



Lorenza Longhi
World of Yum Yum
January 25 – April 14, 2024

Swiss Institute (SI) presents *World of Yum Yum*, the first solo exhibition in the US by artist Lorenza Longhi, featuring newly commissioned paintings and sculptures in a site-specific installation. Through architectural interventions and a visual language that enlists both strategies of luxury advertising, merchandising and commerce, along with craft and DIY techniques, Longhi's work considers spaces of display and the desires they engender. Taking its inspiration from a temporary exhibition space that Longhi encountered in an airport, *World of Yum Yum* features a series of hyperreal closeups of artificial hand-made flowers, reminiscent of Chanel brooches, on movable panels that hang from tracks on the ceiling. Appearing as blown-up photographs pasted like posters and silk-screened with overlay patterns of flower outlines and dots, each brooch's center holds a spy camera that peeps outwards.

"Rigorously speaking, no one wants to be subject of the gaze, we all want to be fabulous objects," critic Rhonda Lieberman writes in a 1992 essay entitled *The Loser Thing*. "Commodities promise to lift and separate people from feelings of inadequacy and unloveliness, but they can also betray us, give us dirty looks, and make us feel unworthy of them."¹ The eyes of the camellias affixed to Longhi's panels can shift within the hanging apparatus, opening new spaces and gaps for visibility or escape. While some stare directly, others give a side-eye squint. Let's get personal, they seem to suggest. Lieberman's *Glamour Wounds* column, written two months later, on Coco Chanel, her brand and the demoralizing experience of visiting the Chanel boutique, or as she describes it, "the world of yum-yum: a shop full of dazzling absurd phalluses fully equipped to beam you up and save you," examines the impulse for masochistically identifying with these luxury objects and finding relief through the joy of degradation from their indifference. Failure to become the commodity, she writes, "is impossible to symbolize; you can only circle around it in interpretative impotence. Or buy it, if possible."²

The flowers portrayed in Longhi's images are actual sculptures, each containing a working camera. She constructs them herself from scrap fabric she has found or collected by following YouTube instructions for making Chanel camellias. For this exhibition, the small flower sculptures were photographed by Longhi along with two professional photographers and enlarged significantly. The quality of the photos varies depending on the photographer's eye and camera. Some are crisp, while others are smooth, muddy, or poor, resembling AI-generated images. Longhi's primary interest is not photographic fidelity, but rather the proximity and texture of the surface of the objects, their materiality. The evidence of their private act of making takes precedence.

Longhi used the spy camera's microphone to record atmospheric sounds of music as she strolled through department stores in Zürich, where she lives, and New York. She additionally positioned multiple speakers playing various pop songs throughout her studio and apartment, and recorded the panoply of shifting soundtracks as she walked past them with the same spy device. A mix of the resulting audio plays in the exhibition on directional speakers located within wall-mounted boxes that are covered in florist's kraft paper, as well as reproductions of the same paper, and printed silkscreen mesh she previously used for the paintings. Passing by, it almost sounds like shopping.

¹ Rhonda Lieberman, "The Loser Thing," *Artforum*, September 1992, p. 80.

² Rhonda Lieberman, "Glamour Wounds: The Chanel Superego," *Artforum*, November 1992, p. 6.

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This exhibition is organized by Alison Coplan, Chief Curator.

About Lorenza Longhi

Lorenza Longhi (b. 1991, Lecco, IT, lives in Zürich, CH) studied at Brera Academy of Fine Arts and at ECAL in Lausanne. Recent solo shows include Kunsthalle Zürich, Zürich; Ordet, Milan; Weiss Falk, Basel; Fanta-MLN, Milan; and Plymouth Rock, Zürich. Her works have been included in group exhibitions at Kolnischer Kunstverein, Cologne; Halle Fur Kunst Steiermark, Graz; Bonner Kunstverein, Bonn; Macro, Rome; Fondazione Prada, Venice; Kunsthalle Zürich; Quadriennale di Roma, Rome; and Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin. In Milan, she was a co-founder of Armada (2014-2018), and in Zürich she is guest professor in the Fine Arts Master department at ZHdK. In 2020 she received the Shizuko Yoshikawa Advanced Award for Young Women Artists and the Swiss Emerging Artist Prize 2020 by Societe Generale. In 2021, she was Artist in Residence at Swiss Institute. In 2022, she was among the winners of the International Sculpture Prize by Fondazione Henraux.

About Swiss Institute

Founded in 1986, Swiss Institute (SI) is an independent non-profit contemporary art institution dedicated to promoting forward-thinking and experimental art making through innovative exhibitions, education, and programs. Committed to the highest standards of curatorial and educational excellence, SI serves as a platform for emerging artists, catalyzes new perspectives on celebrated work, and fosters appreciation for under-recognized positions. SI is committed to being an organization that is diverse, equitable, accessible, and environmentally conscious in its work, structure, and programming. Open to the public free-of-charge, Swiss Institute seeks to explore how a Swiss context can be the starting point for international conversations in the fields of visual and performing arts, design, and architecture.

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