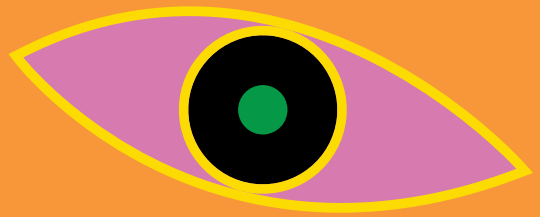


# FANTASÍAS MODULARES

**Ad Minoliti**

English



MASS MoCA







**Populated by gregarious mice and helpful birds, fairy tales have always been the site of lively relationships and communities between multiple species.**

Ad Minoliti's *Fantasías Modulares*, in its emphasis on the co-existence of many species, is no different. Yet unlike many of her childhood literary influences, she does not impose hierarchies between her hybrid beings — grinning triangles, lounging cows, and winking circles all populate the landscapes of Minoliti's imagined worlds, with equal bearing and status. With her large painting *Landscape* (2020), installed at the far end of the gallery, the artist envisions a verdant forest: the quintessential fairy-tale scenery. In many fairy tales, nature and wilderness have been unwelcoming, scary sites, especially for female characters. Think of the perils that Little Red Riding Hood or Snow White face when entering the forest. Aware of how nature has often been portrayed as threatening, or a site of violence, Minoliti's forest of *Fantasías Modulares* is a more welcoming and inclusive feminist terra.

The six-paneled *Landscape* teems with a myriad of actors — blushing trees, drowsy hills, and flirtatious ferns — the mutant flora and fauna of the artist's universe. Giving a face to almost every member of the scene reduces the gap between humans and typically “faceless,” non-human entities. By giving a face to otherwise inanimate objects, Minoliti encourages an empathetic recognition.



**Ad Minoliti, *Fantasías Modulares* #1, 2020**

Digital image for inkjet print on canvas, 78 x 39 inches.  
Courtesy Peres Projects, Berlin.

That said, the artist does not necessarily assign primacy to “enfaced” non-human entities; faceless solid squares, rectangles described purely by lines, and gridded circles seem to co-mingle and congregate to create a distinct geometric species within Minoliti's fantastical world. *Landscape* serves as the convivial theater for *Fantasías Modulares*, its lushness spanning the width of the back wall and curving around to extend into the gallery space.

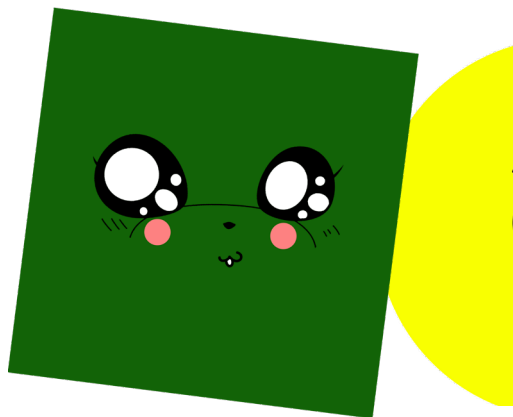


Minoliti is interested in how fairy tales shape identity and social roles during childhood. Her work confronts and often challenges both the familiar imagery and story lines of these narratives. For example, her characters are frequently neither entirely male nor entirely female. Even more, her characters and figures blur boundaries between human, animal, and machine. In envisioning a place that is not dominated by human figures, her work unsettles anthropocentric views of the world and allows hierarchies between humans and non-humans to dissolve and re-form. This activation of other beings, entities, and objects generates a multitude of possibilities, which set the stage for a queer alternative, fairy tale, and perhaps art history.<sup>1</sup>

Trained as a painter, Minoliti draws on the rich legacy of geometric abstraction in her native country of Argentina, where geometry was used both as a language of resistance to authoritarianism and as a tool for picturing utopias.<sup>2</sup> By combining abstraction with playful figuration, Minoliti breaks down traditional modes of representation. She is interested in disrupting pictorial conventions, especially fixed, conservative views of gender, identity, and sexuality. Rejecting human figuration, she creates unique realities by utilizing diverse, colorful, and impish form that are part human, plant, and at times machine.

