



EXHIBITION TEXTS

Giulia Andreani

Sabotage

27 February 2026 – 13 September 2026

For her first institutional solo exhibition in Germany, Giulia Andreani (b. 1985, Venice, Italy; lives and works in Paris, France) presents 32 monochromatic paintings under the title Sabotage. This title reflects her practice of altering and undermining the narratives embedded in historical images, objects and ideas. In this exhibition, Andreani's paintings and her new glass sculptures enter into dialogue with objects from different Berlin museum collections. Installed on and around a wooden structure that evokes both a playground and the stretcher frame of a painting, the exhibition unfolds across three rooms loosely associated with stages of life from childhood through adulthood to maturity. Andreani's practice is grounded in the archive, and in questions of gender and visibility. Her work examines how histories are formed, transmitted and contested. By translating historical photographs into layered paintings that often depict women, her work focuses on lives that have been overlooked or erased.

Reframed Archives

Andreani's practice is rooted in historical photographs drawn from libraries, institutional collections, family albums, film stills and other archives. Her work examines how history has been constructed, preserved and selectively remembered. Rather than reproducing her source images exactly, she uses montage, repetition and displacement to rearrange figures and scenes across time. People from different periods encounter one another and distinct histories are layered together. These shifts destabilise the authority of the archive, exposing its gaps and contradictions. For Andreani, history is not a fixed record but something that changes depending on how and where we choose to look.

Monochrome

Andreani works almost exclusively in Payne's Grey, a cool blue-grey pigment developed in 18th-century London. She uses it in both watercolour and acrylic preparations, but the pigment appears differently depending on the medium: in watercolour it reads as blue, while in acrylic it appears grey. These shifts come from the distinct material properties of each medium, which affect how light interacts with the pigment. Andreani uses this colour as a temporal filter. By reducing images to a single tone, scenes from different periods are brought into a shared, indeterminate past. The colour tones also recall the look of early 19th-century photographs.

Making Visible

Andreani's work centers on women and other figures often excluded from dominant narratives. Her paintings illuminate the overlooked lives of workers, caregivers, artists and mothers. By drawing attention to what has been omitted from official accounts, she reveals how historical meaning is constructed and how it might be reimagined. In this exhibition, she

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extends this approach by incorporating loaned objects associated with domestic and industrial labour, including a sewing machine, a meat grinder, an iron and a typewriter. These objects make visible forms of labour that have often remained unrecorded.

The Frilly Collars

This painting of two girls is based on a photograph from the artist's family album, taken around 1930 in Chioggia, near Venice. It depicts Andreani's grandmother and her younger sister as children. Andreani's painting openly signals its photographic origin: the image does not fill the canvas, recalling a poorly developed photograph. The girls' faces appear softly blurred, evoking early photographic techniques that required sitting still for a long time, often difficult for children. By contrast, the lace collars at their necks are rendered with precision and rigidity. Delicate yet constraining, the collars mark femininity while enclosing the body within social expectations. *The Frilly Collars* links personal family history to Venice's female-dominated lacemaking tradition.

Le stratège (1945)

In *Le Stratège*, Andreani depicts a young boy staring directly ahead. The work is based on a photograph from a collection of discarded family albums that the artist discovered in northern France. The photograph was taken by a member of the French bourgeoisie during the Second World War, and presents childhood as calm, orderly and protected. The work's title unsettles this surface innocence: the boy's intense, unblinking gaze and his absorption in a puzzle introduce ideas of calculation and future intent, inviting speculation about who this child might become. Shown opposite *The lord of (f)lies* - childhood portraits of Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump - the painting reflects on the tension between childhood innocence and the potential for violence in adulthood.

Paint Unbidden (Palimpsest)

This work exemplifies Andreani's practice of combining archival images into collage-like narratives that connect figures across time and place. At the centre stands Leda Rafanelli (1880-1971), an Italian anarchist writer and publisher. To her left, the American artist Georgia O'Keeffe (1887-1986) appears in old age, preparing herbs, while beneath her the Arabic word *za'atar* [thyme] evokes sacred plants and contested land. On the right, the German artist Sigmar Polke (1941-2010) searches for hallucinogenic mushrooms, while below him the suffragette Edith Garrud (1872-1971), a member of the British women's voting rights movement, trains in the Japanese martial art of jujitsu. Rather than forming a single narrative, these figures are layered like a palimpsest: a surface showing traces of multiple histories.

Der Zauberberg (Montdevergues)

The title of this painting refers to the 1924 novel by the German author Thomas Mann (1875-1955), set in a sanatorium. Andreani draws on this setting to recount the story of the French sculptor Camille Claudel (1864-1943). Claudel trained at a time when women were largely excluded from

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formal artistic education. Although she received critical recognition, particularly in connection with her artistic collaboration and relationship with the sculptor Auguste Rodin (1840-1917), Claudel endured financial insecurity, misogyny and increasing isolation. In 1913, her family had her committed to a psychiatric institution in Montdevergues, where she remained until her death. In Andreani's painting, Claudel is released: a mountain appropriated from Sigmar Polke's *Drei Lügen der Malerei* (1995) rises behind her, transforming the scene from one of confinement into an open landscape.

Pour elles toutes (Myrninerest)

Andreani's works, *Pour elles toutes (Myrninerest)* brings an overlooked history to the forefront. The large figure on the right of the canvas is Madge Gill (1882-1961), a self-taught artist and spiritual medium. Gill began making art in her late thirties, following periods of illness and time spent in a sanatorium. She believed her work was guided by a spirit named Myrninerest and signed many of her drawings with that name. Andreani brings Gill together with female shoemakers and healers, placing them under the protection of Juno Sospita, an ancient Roman goddess associated with the safeguarding of women. An Etruscan antefix depicting Juno Sospita, displayed nearby and on loan from the Antikensammlung on Museum Island, extends the painting's layered narrative into the exhibition space.

Deadlier than the male (gaze)

Framing Sigmar Polke's (1941-2010) *Freundinnen I* (1967) are two paintings of women by Andreani, depicting actresses Sylva Koscina (1933-1994) and Elke Sommer (b. 1940). Koscina and Sommer starred together in the 1967 British spy film *Deadlier Than the Male* and also served as the original models for Polke's print. Andreani recreates promotional images of the two women from the film as paintings, appropriating and reworking Polke's image. Polke's original compresses both women into a single, flat composition, presenting them as types rather than individuals. Here, Andreani separates the motif across two separate canvases. By devoting one painting to each figure, she opens up space for the viewer to imagine distinct identities and stories for each woman.

Cianophilia

This glass sculpture, housed in an incubator, is one of four works made with hand-blown Murano glass throughout the exhibition. Historically, glass-making on Murano, an island near Venice, was organized through rigid hierarchies: workshops were patriarchal, techniques closely guarded, and women excluded. In recent years, Andreani has begun working with this material, extending her practice into sculpture. Glassmaking demands precise control of heat and careful handling at every stage. In *Cianophilia*, the glass sculpture in the form of a foetus enters into dialogue with an incubator on loan from the neighboring Medical History Museum. This pairing draws attention to practices of care, control and protection that shape acts of creation. It also foregrounds the gendered histories embedded in both glass-making and medical technologies. Hand-blown Murano glass.

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