

Lorenza Longhi

Minuet of Manners

12.06.–05.09.2021

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Minuet of Manners is a one-person exhibition by artist Lorenza Longhi. Her installation involves every element in the gallery, from the furniture to the hanging method as well as the paintings themselves. When surrounded by these elements, the visitor is invited to consider how they look at art – or indeed everything around them. As the title suggests, Longhi leads us in a dance; how we move relates to art spaces and other contexts. How do we behave in a museum? Is it the same as in a shop? Or at home? And how did the artist move when she created these works?

You read Lorenza Longhi's work differently depending on who you are. This, however, is the case for art per se: its meaning is reliant upon one's perspective and this varies depending upon where you are from, your gender, class and mood. This makes art, just like football, Beethoven or fashion, so interesting – or indeed not. Given that you are currently reading this text, the chances are that you are interested in art. You visit exhibitions, look at art, discuss, enjoy or collect it because it makes your life better and opens doors into other worlds. In short, because it makes you think, and thinking is fun. Art equips us, as if in passing, with tools to rethink our thinking. We can free ourselves from familiar trains of thought; this might posit change to society, or to the idea of beauty.

What has this to do with Lorenza Longhi's work? Maybe a great deal, maybe not much, it depends on your perspective. The exhibition title indicates that looking at art always relies on thinking patterns; it's a minuet of manners. The minuet, a French dance and a musical form, defines, through rhythm and melody, how bodies move in space and how dancers come into contact with one another. The minuet creates a framework for interaction which occurs and then dissipates, yet is always a space for interpretation. What is key is the movement, for this is what connects and dissolves, just like thought binds and releases. Thinking is thus movement and movement is thinking. An interplay develops between analysis and adherence, rejection and acceptance, distance and chaos, closeness and freedom, elegance and cadence, a minuet of behaviours therefore, a minuet of manners.

Every exhibition is a minuet: visitors come into contact with art and engage in a dance with it. Not only with the work, but with the space and other visitors too. And the art equally exists in relation with the space, it presents itself and waits to be seen and absorbed. This can of course fail, or be dull, or ignite passion and incite a desire to possess the work or provoke rejection and strong emotions. Presentation plays an important role.

Lorenza Longhi's exhibition is meticulously presented. A sober, white staircase leads from the second storey to the third. Here, before you enter the gallery, stands a seating arrangement for four people. It is a copy of a museum bench from the Palazzo delle Esposizioni in Rome, which doesn't have to mean any more than that, depending on your perspective. Part of the seat has been silkscreened silver by the artist, so the museum bench may be an artwork. Then you enter the large gallery to the left and initially stand facing a 2.5 metre-tall wall which blocks your view. This solemn barrier is covered with vertical plastic strips, (Crystal Clear Tape,) so it glistens slightly. It might be read as an abstract wall work, but it is only décor. At the centre a path opens into the actual exhibition space. This is the second entrance to the exhibition, at this point you really enter,

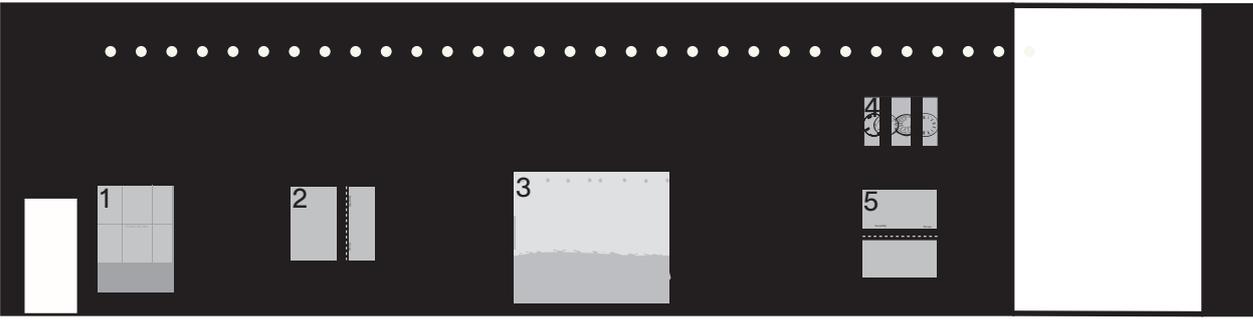
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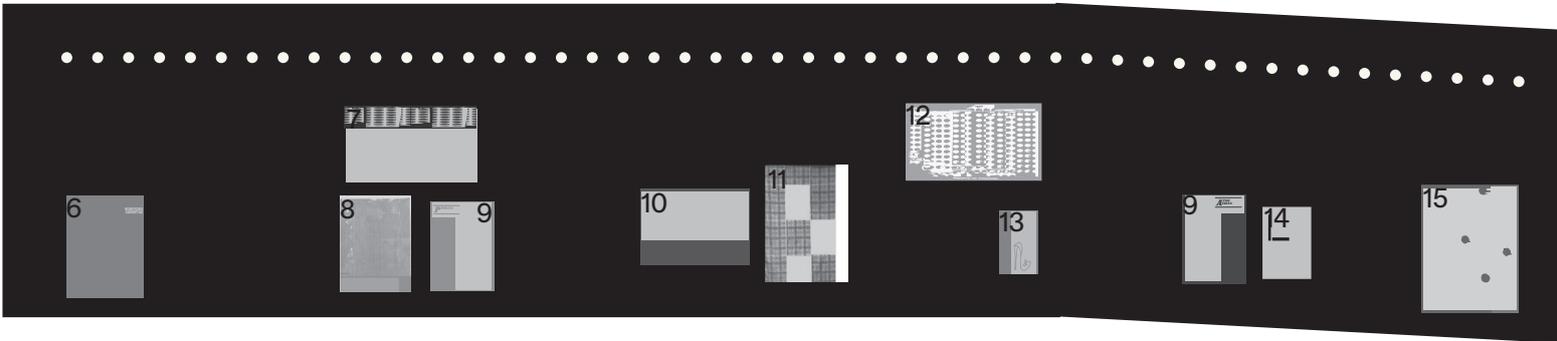
even though you already entered. Now you encounter the most recent paintings by the Zürich-based Italian artist. They do not, however, simply hang from nails on the wall, but on metal rods installed from a hole-based system. This hanging system was developed for the Musée d'Orsay's 1986 opening by Italian architect Gae Aulenti, who led the building's renovation. The idea was that works from the collection could be rehung easily and efficiently thanks to this flexible system. It was only implemented, however, for a short time, the iron rods and holes were probably too prominent, competing too much with works. And this is exactly what is in play here: not promoting the paintings or presenting them to good effect in a white cube (as galleries like to do). *Minuet of Manners* engages and plays with the history of exhibition. This could be dull, but it is not. For behind it lies the question of how we, the viewers, are dealt with. How are we manipulated? How are we seduced, respected, tricked, illuminated and entertained? Who is trying to please who here, and what are their tricks?

