

# EVENTS

13 Feb, 7–8.30pm    PERFORMANCE:  
*MAGNUS WESTWELL: CAUGHT*

A new performance by artist Magnus Westwell, devised in response to Galli's exhibition. Westwell combines choreography and musical performance to create sonically layered ethereal environments in which the body moves through emotional states to the point of catharsis. Drawing direct points of influence from Galli's figurative works – particularly those that blend two bodies into one – *Caught* sees Westwell embody overlapping, phased cycles of sound and movement, exploring themes of time, fragmentation, and loss.

26 Feb, 7–8:30pm    TALK:  
*CHAOS, SORTING, CHAOS,  
SORTING; WITH KYLA  
MCDONALD*

Join us for an exploration of Galli's work by art historian and curator Kyla McDonald, whose commissioned essay for the CCA's forthcoming catalogue, has explored Galli's relationship to the 1970s art scene of Berlin, position within the debates around neo-expressionism and painting as a medium, mid-career outlier status, and reassessment of her work in the past decade. McDonald will respond to the exhibition, share her research, and expand upon it in conversation with CCA's Senior Curator Natasha Hoare.

06 Mar, 7–9pm        WORKSHOP:  
*READING GALLI: DANCE  
PSYCHOTHERAPY WITH ARTIST  
GRACE SCHWINDT*

The event will use the choreographic quality of Galli's large-scale paintings as a starting point for movements that connect with the memories stored in our bodies. Schwindt's research has led her to explore movement therapy techniques as tools for 'reading' art works through a means that is open and associative, privileging affect and personal connection, rather than rational or linguistic response. She will provide an introduction to her research and lead the group in a physical exploration of the work and their own memories.

11 Mar, 7–8:30pm    BOOK LAUNCH  
*ALTERNATIVE PEDAGOGICAL  
SPACES: FROM UTOPIA TO  
INSTITUTIONALIZATION*

Join us for a talk and book launch of Anna Colin's *Alternative Pedagogical Spaces: From Utopia to Institutionalization* (Sternberg Press and Villa Arson, 2025). The author will introduce the book and her research, and will be joined in a conversation with curator Cindy Sissokho.

05 Apr, 11am–1pm    WORKSHOP:  
*COLLABORATIVE  
STORYTELLING WITH ARTBOX*

Join artists Violet and Mark for a workshop on collaborative storytelling. During the session we will explore Galli's extensive drawing practice and joyously cut into sketchbooks, to create collaborative comic books using shape, colour and image. As a group, we will respond to motifs within Galli's work as a starting point to tell our own collective narratives, passing on and responding to each others panels.

For more information on upcoming events visit  
goldsmithscca.art

## CATALOGUE

An exhibition catalogue with commissioned essays by Kyla Macdonald, Filippo Bosco, and an interview with Galli's studio manager Annabell Burger will be published in April. The publication includes full colour reproductions of the works included in the exhibition, as well as additional works. To pre-order a copy please email [goldsmithscca@gold.ac.uk](mailto:goldsmithscca@gold.ac.uk)

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# EXHIBITION GUIDE

**GALLI  
SO, SO, SO  
7 Feb – 4 May 2025**

*'It's about chaos, sorting, chaos, sorting.'*<sup>1</sup>

*'Galli was never concerned with the representation of the individual body, but with the body as a collective experience.'*<sup>2</sup>

*So, So, So* marks the first UK solo exhibition of artist Galli (b.1944, DE) and spans painting, books, collage, and drawing made between 1984–2008. Emerging in the 1980s, Galli's work has rightly gained increasing attention in recent years as a powerful current position on corporeality that proposes an exhilarating and haunting visual grammar of the body. The exhibition's title – *So, So, So* – refers to the cadence of the artist's speech, and in both English and German, gestures to openness and excess.

