also a careful observation and questioning of her own position. The large paintings, Gritli tells me, are also attempts at self-portraits—as a person and as a painter. They show the context in which she thinks, paints, and lives. A tension between intensely private feelings and a more general context. Perhaps they are also about the unfinished, about blanks and omissions in biographies, in art history, on the canvas. The erotic drawings by Gerda Wegener

are not reproduced in their entirety, and in many places on the canvas I can see where the primer was applied. In some parts, the wooden picture frame shimmers through. It is about working and production processes. About horizons of thought. The paintings do not emerge from nothing but are embedded in a genealogy of female painters and supported by a wooden picture frame. I feel this brings us back to the drawings Gerda Wegener made for the erotic magazine for the sake of money. And back to the questions, also so central to Costanza, about how the art world functions and strategies for survival and life in the art world. What does it mean to live and work as an artist? In which economies can money be made and how? In one of Gritli's large paintings, we see the picture *Nach der Nachtschicht* (After the Night Shift), originally by the relatively unknown painter Gudrun Arnold, who was born in 1940 in Leipzig, in the former East Germany, depicting a woman sleeping next to a table laid out for breakfast. Perhaps the woman works as a painter during the day and in the hospital at night. Taking an expanded approach to care, the *Care Collective* describes it in their manifesto as «a social capacity and activity involving the nurturing of all that is necessary for the welfare and flourishing of life». And: «to put care center stage means recognizing and embracing our independencies». The exhibition C & G by Costanza Candeloro and Gritli Faulhaber, I think, also ties in with such considerations. In their work, both artists reflect on the social and economic contexts in which they live and make art. They (also) participate in alternative economies of exchange, where things but also skills are traded instead of money. Establishing close networks of friends and alternative kinship structures are essential for survival. Being there for each other, caring for each other, belonging to a network of companions, thinking together. That's what it's all about.

Gioia Dal Molin, May 2023

Quotes from:

The Care Collective, *The Care Manifesto: The Politics of Interdependence*. Verso: London, 2020.

Gioia Dal Molin, *Vom Lohn der Leidenschaft. Einige Überlegungen zur geschlechtsspezifischen Konnotation von Arbeit im Feld der Kunst*. Brand-New-Life, 2017. <https://brand-new-life.org/b-n-l-de/vom-lohn-der-leidenschaft/>.

Silvia Federici, *Wages Against Housework*. Bristol: Falling Wall Press and the Power of Women Collective, 1975.

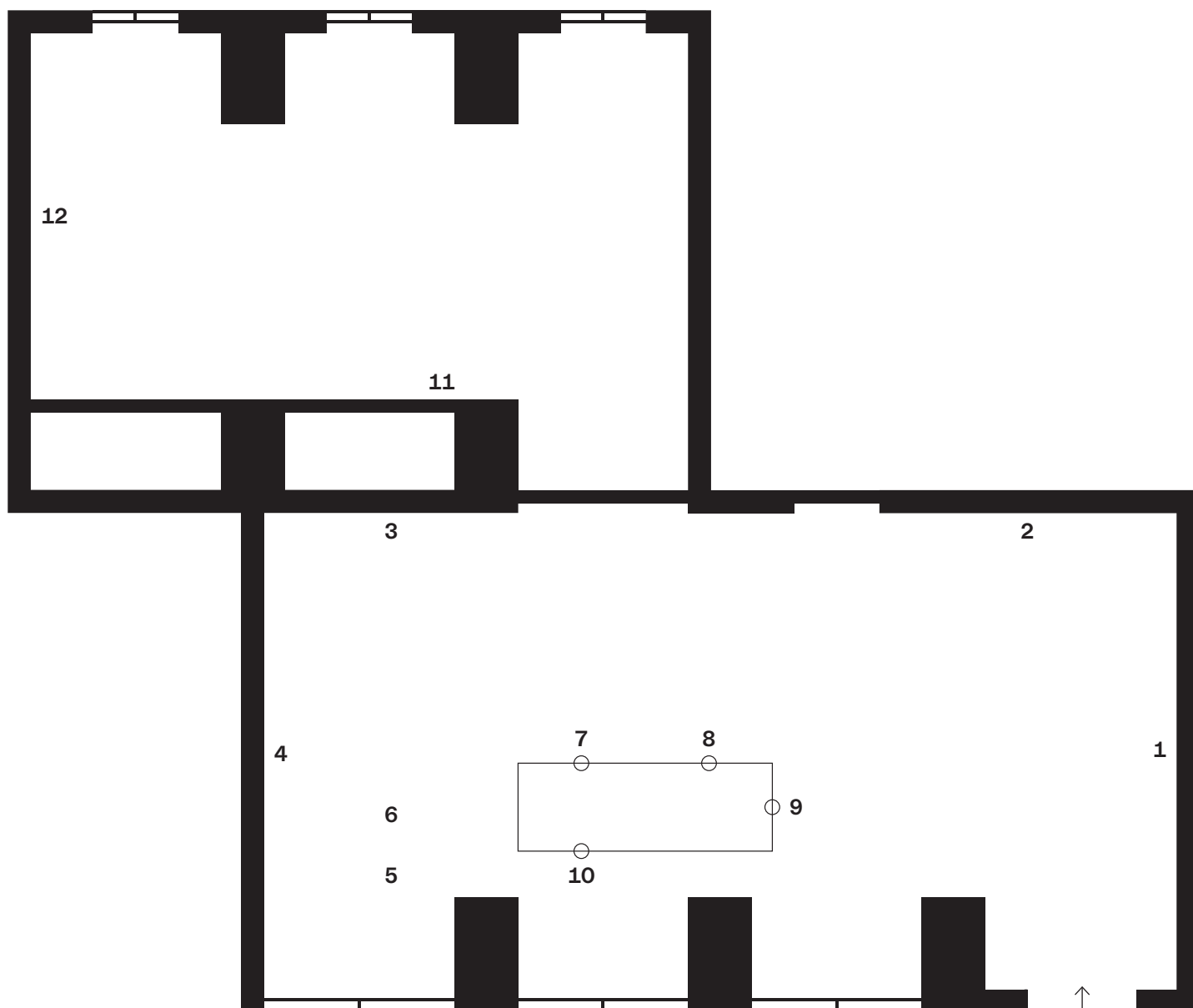
Silvia Federici, *Caliban und die Hexe. Frauen, der Körper und die ursprüngliche Akkumulation*. Mandelbaum Kritik & Utopie: Vienna, 2015. (Originally published as *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation*. Autonomedia: New York, 2004).