Minoliti imbues geometric abstraction with tenderness, a combination of technique and palette that creates her lighthearted aesthetic. Working within a male-dominated tradition, Minoliti employs a deliberately “feminine” aesthetic – sweet, soft, and cute. Riffing on the popular and illustrative cartoonish style, the artist’s compound creatures and landscapes challenge the distinction

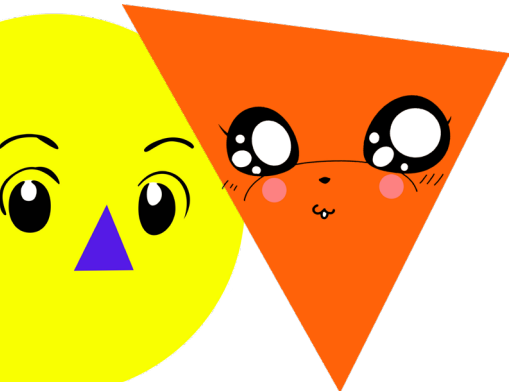
between “high” and “low” art. Her playful and lively interpretation of the Modernist vocabulary does not, however, undercut the seriousness of her subject. *Fantasías Modulares #1* (2020), for example, depicts a small black cat flanking a witchy humanoid figure in a towering green hat. Minoliti reimagines the familiar pair commonly found in traditional Western fairy tales using colorful geometries and abstract language. Appropriating two stereotypical roles often inhabited by female characters – wicked witch or



distressed damsel – Minoliti then redirects our attention to the witch’s hat, whose three eyes stare out inquisitively. Her googly-eyed hat takes over, proposing an entirely new story line, upending expectations by adding a complex twist to a familiar tale.

Minoliti’s desire to work, re-work, and complicate the divisions and definitions of art stems from frustrations with her own educational experience, lamenting its emphasis on white Western male artists. In response, she has actively

reimagined her schooling, shaping an approach that would be more open and accessible to all.<sup>3</sup> Minoliti's reformulation of the history of art has been influenced by the seminal scholarship of feminist, queer, and disability theorists including Donna Haraway, Jack Halberstam, Alison Kafer, and Mel Y. Chen. At its core, their research flips, broadens, and queers how we perceive the world and one another, providing Minoliti with a new and more supple framework in which to imagine her own world-making.

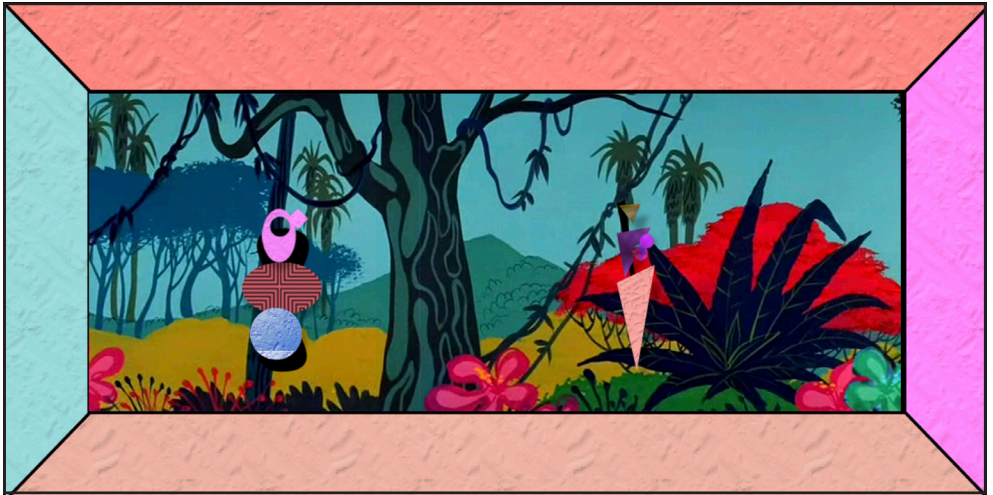


Minoliti also pays direct homage to the feminist and queer activists who came before her through her use of color. In a powerful chromatic pairing, vivid violet and brilliant green frame *Fantasías Modulares*' entrance. For Minoliti, color is ideological—purple nods to feminism while green triangles signify the campaign for reproductive rights in Latin America.<sup>4</sup> Minoliti's reconfiguration of the institutional white-cube gallery extends beyond its recoloring to include more fundamental architectural shapeshifting. Breaking the traditional rectangular

doorway, a green hexagonal entryway ushers viewers into the main gallery. Turning the vertical line into a diagonal one, Minoliti upends the usual progression of structure, sight, and display.

