

Ad Minoliti
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By Thomas Butler



Ad Minoliti, *Queer Deco*, 2018. Painting, digital print on canvas.
150 x 150 cm.

If dollhouses were originally conceived to instruct young girls in how to have good taste and domestic order, what does Ad Minoliti's first show at Berlin's Peres Projects tell us about the state of play in art and life? As a response, Minoliti points to the dual nature of gender binaries as an important subject of debate. An eternal return to the site of trauma – the home or the feminized domestic space – is a good place to start and it's for this reason Minoliti's paintings are neither polite nor ordered. Their abrasive colorings forgo the sensuous harmonies of the kind found in Matisse or in the measured vitality of Kandinsky. Yet both painters are evoked: the former, in sets of three dancing legs, wall-painted in green, blue and purple, replete with zany orange eyes (*Legs*, 2018); and the latter in the cyborg figures painted in floating color shapes that are a recurring motif in most, if not all, of the paintings. The avant-garde zombie is not for turning, or dying, for that matter. And perhaps this is what these paintings are about: their retro-future appearance is fitting at a time when technological progress stands in stark contrast to the resurgence of reactionary values. They are nostalgic for the utopia that the avant-garde dreamed of most: one that did away with identities, whether imposed by family, society or the state.

In one painting, *Queer Deco* (2018), the artist queers the children's playroom – often a site of strict visual coding and control. The painting consists primarily of a photographic image of a 1960s or '70s playroom. In the background lie floral curtains and shelves stacked neatly with soft toys and books. In the foreground a table is littered with soft toy animals. Painted onto this image, a cyborg appears to have fallen, with legs splayed, onto these animals. The violence of the fall is offset by the absurd expressions on the toy animals, with eyes that roll up in humorous irony or dumb shock. But when the painting is given a second look, it is unclear as to whether this strange abstract figure has fallen or is sitting on the animal's face in a position of sexual gratification. *Queer Deco* nestles in the green mural *Teddy Bear Green* (2018), the latter mirroring the former's knowing humor and acting as an additional frame. In the mural, the large bare-nosed smiley hovering over the painting performs its affective labor with cute detachment. As a framing device this mural, with rounded corners, recalls the digital architecture of iPhone messages. "Dollhouse" shows that design and control are easy bedfellows, and the ways in which control is exacted can be seen in all our designed environments, whether domestic, urban or digital.