Galli was born Anna-Gabriele Müller in Saarbrücken at the end of the Second World War. Her Short Stature was fortunately unnoticed during her infancy under Nazi rule. She initially trained under painters of the Cobra movement, who emphasised an aesthetic break with Western ideals, naturalism, and abstraction, and in 1969 moved to West Berlin to further her studies. There she studied under the tutelage of painter and graphic artist Martin Engelman, whose work referenced Hieronymus Bosch, Pieter Bruegel and Surrealism, indelibly informing her approach to figuration. In the 1970s, West Berlin was a city at a turning point, moving away from the hangover of Nazi fascism and post-war depression, to increasing freedoms, blossoming into an avant-garde scene of squatting, punk music, and feminist and queer civil rights movements. The body as a battlefield was central to these shifts, an arena Galli's blistering work enters on its own terms.

The paintings on display across the CCA's two floors were made in the 1980s and 1990s. Often on a large scale, they are incredibly physical works, bearing visceral traces of their making. In interviews, Galli emphasises the instinctiveness of her process, working intensely on a 'figure', sometimes completely painting over it, to develop a desired emotional force and communicative energy. The resulting figures are anti-heroic, frequently genderless, and often violently contorted and convulsed. They are also deeply ambiguous, mixing the human and non-human, singular and plural, sensual and combative, requiring close and engaged reading to decipher tangled knots of limbs and fragments of interiors. Each comes into being through

spare and economic rendering, moving between formation and deformation. Her act of creation is palpable, but the viewer's reading is critical – although the figures ultimately elusively resist definition. Galli's approach to the body has often been read through the lens of her Short Stature and queerness, but Galli herself views this interpretation as reductive, stating *'the body as a battlefield – that applies to everyone.'*

## FIRST FLOOR

### 1. CLERESTORY GALLERY

*'Drawing, this daily training over the years, is of course a prerequisite for anything to come out at all. You have to stick with it; if I'm not working, nothing comes to mind.'*<sup>3</sup>

This gallery is devoted to Galli's drawings, made from 1984–2008. They range from A4 to larger format, and from striking monochrome figures through to more colour-rich domestic interiors. The presentation follows a loose chronology, showing shifts in technique and materials, and the development of her ideas around the figure, text, and composition. Galli is prolific in her drawing output; in the late 1980s she was making as many as ten a day. During this period, she would work off one ream of A4 paper, so that the marks of previous drawings are sometimes palpable on those that come next. The uniformity of the format has a productive tension with the content of the drawings themselves, which are gestural and expressive. Most feature a prominent date, which lends the works a diaristic quality, and conveys the disciplined nature of her practice. She taught drawing and illustration at Münster University for many years and takes this problematic tradition of life drawing in art pedagogy as a departure point, abandoning an indexical or anatomical relationship to the body to give primacy to expression and affect. Galli draws rapidly - often in biro, graphite, coloured pencil and pen - and each has a bold immediacy. Together the drawings *'resemble an inventory of the human condition'*<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Galli

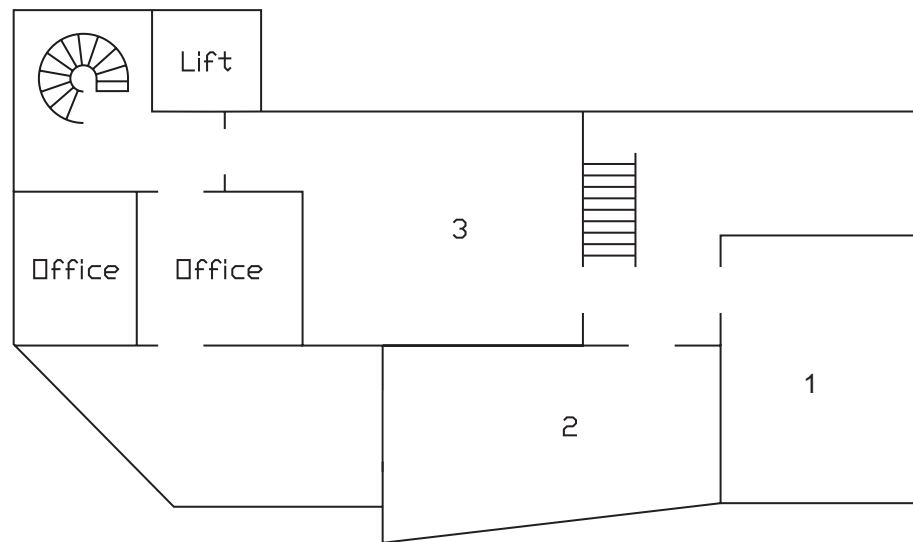
<sup>2</sup> Interview with Annabell Burger, February 2025, in *Galli: So, So, So* published by Goldsmiths CCA.

