

anni wu

FERAL KINDNESS

Galamb Thorday and Claudia Petraroli

24.09.2026 – 31.10.2026

Curated by Giorgia Aprosio

“Good manners” are learned before we even know what they are. Long before we can name a rule, we have already learned to correct ourselves and prepare our bodies to become socially legible.

Feral Kindness, an exhibition by Galamb Thorday and Claudia Petraroli curated by Giorgia Aprosio, opens on 24 September 2026 at Anni Wu Gallery in Milan. The project reconstructs in reverse the process through which we learn to be seen: from the surface of social behaviour to the inner voice that continues to guide our actions, even when no one is watching.

The title brings together two apparently irreconcilable words. “Feral” refers to something wild, animal or savage. In English, it is also used to describe animals that were once domesticated and have since returned to a wild state. “Kindness,” by contrast, means gentleness and care, but also the reassuring form taken by a body trained to appear agreeable.

Their combination produces the oxymoron from which the exhibition proceeds: how much instinct survives in the gestures we have learned, and how much discipline is concealed in the forms through which we make ourselves acceptable?

What emerges is a portrait of care as a form of labour in its own right: repetitive, unpaid practices that require the constant disciplining, correcting and transforming of the body so that it conforms to social codes of desirability and decorum. It is in the gap between the reassuring promise and the effort of everyday performance that the grotesque, almost uncanny dimension running through the works’ accommodating and playful appearance begins to emerge.

The exhibition begins with the public dimension of a femininity constructed and performed according to social gender norms. It then moves through the private rituals of beauty and care that prepare bodies to enter the scene, before arriving at the internalised surveillance through which each subject learns to constantly control and modify herself.

In the first room, everything seems ready to be looked at, yet something has already exceeded the limits.

Positioned opposite the entrance, *Host of Guests* (2026) places the viewer in the position of someone arriving at a party and encountering an unexpected scene. A group of women in evening dresses surrounds a naked man lying at the centre of the composition. His body serves as a surface on which sushi is served, while the circular arrangement of the figures creates a kind of ravenous arena around him.

The scene reverses the gender roles typical of the imagery of *nyotaimori*, an eroticised Japanese gastronomic practice in which food is served on the naked body of a woman. The reversal changes the direction of the gaze without neutralising the violence implicit in the scene.

Immobilised in a pose that would be impossible to sustain, the man gives way and melts, adapting to the function imposed on him, while looking at us through the reflection of a champagne flute that magnifies his eye.

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The champagne flute returns in *Fizz and Feathers* (2025) and *The Master of Margaritas* (2025), two paintings facing each other from opposite sides of the room. Both are constructed around a pyramid of glasses and function as opposing poles: in the first, the glasses are still facing upwards, while in the second they are overturned. The almost ornamental chime of the goldfinches on the glass of the still-full vessels gives way, in the neighbouring painting, to the women's clamorous voices, which reverberate among the overturned glasses and seem to invade the room.

The composure of the pose turns into euphoria, while grace slips into a collective excitement verging on the animal.

In the same room, Petraroli's *Via il dente, via il dolore* (2023) concentrates this same tension within a few millimetres. Inside a small steel box, similar to those used in jewellery, lies the artist's wisdom tooth, covered in gold obtained by melting down a ring that belonged to a relationship that had come to an end. The title refers to a familiar Italian consolatory expression, according to which removing the cause of suffering should also put an end to the pain. An evolutionary remnant of a now-lost primitive function, a fragment of the artist's body and a symbol of a broken bond, the tooth has been transformed into an artwork and is now offered for purchase by third parties.

The second room is where the public image is constructed. Here, the domestication of the body assumes the everyday form of care or, more precisely, care work.

Petraroli's new ceramic sculptures, including *The grief is never ending but so are the strange ways love will find you again, again, again* (2026) and *Just as you take my hand* (2026), rework the forms of wellness tools, objects associated with massage and relaxation. Enlarged and translated into ceramic, their ergonomic profiles lose their hand-held scale and practical function, taking on an almost archaic sculptural presence. They become abstract, anthropomorphic figures endowed with an almost monumental solemnity. Their forms recall those of the famous female figurines of the Palaeolithic, whose function remains mysterious, but which modernity has retrospectively named "Venuses."

