



Press Release

GESTURES AND TRACES

Eleonora Agostini and Lucrezia Zanardi

OPENING 16th NOVEMBER
From 3:00 pm to 8:00 pm

Cartacea Galleria
Via San Tomaso, 25 - Bergamo



Eleonora Agostini



Lucrezia Zanardi

From November 16th to February 1st, the spaces of **Cartacea Galleria** will host the exhibition **Gestures and Traces**, an exhibition by **Eleonora Agostini and Lucrezia Zanardi**.

Critical text by Sara Benaglia and Mauro Zanchi

What is the origin of this exhibition between Eleonora Agostini and Lucrezia Zanardi in the CARTACEA Galleria? Where is the point of contact between their research and how is photography transformed through the two projects?

Both are working with photography and, following distinct paths and processual modalities, are exploring the life and history of two female figures dear to them, physical persons who really existed and with whom they related in a specific way. For Eleonora Agostini this figure is her own mother, for Lucrezia Zanardi it is ETTY HILLESUM. Their research stemmed from archives—one private and the other public—from which they brought forth interpretive interventions. Both artists use a mixture of different materials to construct complex narratives, the logical implications of which fall back on the very definition of photography, which is rewritten and performed in a personal way. Collage, perhaps, is the media form to which their formalizations most closely approximate. But there is more. Because photography has a transformative value above all toward the social and relational system of which the medium is an ancillary tool.

Eleonora Agostini presents at Cartacea Galleria the series *Study on Waitressing*, started in 2018 and still ongoing. The work originated when the artist took some studio photographs of her mother, as she performed a reenactment of the gestures performed in the workplace, during room service. The photographs documenting the nude body appear to be of the same matrix as those that appeared in nineteenth-century books consulted by painters as anatomical studies. Unlike those images, these present in the series devoted to the working postures and gestures repeated daily by the mother for years must be observed from another point of view, to find all the signs of the fatigue and wear and tear imposed by capitalism on the lower classes, too. For two years the project remains locked in Eleonora's personal archive. In 2020 she makes the first collage with contact specimens and darkroom experiments of those shots. The compositional character of the image is chosen to return the idea of a study of the figure. Is there also a semantic kinship with the feminist collages made by Hannah Höch in the twentieth century? Reusing images that have already been produced and reassembling them leads her to notice a common thread between the figure of the mother who reinterpreted the movements and postures of a maid in the studio and the process of creation itself. The work we are forced to do to make ends meet and earn some money to survive leaves marks and calluses on the soles of our feet, as illustrated in one of the collages in the exhibition: a kind of atlas based on the language of these impressions recorded from the skin. During the Covid pandemic, Agostini studies waitressing and collects photographs in which her mother is at work. Looking at the discipline of her body triggers new questions in Eleonora about what happens when we relate to “our audience.” She displays several original materials from her mother's archive, opening up a sociopsychological conversation about the theatricality of the everyday and in some ways photography. She notes that her mother adopts the same poses she assumed during her work services even in her private personal photographs, in her photos on vacation and with friends. This observation is the beginning of a study of the relationship line between private and public behaviors. At what point does the line between private and public begin to overlap and merge? *Study on Waitressing* (2018-ongoing) unfolds according to two narratives: on the one hand it pays attention to behaviors, gender

norms, and social expectations; on the other it enters into a private relationship with the mother. This complexity is articulated in different chapters and materials: collages composed of elements that come from the darkroom (a processuality that precedes print proofs); cut-outs of archival images; an audio featuring a voice-over actress reading a 2017 manual with texts re-edited by the artist; a book to be released in November with WittyBooks; the video *Welcome, Sir* where the mother tries to maintain a smile for eight long minutes; and photographs in which the work space is shown theatrically, inspired by Erving Goffman's work on the theatricality of everyday life.