<sup>3</sup> *Galli*, Galerie Georg Nothaler Catalogue, Interview with Marianne Meinhold, 1985.

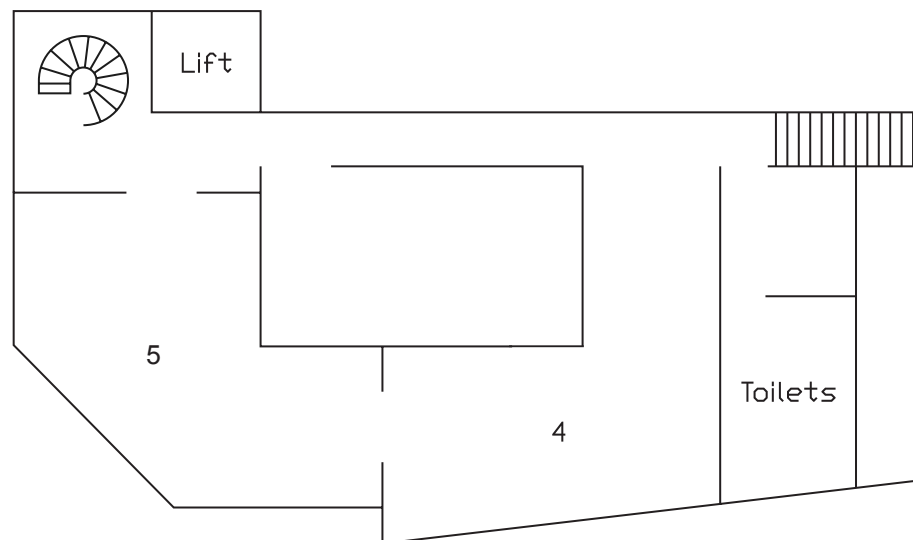
<sup>4</sup> Interview with Annabell Burger, February 2025, in *'Galli: So, So, So'* published by Goldsmiths CCA.

# FLOORPLAN

First Floor



Basement



## 2. & 3. DASKALOPOULOS TANK GALLERY & BRIDGET RILEY GALLERY

*‘You can’t play it safe, that would be a...mistake. Ultimately, you have to accept what falls out of your hand.’<sup>1</sup>*

An expanded sense of Galli’s drawing practice extends into the Tank Gallery. Here, a film made by the artist shows the animation of her flip books by her own hands, which playfully move between scenes showing animals, figures, and ever-morphing landscapes. More sketch books, artist books and leporellos are shown in a vitrine, demonstrating her ceaseless invention of forms and interest in creating narrative sequences.

<sup>1</sup> Galli, Galerie Georg Nothaler Catalogue, Interview with Marianne Meinhold, 1985.

They frequently incorporate text, in the form of fairytale-like stories featuring animals, or enigmatic words plucked from listening to the radio or music.

Galli was a vibrant part of the literary scene in West Berlin, and was close friends with literary figures such as Romanian poet Oskar Pastior, the only German-language member of the Oulipo and with whom she produced an artist book, and Swiss playwright and novelist Max Frisch. Her works often incorporate texts within the pictorial plane or as punning titles, in a Dadaist mode of quotation from newspapers, shopping lists, poems, or radio programmes. (With respect to the puns incorporated into the titles of works, they remain in their original German.) The puns’

doubling of meaning create playful misdirects in the work, and point to the instability of language and contingency of meaning, corresponding to Galli’s creation of figures and images that have a friction of indeterminacy.

