



Ferenc Gróf & Zsófia Gyenes

AN ICEBERG OF ONE'S OWN

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Almost every contemporary phenomenon that we discuss or write about is framed through the concept of “crisis.” The rise of the far right is often described as a democratic deficit. The crisis of care is perceived as the exhaustion of our personal capacities, a pressure on our households. However, our most visible crisis remains undeniably the environmental crisis, which is causing both the melting of ice caps, devastating droughts, and storms accompanied by unprecedented floods. Instead of leading to a period of normalization or stabilization, these crises seem to persist, with a crisis in one domain deepening another. This suggests that crises are not merely temporary phenomena but are structural features of the current system.

The question is why we tend to see these elements as isolated? Why is it difficult to conceive of the relationship between the current mode of production and care work, nature, and various forms of domination within a global conceptual framework? In order to express something fundamental about the essence of the systems that structure our lives, critical theories often resort to artistic language, metaphors, allegories, and visual elements. For Federico, the figure of the witch refers to Shakespeare, while Nancy Fraser illustrates how capital destabilizes its own material basis through the image of the ouroboros, the snake eating its own tail.

The works of Zsófia Gyenes and Ferenc Gróf exist within this extended field of associations surrounding the metaphor of the iceberg. The materials used in the exhibited works—textiles, seals, aerated concrete blocks, cast iron, pigments collected at Dunaferr—make visible and tangible the relationships between the different levels of the iceberg. It is not just about illuminating invisible structures: the artists deconstruct these elements, often reorganizing them playfully into new variations. The perspectives thus created also allude to complex theoretical questions.

There are several theoretical models available for interpreting the relationship between humans

and nature within the current mode of production: one can see this process as that in which the worker deprives himself of nature, thereby detaching himself from himself as part of nature. Or as a rupture in metabolism, where industrial production disrupts natural metabolic processes, choosing to separate from them. Alternatively, nature can be understood as a “cheap” or “free” resource from the perspective of capital, whose sole function, within this extractive relationship, is to provide raw materials for production.

The work *Creosote* takes its title, among other things, from a bush known for its ability to thrive in drought-prone regions, ensuring its survival at the expense of surrounding vegetation by drawing in their water and nutrients. The symbolic system of *Creosote* reorganizes the graphic elements of geological maps, which traditionally indicate sites of various minerals. Its colors come from materials collected at the Dunaferr steel plant in Dunaújváros, Hungary—byproducts of industrial production which, through their materiality and textures, transform into an abstract landscape of extraction and production.

Capitalism cannot function without the reproduction of life (and labor power), both in the long term and on a daily basis. Social reproduction, care work, has traditionally been carried out largely by women. Their unpaid labor is appropriated by capital, which makes its own accumulation dependent on this work while simultaneously concealing and denying this sphere. In Maria Mies’ book *Women: The Last Colony*, the cover image is shown in the form of a book cover and a reprise of a song fragment while also appearing to cover something like a tombstone. Thus, the home is not the site of women’s liberation within the private sphere, but rather that of their exploitation and appropriation—a place of separation and division.

The artists directly engage with Mies’ iceberg metaphor. By printing representations of the iceberg’s invisible zones onto the materials used, they make tangible what is usually hidden. Each variation opens a new space for reflection on the

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A ROOM OF ONE'S OWN

120x100x25 cm, beehives, cellular concrete cubes



An Iceberg of One's Own, Magma, 2024
exhibition view, photo: Attila Kispál

hidden structures that sustain our social systems. Through repetition, they highlight the often-invisible narratives of the economy and labor, revealing various configurations of exploitation and appropriation.

From a technical perspective, the main tool in the work *Saját Jéghegy* (Our Own Iceberg) is the seal, whose significance operates on multiple levels, adding a new dimension to the interpretation of the exhibited works. On the one hand, the seal is a means of approval: as a bureaucratic form, it serves as a tool of power that grants legitimacy, making, for example, a labor contract valid. On the other hand, the seal inscribes something upon us—like the cast-iron seal marked with the word “Society,” which refers to an 18th-century slave badge.

Finally, the seal repeats. Repetition can be a simple copy, a reproduction, or a reiteration, but as seen in the variations on the iceberg or *Meander*, repetition also carries the possibility of subtle change. Through this repetition, we have the choice to shape things differently, creating new patterns.

From this perspective, the exhibited works are not neutral. They perform rigorous theoretical work to uncover relations of domination and exploitation that are often invisible or denied in social consciousness. They highlight that our economic and social systems are not merely abstract concepts but have concrete, material, and experiential effects, shaping our relationships and bodies. Mies' iceberg is thus our own iceberg because, from the beginning, we are woven into this socio-economic system. However, this is not a passive relationship: encountering these works illuminates how we ourselves repeat the imposed rules, how we become those who perpetuate them, and thus active participants in these shaping processes. The artists provide us with tools and building blocks to rewrite our icebergs, creating new configurations for the political imagination.

Noémi Bíró



SOCIETY
30x80x10 cm, cast iron



WOMEN: THE LAST COLONY (COVER)
39x71x10 cm, painted concrete