Lucrezia Zanardi exhibits *Present Traces of Past Experiences* (2020). This series, composed of eleven images, an audio and a book-arises from reading Etty Hillesum's diaries at a young age. Zanardi will reread these diaries several times, discovered thanks to an actress cousin. Over time they would become the focal point of her own research and a way of approaching the life of a person she read about but did not know personally, whose thoughts she went on to appropriate. She decides to search the contemporary for traces of Etty Hillesum's life. Where to look for them? In the official archives of the Dutch writer, certainly, but also in the places she passed through and lived in, environments that are now home to other inhabitants. How can photographic images show this woman's past experiences in the traces of the present? Are there relational systems in the contemporary that are able to bring them out? Historical photographs, notes, handwriting, and new images that record the spaces once inhabited by the woman coexist presented in a series of vitrines in which these materials are displayed in a nonlinear and non philological manner, without captions. The frame voids themselves become a constituent part of a project in which the image seeks to evoke the presence of a woman known through the pages of a book, a person unknown in the real, but experienced as familiar. The materials in the vitrines are traces, not accounts, of her past. It is the materials themselves, the affections, and the absence of linearity that express the echo of a silent dialogue between two women who have never met, but who are close. Among the signs chosen by Zanardi are the reproduction on glass of Etty Hillesum's handwriting transcribing a poem by Rilke, a drawing of the writer's hand analyzed by her own psychochirologist. Nothing is narrated directly, but is rendered through visual and writing details, along with the artist's logbook, which extends the official archive of the woman who died in the concentration camp, making a journey to the places where she had lived. Hers is an ethnographic research, which wants to include the emotionality of the people who now reside in the spaces where the writer lived, the atmosphere of the houses, what it means to be there. The artist is looking for magical points of contact, coincidences between the current inhabitants and what still lingers in the porosity of the domestic walls. The photo-documentation of places is inspired by what Zanardi has seen in the archives, the details of a physical detail, of a spatiotemporal dwelling. The emotivity, the items of furnishings, added to the reading of diaries, are components of an intuitive doing. In this search for the traces of a life, the camera is one of the means through which to make a past life act in the contemporary, still present in the plots of reality.

Who are the women from whom we were born and those whose thoughts we absorbed, making them our own? Do we inherit a form from their bodies and identities? What kind of medium does photography become when it opens an archive toward sociological and relational dynamics?

Eleonora Agostini

Eleonora Agostini (1991) is an Italian artist based in London. She graduated from the Istituto Europeo di Design in Milan in 2013 and obtained her master's degree from the Royal College of Art in London in 2018. Her work has been exhibited internationally in group and solo exhibitions, including galleries and museums such as FOAM Amsterdam, the Venice Biennale, the South London Gallery and Borough Road Gallery in London, Leeds Art Gallery in Leeds, Fonderia 20.9 in Verona, Almanan Inn in Turin, Forte Belvedere in Florence, Galleria L21 in Palma de Mallorca, Museo Castromediano in Lecce, MAR Ravenna, National Museum of Gdansk and festivals such as Peckham 24 in London, Getxophoto International Photo Festival, Fotografia Europea in Reggio Emilia, Photo OpenUp in Padua, Circulations Festival in Paris and Format Festival in Derby. She was an artist in Futures Photography 2021 (selected by Camera Torino) and Bloomberg New Contemporaries 2019. She was nominated for the Foam Paul Huf Award in 2021 and selected for Amsterdam FOAM Talent 2024. Her work has been published in FOAM Talent, Photoworks Annual, Der Grief, Unseen Magazine, Wallpaper, GUP Magazine, among others. Her work *A Blurry Aftertaste* is part of the Government Art Collection. Her first book *A Study on Waitressing* published by Witty Books, will be presented during Paris Photo this year.

Lucrezia Zanardi

Lucrezia Zanardi (b. 1994, Bologna) is a multimedia artist, researcher and lecturer at the University of Applied Sciences and Arts Dortmund. She is completing her doctorate at the Institute for Culture and History of the Radboud University Nijmegen. Zanardi studied Multimedia Arts at the IUAV University of Venice and at the Hochschule für Gestaltung in Karlsruhe, graduating in Venice in 2016. She obtained her Master in Photography – Photographic Studies at the University of Applied Sciences and Arts Dortmund in 2020. She is a board member and curator at the non-profit organization Ety Hillesum Huis in Middelburg.

Lucrezia's works have been exhibited at Dortmunder U (Emerging Artists Dortmund 2019), Folkwang Museum Essen (*Butterland - Delusion of Photography*), Künstlerhaus Malkasten Düsseldorf, Voies Off Rencontres d'Arles 2021. The photo book (selfpublished) was included in the shortlist of the *LUMA Dummy Book Award* Rencontres d'Arles in the same year. Zanardi presented her photographic research at Plat(t)form - Fotomuseum Winterthur in 2022 and was selected in 2024 by Camera Torino as part of the European program FUTURES (EPP – European Photography Platform).

USEFUL INFORMATION

Opening Saturday 16th November 2024

From 3:00 pm to 8:00 pm

Dates

From November 16th to February 1st 2025

Working Hours

Thursday, Friday and Saturday, from 3:00 pm to 7:00 pm

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