In Galamb Thorday's large painting *Practice Ground Between Sand and Stars* (2025), a woman lies motionless, almost entirely covered in mud, undergoing what appears to be a spa treatment pushed to excess, verging on the grotesque. *Monolog IV* (2025) appears to be the next scene: a close-up of the same figure's relaxed, introspective face, crossed by a spiral that seems to lead into her thoughts. Its movement mirrors that of *Flower Oracle* (2026), in which a woman's hands play "loves me, loves me not" with a daisy, letting its pale petals fall into the whirlpool of the muddy water of a river.

Downstairs, Petraroli's immersive video installation *At some point, you will notice a gentle breeze stirring behind your eyes* (2026) takes the viewer to a deeper level of domestication: the psychic. Guiding the viewer through the different stages of the session are the 3D-modeled figures already introduced by the sculptures in the previous room: a rotating lipstick, an insect resembling a tongue, a headless Venus and an extraterrestrial quadruped.

A slow, sensual female voice gives instructions for relaxation, gradually replacing the exercises with excerpts from feminist texts by Valerie Solanas, Virginie Despentes and Sara Ahmed on beauty standards, male domination, labour and prostitution. Over the course of the session, behind the voice's calm, monotonous tone, the content of the inner monologue becomes increasingly intense, producing the opposite effect to the one promised: rather than relaxing, the audience is drawn into a crescendo of self-awareness that becomes increasingly invasive, confrontational, radical and violent.

The voice, which appears to be human, was generated by the artist using an artificial-intelligence dubbing system. The video uses archive footage showing women engaged in beauty rituals, in highly sexualised poses and aware that they are being watched. Found online by the artist, the images are freely available for use, including commercial use.

In the final sequence, rolls of toilet paper and a rain of lipsticks and kohl pencils invade the screen in homage to Nawal El Saadawi, the Egyptian writer and feminist activist who, after being imprisoned by Sadat's regime in 1981 and deprived of paper and pen, secretly wrote *Memoirs from the Women's Prison* on a roll of toilet paper using an eyebrow pencil.

Galamb Thorday (Keszthely, Hungary, 1990) is a German-Hungarian artist who lives and works in Leipzig. She studied at the Hochschule für Grafik und Buchkunst (HGB) Leipzig, where she earned a degree in Fine Arts and subsequently completed the Meisterschüler programme. Her practice focuses primarily on painting. Thorday does not work from preparatory drawings, but paints directly onto the canvas. Her compositions emerge from mental collages, in which realistic-looking figurative fragments are assembled through associations or disassociations of meaning and transformed into scenes altered both in sense and form. The result is a disturbing surrealism: bodies, objects, and animals retain their recognisability, while slipping into a visionary, almost psychedelic dimension, as if distorted by an optical lens. Her work has been presented in exhibitions and institutions in Germany and internationally, including the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, the Cheongju Craft Biennale in South Korea, Kunstverein Augsburg, and Halle 14 in Leipzig.

Claudia Petraroli (Teramo, 1987) is a multidisciplinary artist who lives and works in Milan. Trained as an art historian and photographer, she worked for several years as a photo editor in the fashion industry. Her practice extends the language of photography through the use of different media, including ceramics, video and 3D modelling. Her research explores collective behaviours within consumer society, the symbolic dimension of industrial object design, and the persistence and transformation of social rituals, with particular attention to the processes through which contemporary identities are constantly post-produced. Her work has been presented in exhibitions and institutions in Italy and internationally, including Triennale Milano, Palazzo delle Esposizioni in Rome, the Italian Cultural Institute in Munich and Fotografie Forum Frankfurt.

For both artists, *Feral Kindness* marks their first collaboration with the gallery and their first joint exhibition.