

Artist Ad Minoliti's paintings are warm, cuddly and full of joy. With that same warmth, Ad invites you into their non-binary world.

### Invitation to the Non-binary world

Park Sehoi – August 2023



**It's incredible how some paintings are placed on pedestals like mushrooms sprouting from the gallery floor, while others appear to be connected to paintings on the wall.**

That's right. From above, the mushrooms seem to grow as if they are separate entities, yet they are actually interconnected underground like a network. That's what I was going for. The mentioned wall drawings were intentionally designed to appear to grow from the floor, while the pedestals were designed to resemble tree stumps.

**Until I heard the explanation, I assumed you were borrowing the pedestal concept for sculptures.**

You are right that I attempted to create a pedestal—like feeling. I wanted to install the works not just on the flat wall but also slightly away from it.

**Your show reminds me of Hilma af Klint who is often regarded as the unsung pioneer of abstract expressionist painting.**

I saw Hilma af Klint's exhibition in the UK for the first time. To be honest, I was a little upset. Only if I had seen her paintings when I was younger and it would have been great. (At the artist's request, her abstract paintings were sealed for 20 years following her death in 1944. Even after the seal was lifted, it took more than 40 years

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for her work to be thoroughly analyzed). It was disappointing that her work had been 'rediscovered' after such a long time.

**The reason that Klint was forgotten in art history for so long is somewhat similar to how modernism erased female artists, as briefly discussed earlier.**

I believe that such a system still exists in the contemporary art scene. (Like anywhere else) Discrimination of many forms exists in the art world. Feminism and feminist art are currently gaining attention and I support both. However, the majority of feminist works of art tend to be gloomy and melancholy when viewed from an emotional perspective. While being part of feminist art, I also wanted to showcase artworks that are colorful and happy.



**I sometimes feel labeling 'Feminist Art' and grouping everything together as if it were all sad and depressing art isolates works of a particular sort.**

I completely agree with you. However, challenging such acts of labelling is part of queer theory.

**It just occurred to me, why mushrooms?**

By any chance you know *The Last of Us*?

**I certainly do. It is the zombie TV series from HBO which is immensely popular in the United States. Although it has not yet been officially released in Korea, I have heard of it.**

In the series, mushroom plays a vital role. They are depicted as an organism that parasitizes hosts which then turns them into zombies. They even play a negative role in connecting the zombies. Indeed, as a result of this show, people began to fear mushrooms. However, I wanted to take a critical look at how the interconnected nature of mushrooms is portrayed negatively. Isn't the idea of us being connected a positive thing? Moreover, in Eastern cultures, since the 1970s many mushrooms have been known to be foods rich with medicinal properties and efficacy. While mushrooms in Western society are associated with the image of narcotic drugs.

**That's interesting! Ad Minoliti's work was inspired by the popular series *The Last of Us*!**

In science fiction films or fictional works, apocalyptic worlds are frequently depicted in a negative light, with violence and despair. However, I believe it is possible to transform the image of the future with a more optimistic and utopian vision.

**If that's the atmosphere you intended for this show, then it was a success. It felt joyful and warm.**

I sometimes think traditional galleries or typical exhibition venues, such as these so-called white cubes are

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places of authority and prejudice. I intended to change such spaces by using various colors and shapes. I am delighted you felt warm.

**I had the thought that ‘tenderness’ might be the most crucial thing for you. Some hairy animals appeared in your last exhibition and you said that the brush strokes found here and there are to make them appear as fur from paintings in this exhibition. Pursuing that warmth seems to be your life philosophy.**

In Spanish, there’s a word called *peluche* which means stuffed animals such as teddy bears or bunny dolls. It also emphasizes their soft and plush texture. In my work, I attempt to emphasize this *peluche*

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Some may find them childish or kitschy, but I believe they serve as a tool as well as an idea for in conveying love, affection and warmth.



**It also appeared to be an attempt to blur the binary of figurative and abstract art. At first glance, it seems to be figurative art, but upon closer look, it appears abstract. Suddenly very detailed figurative objects appear on the abstract surface.**

I think such black-and-white thinking can indeed be detrimental. It is more than simply a concept that impacts artists and those in the art industry. It can also have a negative impact on the audience consuming and appreciating art to have a binary manner of viewing artworks.

**In the exhibition statement, the connection between Donna Haraway’s *A Cyborg Manifesto* and your artwork was mentioned which I found a little too difficult to understand (grin).**

In terms of expression, I refer to my painting technique as ‘cyborg painting’. I print my drawings and then brush over them with paints. This process alone does exist between humans and machines which is why I thought of it as a cyborg painting. You could understand it at that level of relationship. Now, in the respect of the work’s subject matter, one of the subject matters Donna Haraway had discussed in her Manifesto is the emphasis on non-binary. She explains that the notion of non-binary where forms cannot be categorized as animals, humans, or machines and neither as creatures nor inanimate existence. My works are neither abstract nor figurative. Geometric shapes found in my work such as figurative ‘eyes’ resonate with the thematic consciousness.

**The concept of mushrooms in this exhibition continues on to the next exhibition, doesn’t it?**

I am having a solo exhibition at the Erlangen Art Museum in Germany in October. I am planning to delve deeper into the mushroom notion and offer it in the form of paintings and drawings. This current exhibition could be interpreted as a preview of the thematic consciousness of the upcoming German exhibition.