Silvia Federici, *Caccia alle streghe, guerra alle donne*. Nero: Roma 2020.

Ramaya Tegegne, *Wages For Wages Against*. Kunsthalle Zürich, 2017.

**Costanza Candeloro** (1990, Bologna, Italy) lives and works between Italy and Switzerland. She graduated from the HEAD – Genève. In 2022 she held solo exhibitions *MY SKIN- CARE, MY STRENGTH* and *ENVY & GRATITUDE* respectively at Fondazione ICA, Milan, and at Galleria Martina Simeti, Milan. She was among the twelve artists invited to inaugurate the *RETROFUTURO* at MACRO, Rome (2021 – ongoing). Costanza Candeloro also participated in *Devoured Spaces*, Tunnel Tunnel, Lausanne (2021); *H or Audience*, Kunsthalle Friart Fribourg, Fribourg (2020); *Dépendance de l’Air*, Riverside, Bern (2019); *Hey, You!* 16th Quadriennale D’arte, Rome (2016); *Pocari Sweat, Truth And Consequences*, Geneva (2014) among others. In 2020 she developed the online project *Life-Edit* for Fondazione Prada, Milan. Most recently her work was exhibited in the group show *Bodies-Bodies* at La Rada, Locarno (December 2022-February 2023).

**Gritli Faulhaber** (1990, Freiburg im Breisgau, Germany) lives and works in Zürich. She has recently held solo exhibitions at Sangt Hipolyt, Berlin (2020); *Cherish*, Geneva (2019). Recent group exhibitions include *Sweetwater*, Berlin (2023), *Theta*, New York, (2022), *Swiss Art Awards*, Basel (2022); *Kunsthalle Friart Fribourg*, Fribourg (2022); *Artgenève*, Geneva (2022); *Fonda*, Leipzig (2021); *Galerie Lange + Pult*, Zürich (2021); *Kunsthaus Langenthal*, Langenthal (2021); *Kunstverein Leipzig*, Leipzig (2020); *Museum im Bellpark*, Kriens (2020); *Cité des Arts*, Paris (2019). She is a 2022 recipient of the *Swiss Art Award* as well as the 2022 *Working Grant* of the City of Zürich.



**1**  
Gritli Faulhaber, *No title (I)*,  
205 x 350 cm, oil on canvas, 2023

**2**  
Gritli Faulhaber, *For Berthe*,  
25 x 20 cm, oil on canvas, 2023

**3**  
Gritli Faulhaber, *No title (II)*,  
205 x 350 cm, oil on canvas, 2023

**4**  
Gritli Faulhaber, *For Lili & Gerda*,  
40 x 26 cm, oil on canvas, 2023

**5**  
Costanza Cadeloro, *Price*,  
60 x 160 cm, ink on paper, 2023

**6**  
Costanza Cadeloro, *Gratuity*,  
60 x 160 cm, ink on paper, 2023

**7**  
Costanza Cadeloro, *Living currency (I)*,  
60 cm ø x 2 cm, print on glazed ceramic, 2023

**8**  
Costanza Cadeloro, *Living currency (II)*,  
60 cm ø x 2 cm, print on glazed ceramic, 2023

**9**  
Costanza Cadeloro, *Living currency (III)*,  
60 cm ø x 2 cm, print on glazed ceramic, 2023

**10**  
Costanza Cadeloro, *Living currency (IV)*,  
60 cm ø x 2 cm, print on glazed ceramic, 2023

**11**  
Gritli Faulhaber, *Femme inconnue*,  
18 x 18 cm, oil on canvas, 2023

**12**  
Gritli Faulhaber, *No title (III)*,  
205 x 320 cm, oil on canvas, 2023