

FRIEZE Galli's Tangled Web of Bodies

On the occasion of her exhibition at Goldsmiths CCA, London, a look at the artist's 1985–87 painting 'Langes Bild', depicting the chaos and confusion leading up to the fall of the Berlin Wall

In a person's first orgy, they need five business days to figure out whose limbs – arms, legs, hooves – belong to whom, and whether or not this whole thing was even a good idea. It's a real sculptural performance, and you've got to be long-sighted if you want to achieve orgiastic freedom. I think the German artist Galli must have been doing some window shopping in the red-light district of Kurfürstendamn when she painted *Langes Bild* (Long Picture, 1985–87), mere years before the fall of the Berlin Wall. Galli takes a few randy bodies and limbs – some truncated, others cloven-hooved – to a pencil-thin bed, where they pull hamstrings until the cops show up. (It's 1987 Berlin, so they definitely will. Oh, wait ...) An amateur psychoanalyst might have something to say about all this lewd figurative work, but it's prudent to focus, at least moderately, on the painting's diabolical styling tips.

Six cartoonish arms, three legs, two cloven hooves and a half dozen, erm, fingers? splay themselves, smashed in yellow acrylic that Galli can't keep within figurative lines. She's got anger issues. A spread-eagled silhouette languishes on the bed, someone's arm venturing out of the (iron) curtains of her genitalia while brandishing a stone directed at a piggish figure. Is that a predictive fallen rock from the 'Wall of Shame' coming out of her vulva? Fighting for an undivided political picture almost always starts with throwing stones and always – always – at pigs. *Defund the pigs!*



Galli, *Langes Bild* (Long Picture), 1985–87, acrylic and charcoal on nettle, 1.5 x 1.8 m. Courtesy: Kraupa-Tuskany Zeidler, Berlin; photograph: Mark Mattingly

Anyways, where was I?

Galli's work wounds in pre-emptive truth-telling, burning authority figures with unsubtle digs and stings, which explains why she mixed stinging nettle with black chalk to scrawl childishly over the image of the swine. Nettle releases histamines on contact, so there's an asthmatic photosynthesis that's likewise present in breathless sex romps with characters who've passed their gym-going years, if their stomachs are anything to go by. People couldn't breathe easy when the Wall was up, let alone together; it was hard to trust anyone in East Germany and people were so bereft that they transformed the Wall into a symbol of the certainty of physical solitude. Where do we cry out when we no longer believe? We cry *with* one another; we wheeze and puff and move together, tearing our ACLs and risking inflammatory reactions. Galli's black and yellow tirade echoes from the walls of the earth, hacking them down with claws bent in revelry, wiping foreheads with the cloth of our enemies, putting to bed all our charcoaled griefs.

Like I said, Galli's got anger issues.

Galli, 'So, So, So', is on view at Goldsmiths CCA until 4 May.

Main image: Galli, Langes Bild (Long Picture), 1985–87, acrylic and charcoal on nettle, 1.5 × 1.8 m. Courtesy: Kraupa-Tuskany Zeidler,

Berlin; photograph: Mark Mattingly

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