

# GALERIE

## Love Meetings or Love in Times of Capitalism

Solo exhibition by **Konstanze Schmitt**, curated by **Solvej Helweg Ovesen**

within the frame of the exhibition program **SoS (Soft Solidarity)**,  
conceived by **Nataša Ilić** and **Solvej Helweg Ovesen**

**07.02. till 28.03.2020**

### The Work of Love

A conversation between **Konstanze Schmitt** and curator **Solvej Helweg Ovesen**,  
December 2019

In the summer of 2019, the artist and theatre director Konstanze Schmitt together with the filmmaker Minze Tummescheit and the performer Mariana Senne did artistic research on love-relations in Wedding. Based on Pier Paolo Pasolini's film ›Comizi d'amore/Love Meetings‹ (Italy 1963), they both performed interventions in the public space of Wedding and made qualitative interviews with people of all ages.

For his documentary Pasolini travelled through Italy for half a year and interviewed people in the countryside, in the city and on the beach, old and young, poor and rich, directly about ›love‹ and its circumstances, asking for example, »Where do the children come from?«, »How important is sexual fulfillment in a partnership?«, »What does homosexuality mean?«, »Why is there prostitution?«, »Is it acceptable to divorce when things do not work out in the marriage?«, etc.

Schmitt's performative research, on the other hand, mainly examined the relationship between romantic love and capitalism, as well as the understanding and creation of solidarity as a social orbit yesterday and today. During the time of the research the dérives through the current love landscape of Wedding were continuously mapped and performatively processed by the artists in the rooms of Galerie Wedding during its opening hours. Interested people were invited to stand in the projection of a selected scene of ›Comizi d'amore‹ and speak the original text as well as answer in a personal way to the questions Pasolini asked half a century ago.

The research on love in Wedding, which among other things resulted in several film sequences, was Schmitt's first part of three in a process of exploring love in times of capitalism (1st part research in Wedding, 2nd part Theatre play at HAU/Hebbel am Ufer, 3rd part exhibition in Galerie Wedding). The film sequences are the ones presented in the current exhibition. The second step in the process was a performance she created and directed together with Bini Adamczak in HAU3: ›Everybody Needs Only You. Love in Times of Capitalism‹ (Premiere: 6th of December 2019).

In the following conversation we speak about the artistic venture into the question of why love or to be loved seem to require so much work today and about the process of making the works on the subject.

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**SHO: How did you come up with the subject of love and capitalism as an artist? For more than 10 years you have engaged with ways of rethinking the relationship between family, work, reproduction and capitalism - would you share your thoughts on this route?**

**KS:** In 2009 I began to work with Territorio Doméstico, a group of organized care and domestic workers in Madrid. Care workers do the love work, but it is paid and outsourced of the family construction. And love is what normally pays for the housework. Women all over the world are trained to do all this work, to care for others, take care of kids, take on the whole work of human reproduction so that capitalism can function.

This is theorized by the radical feminist Silvia Federici in her manifesto ›Wages Against Housework‹ (1975) and other texts, in which she depicts how women are supposedly paid with love for housework. Together with Territorio Doméstico and Stephan Dilleuth, we realised the performance and installation ›Triumph of the Domestic Workers‹. That was in the context of the exhibition ›The Potosí Principle‹ curated by Alice Creischer and Andreas Siekmann, which was also presented at Haus der Kulturen der Welt in 2010. That is how I came to the whole issue of love. It was derived from the capitalist and postcolonial situation in the world.

I then began to focus on the early Soviet Union ideas, that means all these communist ideas on how society, family and reproduction could work differently. In Soviet constructivism, life was redefined, restructured, a revolution of the everyday life took place, just like the notion of art changed - art became a part of life, not an opposite to it.

I discovered Sergei Tretyakov's play ›I Want a Baby!‹ (1924), which treats human reproduction as a case of rational production. The domestic workers in Spain had said, ›Without us the world wouldn't turn around and that is where our power lies.‹ So this is what my performative research ›MILDA‹ from 2011-13 and its connected performance and film works are about that reproduction can be organized as production, as well as this whole thing called ›romantic love‹ and ›marriage‹, which the avant-garde character Milda wants to skip, looking for the qualities she needs and then wanting to make a contract with someone for producing the child: This was the first time I encountered the concept of love as a rationalist idea.

