

ARTFORUM



View of "Ad Minoliti," 2018. Photo: Jeff Warrin

Ad Minoliti

KADIST | SAN FRANCISCO

In the foyer of “The Feminist School of Painting,” her first institutional solo exhibition in the US, the Argentinean artist Ad Minoliti assembled a browsing library with books and zines on queer theory, posthumanism, science fiction, veganism, and antiracist education. Next to the bookshelves were twelve small works made by other designers and artists, including some chosen by those who co-facilitated the workshops that she organized during her residency at Kadist. The eclectic range of objects—including two collages by Elisabeth Wild, a T-shirt with a graphic by Jacqueline Casey, an unassembled figurine from the 1986 film *Aliens*, and a facsimile of William A. Anders’s famous photo of the earth taken from the Apollo 8 spacecraft—was a sign of Minoliti’s desire for a heterogeneous curriculum. On the wall, Minoliti hung bandannas similar to those worn by activists in two 2018 protest movements in Argentina. Groups seeking the separation of church and state adopted orange kerchiefs, while the massive numbers of people demonstrating in support of a proposed (and ultimately defeated) bill that would have legalized abortion wore green kerchiefs. The installation of books, heterogeneous artworks, and bandannas folded into triangles highlighted the connections between color, geometry, sexuality, and politics in Minoliti’s previous works and in the rest of the exhibition.

Minoliti covered the walls of the two main galleries with bright murals featuring figures that were a cross between hard geometrical forms and cuddly animals, including eleven-foot-tall rectangles with kittenish whiskers, beaks, and (sex?) organs. The artist has described the cute aesthetic of such works as an attempt to queer the forms associated with Concrete movements in Latin America. In the middle of the galleries were colorful tables and chairs. The murals and furniture made up the setting for a temporary art school.

During the show's two-month run, Minoliti conducted seven workshops alongside women artists, writers, and scholars from the Bay Area. Each collaborative workshop presented a genre of painting through a different feminist, queer, or antiracist critical lens and included open-ended studio sessions, with materials provided by Kadist. On days without scheduled events, exhibition visitors could sit at the tables, watch a projected YouTube playlist (of lectures by Kathy Acker, Donna Haraway, Alison Kafer, and others), and use crayons to fill in coloring-book images of Minoliti's works. This allowed for different forms of self-guided study. When she wasn't facilitating workshops, the artist became a pupil, learning from San Francisco and its artists and activists as much as she was teaching others.

"The Feminist School of Painting" folded these contemporary discussions on feminism and queer politics into Argentinean traditions of Concrete art, artist-organized education, and political artists' groups. In the 1940s, Concrete painters in Argentina and Uruguay used formal innovations, such as shaped canvases, to work against the illusionism of easel painting, which they thought would also undermine the stability of political illusions and ideologies. Similarly, Minoliti describes her works as biopolitical devices that shape environments and subjectivities—thus the exhibition-as-school and the school-as-exhibition. Artists in Argentina have long organized their own studio classes, as well as seminars for theoretical and critical discussions, as alternatives to the ossified curricula of local art academies. In the past thirty years, artist collectives and venues such as the Centro de Investigaciones Artísticas, Serigrafistas Queer, and the Centro Cultural Ricardo Rojas have also provided leftist aesthetic and pedagogical models in their exhibitions, classes, and street demonstrations.

Drawing on her experience in many of those informal artist-run organizations—and in particular on her years in the innovative studio classes taught by the painter Diana Aisenberg—Minoliti aimed to provide an experimental education akin to the one she received in Buenos Aires. At the final workshop, she seemed to have succeeded. Minoliti gave a talk about the feminist history of abstraction, and then participants painted as they mingled with the curators, the artist, and participants' children, discussing each other's paintings in progress and swapping contact information so that they could keep in touch. This school extended into the city. Minoliti's exhibition and residency were not about displaying or producing objects but were about forming subjects, or, at the very least, creating opportunities for visitors to reflect on how they might use art to shape their social relations and themselves.