The exhibition *Minuet of Manners* develops through an accumulation of moments: the seating outside, then a first room or corridor, there the initial, taped wall, then the large gallery and finally the works, the rods and the wall that literally completes the space. Longhi's painting equally develops through layering. First the artist designs a composition on her computer. Then she buys cheap fabric (the first layer), pasting tape strips, sentences or graphics on this (second layer). She then lays out the fabric and prints silver paint onto it using a silkscreen frame (third layer). The frame functions like an oversized brush, generating patches of silver, sometimes dense, sometimes not. Gaps appear, because the material being printed folds over in parts. These are not mistakes, nor are they planned, often they remain and sometimes they are printed over. Then the tape, sentences or graphics are removed and become voids, rendering the material visible (a coming and going, advancing and retiring, like in the minuet). Finally, the material is stuck to a board (fourth layer). The picture is then hung on a wall (fifth layer). Through this process interesting, elegant pictures emerge, perhaps surprisingly. The reason is as simple as it is hard to define: a dialogue comes about, a tension between the method of production, which is so straightforward and easy to comprehend, the artist's formal decision making and the «mistakes» and how they bring the method, material and paint to light, as if these wanted to break free. Each of these ideas could spark a long narrative – on abstraction, say, its claims and ideological background. Or on happenstance and the power of the artist. How, for example, she makes painting into memes by running slogans across her pictures. Like the motivational phrases with which banks and art fairs greet us (Incredibly Global), the self-optimisation mottos of fitness centres and consultants (Action Taken) or beautiful new phrases that emerge, like haikus, from our art and consumer culture: Inconspicuous Consumption. Longhi's art, seeming at first so elegant and light-footed, draws us into the murky depths of contemporary life. These works are at once memento mori and memento memes.

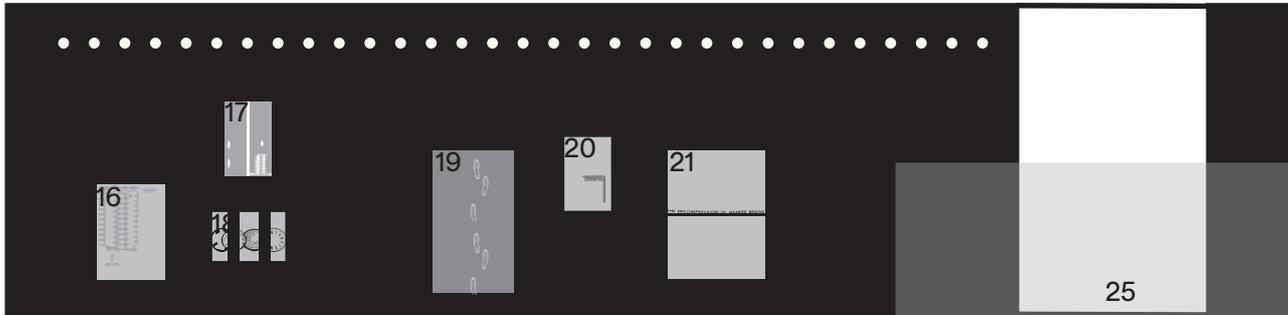
Daniel Baumann



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|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 Untitled (Apropos...) | 10 Untitled (Altes Gold) | 20 Untitled (Red Treat) |
| 2 Untitled (IP) | 11 Untitled (Festive Skirt) | 21 Untitled (2018) |
| 3 Untitled (Institution of Privacy) | 12 Untitled (Saved Space) | 23 Business Card |
| 4 Untitled (Baisemain) | 13 Untitled (Gent, Be Seated) | |
| 5 Untitled (IG) | 14 Untitled (Capital((ist))stool) | |
| 6 Untitled (Lillac Treat) | 15 Untitled (Slippery Business) | *Not on walls |
| 7 Untitled (Baroque Prelude) | 16 Untitled (CC) | 22 Panoramic Couch 1 |
| 8 Untitled | 17 Untitled (Service System) | (outside) |
| 9 Untitled (Again) | 18 Untitled (Collier De Chien) | 24 Panoramic Couch 2 |
| | 19 Untitled | 25 Panoramic Couch 3 |

Opening hours: Tue–Sun 11 am–6pm, Thu 11 am–8 pm, Mon closed

Save the date: Lange Nacht der Zürcher Museen, 4 September 2021

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