*Fantasías Modulares* brings a Modernist past into a distinctly queer future. The exhibition's title, for example, is motivated by Minoliti's interest in modernist design and its embrace of modular elements that can be moved, separated, and reconfigured to produce new, mutable objects. She uses this methodology in her character construction — like the net-based project *PLAY SIGNIFICANT OTHERNESS* (2015) whose romping figures shake, share, and switch the shapes that assemble their geometric bodies — but also in her configuration of the gallery's physical structure. Three curtains — blue, red, and yellow — are inhabited by dancing hybrid figures and flora. Their style departs from the creatures and works which surround them: Deep colors, retro flowers, and op art call back to a vintage aesthetic of the 1960s and '70s.

Minoliti has arranged the curtains to emulate an experiential stage, playing with conceptions of space and time. Although visitors are guided by the fabric partitions while encountering various creatures and stories along the way, the suggested path is far from mandatory; rather, visitors are encouraged to create and read Minoliti's tale in any order, and at their own pace. This modular organization suggests a world in which time and narrative are not linear.<sup>5</sup> It is here that *Fantasías Modulares* materializes the fluidity and plurality implied by its title, as the exhibition offers a proliferation of paths, creatures, and futures. Through objects, painting, and design, *Fantasías Modulares* tells open-ended, mutable fairy tales whose narratives are not driven by a single



Ad Minoliti, coded by Mariana Lombard, *PLAY SIGNIFICANT OTHERNESS*, 2015

Net-based project. Courtesy Peres Projects, Berlin.

protagonist, but celebrate the kinships of a diverse community regardless of animacy, sexuality, or gender.

Building and occupying a domain of queer utopianism can be, as theorist José Esteban Muñoz so poignantly observed, “an insistence on potentiality or concrete possibility for another world.”<sup>6</sup> Minoliti’s

optimistic imagining of alternate tales and inclusive worlds hopes to change everyday life for the better, while keeping at least three eyes on an attainable future.

–Isabel Casso, M.A. 2020

Williams College Graduate Program in the History of Art

<sup>1</sup> The term “queer” has a long history with multiple definitions that are still shifting and changing today – this is perhaps because queerness is indefinable. It could mean odd or strange. At the same time, it is a reclaimed slur used to describe people whose gender and/or sexuality does not conform to conventional standards.

<sup>2</sup> Minoliti’s relationship with geometry and abstraction began with looking at the Madí and Asociación Arte Concreto-Invención who were active in Argentina beginning in the mid-1940s. The majority of the work created by these two concrete abstract collectives was completed during the authoritarian reign of Juan Domingo Perón.

<sup>3</sup> For example, in *The Feminist School of Painting* (2018), presented at KADIST in San Francisco, Minoliti conducted a series of weekly workshops with local scholars and writers who recast the canon of art history and the art school structure through discussion and

collective art making. This collaborative, workshop-based effort allowed Minoliti and others to rewrite their traditional and male-centric arts education.

<sup>4</sup> At pro-choice rallies throughout Latin America, supporters are seen wearing green triangular bandanas around their necks. Purple has long been associated with feminist causes, dating back to the suffragette movement in the United Kingdom at the beginning of the 20th century.

<sup>5</sup> Here I am thinking of and with Jack Halberstam’s seminal book, *In a Queer Time & Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*. Halberstam plumbs “queer time” and its disruption of conventional “life experiences – namely, birth, marriage, reproduction, and death.”

<sup>6</sup> José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 1.

**Ad Minoliti** (b. 1980) earned her BFA from the National School of Fine Arts R. Pueyrredón in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Her work has been exhibited at institutions such as the Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden, Museo de Arte Moderno de Buenos Aires, Guangdong Times Museum, and the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago. She has also participated in the Aichi Triennale, Japan (2016), FRONT Triennial, Cleveland, Ohio (2018), and the 58th International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia (2019). She has been the recipient of multiple awards and grants, such as the Ministry of Culture of Argentina, the Metropolitan Fund for the Arts of Buenos Aires, and Mexico's FONCA Conaculta, among others. Minoliti splits her time between Buenos Aires and Berlin, Germany.



## **Ad Minoliti**

### *Fantasías Modulares*

January 25, 2020 – January 2021

Curated by Isabel Casso

*Fantasías Modulares* is made possible by the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute in support of MASS MoCA and the Williams College Graduate Program in the History of Art. Additional support is provided by Peres Projects, Berlin.

Interior flap:

**Ad Minoliti, *Landscape*, 2020 (detail)**

Inkjet print and acrylic paint on canvas, 5.8 by 19.5 feet

Courtesy Peres Projects, Berlin.

**MASS MoCA**

1040 MASS MoCA Way  
North Adams, MA 01247  
413.MoCA.111  
[massmoca.org](http://massmoca.org)