



Galli, *Hocker (Stool)*, 1989/1998, acrylic on cardboard, 48 × 33 7/8".

## Galli

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While preparing the Eleventh Berlin Biennale, 2020, one of its curators, Agustín Pérez Rubio, stumbled on an artist's book by Galli, leading to her inclusion in the exhibition. Born in 1944, Galli is a painter who rubbed shoulders with the Neue Wilde, or German neo-expressionists,

and whose works have drawn little attention in recent decades. One result of her recent “rediscovery” was “Cross Section 1987–2009,” which assembled a group of small- and medium-format works, mostly executed in acrylic on cardboard. Their imagery abounds with domestic objects (mostly cups) and misshapen bodies in impossible positions. In *Baum/Tasse, aka fürchtet euch nicht*, (Tree/Cup, aka Do Not Fear), 1987/2004, a disembodied hand holds a saucer and cup beneath what looks like a dangling bunch of flesh-colored bananas—or perhaps another hand? In the background, and barely outlined on a dark plane, is the silhouette of a tree. In *Landschaft mit Unkraut säendem Teufel!* (Landscape with Weed-Sowing Devil!), 1987/2004, the branches of a tree trunk draped with a flecked tablecloth seem to transmute into hands. A floating cup spills liquid on one of the upturned palms; another trunk holds an upright cup; and a third cup sits atop a separate trunk, colored blue. The artist employs a thick impasto brushstroke that alternates with a hesitant fragile line to give her images a crackling appearance. This technique is evident, for instance, in the collection of white crockery—sparely outlined with a few strokes—in *Untitled*, 2009.

The anthropomorphic representations in Galli’s work have a somewhat sordid air. Legless torsos have arms that gesticulate wildly; udders and legs ending in hooves protrude from beneath skirts, as in *o. T., (mit Eutern), Küche von Fratta* (Untitled [with Udders], Fratta’s Kitchen), 1987/1998. Another work shows a naked man urinating from both his penis and arms (*Untitled*, 1990). Elsewhere, a contorted figure wearing a look of horror holds a spoon while standing at a dining table, on which rest a frying pan and a glass (*Magentrost*, 1991/1993/1996). In Galli’s drawings, we also find outlandish characters, but the agile and somewhat angular strokes in graphite and pastel crayon give them a lightheartedness not found in the paintings.

In the painting *Hocker* (Stool), 1989/1998, two legs of a three-legged stool sprout hands that hold up a haloed figurine. From the seat emerges a weary yellowish eye, while a white mop of hair seems to rise from the rest of the surface in thick, sinuous white strokes that veil a dark background layer. Curiously, this enigmatic cyclopean adorer keeps its gaze lowered, as if in a mystical attitude it still resists its nature as a stool.

From Galli’s imagery it might be easy to infer a problematic relationship to the body—not surprising, given the biases that would have been faced by an artist who has achondroplasia (a bone disorder leading to dwarfism) and who is openly queer. But such an observation should not be overemphasized, or one risks subordinating technically remarkable and visually striking works to condescending reductionism. Galli’s work is worth rediscovering because it is still artistically alive, not because of her biography.

*Translated from Spanish by Michele Faguet.*

—Joaquín Jesús Sánchez