When I began to work on that, I was also inspired by the Soviet feminist writer Alexandra Kollontai, who questioned the bourgeois construct of love and put the focus on finding new ways of societal relationships. She said that we have to make social bonds so emotional that one no longer needs to flee from loneliness into marriage, meaning here the utopian idea to generate collective sensitivity, caring and tenderness in society and not reducing it to a love relationship between two people. The author Bini Adamczak quotes her often and profoundly developed these ideas.

**SHO: Bini Adamczak is the author of ›Communism for Kids‹ (2004, english publication in 2017) and ›Beziehungswise Revolution‹ (2017) and has written a lot about communism and queer feminism. You are working together since years. Can you tell us how your collaborated now in regard to the performance ›Everybody Needs Only You. Liebe in Zeiten des Kapitalismus‹ at HAU?**

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**KS:** The collaboration with Bini Adamczak is very important to me. The theatre project ›Everybody Needs Only You. Love in Times of Capitalism‹ we made together, was a performance realized with four actors, a dramaturg and a stage designer. Bini Adamczak and I long ago asked ourselves, »What is the trade that love does? And how does it actually feel like to live in capitalism?«. So we turned around the cliché about love being the thing about feelings without any business involved - it is just me and another person in an intimate relation. And on the other hand, capitalism is said to be all about business, all is rational and cold deals. We reversed those questions and said: love is a market as well. And since in capitalism we are connected to and depending on each other worldwide, we can also see this global market as an utopian possibility of love.

In the first chapter ›Circulation‹ of the HAU performance we wanted to show this whole market of finding someone and presenting and ›selling‹ yourself. The second chapter ›Consumption‹ is about when the relationship is happening - and then there is supposedly no market. But there is no such thing as an inside and outside of capitalism. The love-relation is supposed to function as the opposite to the outside, the rough reality of capitalism on the streets, at work, etc. It is supposed to be the cure to the wounds of the world. The promise of romantic love is that inside the relationship you are able to feel unique, you are seen as a person, you are someone special. Meanwhile outside you are someone who can be exchangeable.

**SHO: At this point it would be really interesting to hear what you draw from the first part of interviews and the public interventions in Wedding?**

**KS:** So all this theoretical thinking was already in my head before I began with my research in Wedding. Here, I wanted to see how the relationship between love and capitalism was unfolding and lived today: How do people perceive love, sexuality and relations? That is how I came to Pasolini's film ›Comizi d'amore/ Love Meetings‹. It was a good tool to go into public space in Wedding and talk to people.

I really love interaction with people and have often worked with interviews. One day Mariana Senne and me had an intervention on the square in front of the City Hall of Wedding, where Galerie Wedding is located, and here we put a carpet and three chairs in the middle of the open square and waited for someone to come by. After a while people came and sat and talked with us. It may have to do with the fact that I had a concrete project, but in Wedding there is a lot of interaction in the street, not this running, running. Sometimes it reminded me of Spain where I lived for several years, with this summer atmosphere, the local community-feeling and the fact that people know each other.

In general I have distilled many texts based on interviews with people. I have worked a lot with performance in public space. Now love was the excuse to get in contact with people here. I had this whole catalogue of questions from Pasolini. As before, when I was working with the existing I Want a Baby!-play from the 1920s for example, I like to bring historical material into a situation and confront people of today with it.

When people were interested in talking to us in Wedding, we asked, »Would you like to come to the gallery and see a scene from this 1960s documentary?«. So we interviewed and filmed or recorded neighbors - some alone, some in groups. One of the film works of 2019 we see in the exhibition consists of people from Wedding who are standing in front of the ›Comizi d'amore‹ film from 1963. The

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locals are speaking the text together with the people inside the film, and this was somehow a warm up. Then we would stop the film and talk about their current experience of love in capitalism.

**SHO: You said that you encountered diverse and often pragmatic approaches to love and marriage in Wedding. What do you mean by that?**

**KS:** There were many interesting stories that came out in the research. To resume: Some people talk theoretically about love and capitalism, and then there are the people who just do it - this is Wedding.

**SHO: What is your vision of love - is love solidarity?**

**KS:** I think it's possible to realise other kinds of social relations in the public space that are very important. They could be more tender, we could be more sensitive in the ways we treat each other, also outside of our private relationships. So to close the circle from the Russian avant-garde over workers' theatre to the theme of ›Soft Solidarity‹ that you have ongoing in Galerie Wedding: Deconstructing the concept of romantic love by questioning it publicly as in the Wedding research and performances or with the text-based performance in a theatre setting as in ›Everybody Needs Only You‹ directs the focus on how we construct relationships between each other – not only between friends and lovers, but in society.

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