Her works draw on sources such as mythology, literature, art history, and the particularities of sexual desire, but formal ambiguity flattens hierarchies of interpretation. Despite the intensely personal dialogue through which the works are created, they never impose a singular reading or refer to the artist as the arbiter of meaning. The act of making is directly referred to in some of the works, such as *Kentaur (für Schari!)* (1990), and *Hocker* (1989), on display in the Bridget Riley Gallery. Here painting is depicted as a violent process of physical and existential struggle and fragmentation – becoming just an eye or partially transforming into a hooved creature.

In interviews Galli describes the spontaneity of her approach to painting, which is visible in the splashes of paint, and sweeping arcs of line is the result of a process that *‘can be conceptualised as a dialectic between intuition and control.’<sup>5</sup>* With a deceptive simplicity, Galli’s work makes dexterous use of negative space, suggestions of forms, and a choreographic sense of gesture and movement. In *Turbasky* (1987) the bodily performance of the process is especially marked, with handprints smearing red paint down the image. Despite their often-violent content, Galli achieves a sensuality from a particular handling of line and colour – the selection of which she has described as being often incidental, but that consequently demands a counterpoint which then limits subsequent decisions.

## BASEMENT

### 4. & 5. WESTON GALLERY & BACK BASEMENT

*‘Painting is a sensual process. Doing is important. You paint with your whole body.’<sup>6</sup>*

The Weston Gallery introduces works made during a particularly rich period spent at the Villa Romana residency in Florence in 1990. Here Galli works in Tuscan reds, whites, and blacks, to render dismembered forms, violent confrontations, and balls of limbs. It is interesting to reflect that, confronted with the Renaissance approach to a universal definition of beauty, Galli interprets the city as a violent medieval

<sup>5</sup> Interview with Annabell Burger, February 2025, in *Galli: So, So, So* published by Goldsmiths CCA.

<sup>6</sup> Galli, Galerie Georg Nothaler Catalogue, Interview with Marianne Meinhold, 1985.

space. She was perhaps influenced by the Mannerist tradition evident across the city, to explore a figurative style that favoured distortion and extremity, but also by the experience of feeling hemmed in during her stay. Following her time in Florence, Galli began to paint her figures enclosed in physical spaces, in response to the high wall that enclosed the Villa, and the narrow streets of the city. As such, Galli’s figures move from an earlier preoccupation with ‘becoming’, towards an idea of being ‘acted upon.’<sup>7</sup>

The final gallery presents works that focus on domestic space. Here figures grow out of kettles, or objects speak to one another in claustrophobic boxed-in spaces. A sense of home becomes ambivalent, a safe enclosure but also an unbearable pressure chamber that swallows the body and erodes the division between object and subject. On display are four works from 1994 that use paravent folding screens as a formal device, summoning art historical instances of these as a backdrop for female nudes and disrupting those expectations.

Also included are Galli’s index cards works, made between 2000-2006. As with the A4 drawings, the use of a rigid formal parameter creates a productive tension with the subject matter of the drawings, and mode of their making, here biro, pencil, pastel, paint and coloured pencil. Their subject matter ranges between the domestic interior, intense existential renderings of figures from meshes of biro marks, and surreal claustrophobic landscapes. The works are double-sided, prompting a narrative reading between the two faces, and will be flipped halfway through the exhibition (26 March) so that both sides are shown.

The exhibition closes with a rare self-portrait made in 2001. The artist stands with their back to the viewer painting a teacup. Both figure and cup are rendered through the same means, making the act of painting indivisible from the body of the artist herself.

<sup>7</sup> Working on the Border: On Galli’s Drawings’, Meinrad Maria Grewenig in *Galli, Arbeiten auf Papier*, 1992, Stadtgalerie Landeshauptstadt Saarbrücken.