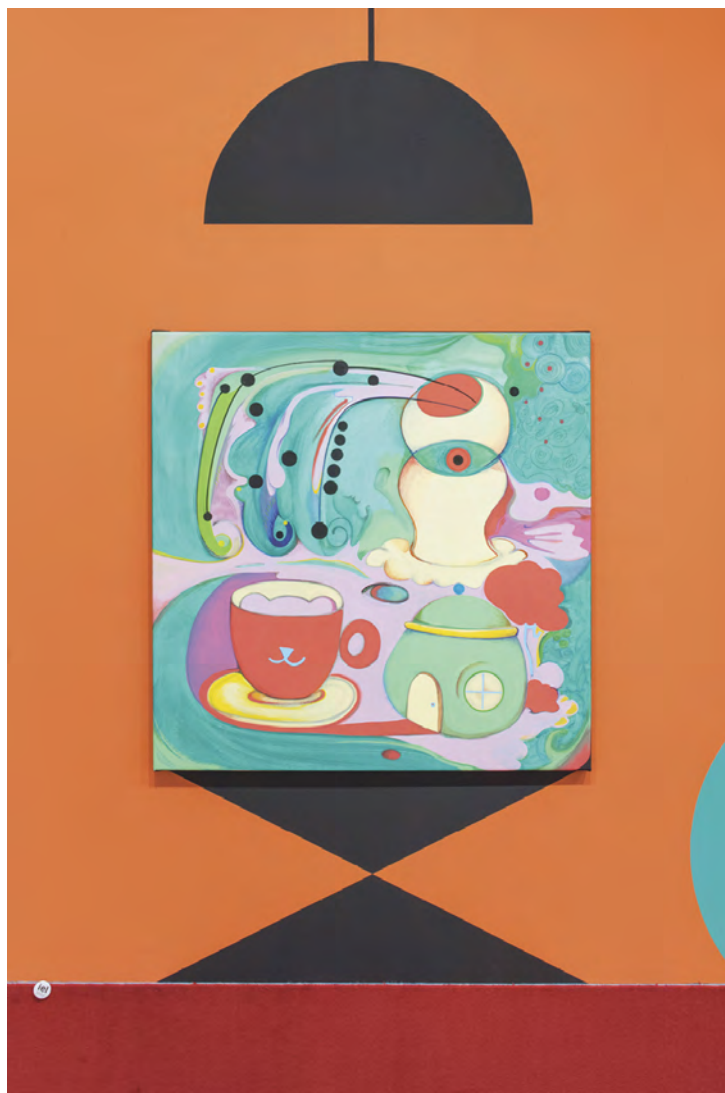


ARTFORUM



Ad Minoliti

Paris: GALERIE CRÈVECOEUR

Growing up, Ad Minoliti dreamed of becoming an architect; today, the artist's stencil-sharp, high-key color abstractions and plush installations consider how childhood is collectively built. As pioneering pediatrician and psychoanalyst D. W. Winnicott theorized almost a century ago, play is how children construct and shift boundaries between illusion and reality. As they slip in and out of fantasy through play, a differentiation between two and three dimensions dissolves, making these early stages of development a rich terrain to explore in painting and installation. Minoliti used both of the gallery's spaces, making the smaller one even cozier with two yellow beanbags and a section of thick red carpet. There, inside a round cutout in the gallery's wall, Minoliti tucked a machine print and acrylic painting, *Butterfly with yellow eye* (all works cited, 2022). In this canvas, simple abstract shapes are reborn, as if emerging from a cocoon, with the artist's rhythmic arrangement of schematic eyes.

The exhibition title, "warm hole & hot tea," was borrowed from an Instagram account loaded with children's-

PERES PROJECTS

book illustrations of burrows. An alternative reading of the phrase as shorthand for sexual anatomy was coyly dangled but never addressed, leaving a sense of latent terror, with nightmarish echoes of Ottessa Moshfegh's *Eileen* (2015), and reminding us, perhaps, of how frighteningly vulnerable that desired space of childhood can be. But Minoliti directed us to an illusory ideal: scenes of smiling animal families taking refuge together in their subterranean homes. There's often a table inside these tiny imagined spaces, a geometric form around which the unified group gathers. And here Minoliti turns their painterly attention for the first time to this particular piece of furniture in their newest series, "Mesas," 2022-. Their shared title a reference to *mesas revueltas* (turned tables), a *trompe l'oeil* subgenre in Spanish art history, Minoliti's compositions picture, as if from above, containers used for serving food and drink—objects that, around the world and across the centuries, have found their way to the communal table. In *Mesa 3*—a work hanging just above an actual table set with ceramic mugs adorned with grinning Play-Doh clown faces—a teapot takes the shape of a house and a teacup wears the nose of a plush toy. A fantastic form in butter yellow and chartreuse looms at the top of the composition, like a cross between a nuclear cloud and one of Tobia and Afra Scarpa's iconic 1960s Jucker lamps. But maybe it's just a steaming kettle of green tea. As if springing from these painted tabletops, a small collection of children's books had been placed on the real table for viewers' perusal. The selection included beginner books, such as *The World of Mr. Mole*, that picture animal burrows, or whose covers and pages are literally tunneled through in circular cutouts or uncovered layer by layer via the lifting of flaps.

In the gallery's larger space, Minoliti realized a group of wall paintings that shelter the artist's works on canvas. For example, *BEB*, which evokes a teddy bear, and *Mesa 1*, which pictures an open book and a winking teapot, hung atop a jewel-toned mural of a brazier-warmed underground den. Nearby, a wall painting in black outline, like an oversize coloring book page, suggested a hotter season. Minoliti's canvas *Gumby* hung on top of it, positioned so that it lounged on a representation of a plush beanbag while being cooled by a rotating fan. An invitation into the illusion, Minoliti's wall drawings are human scale. And if we follow Winnicott, shared illusions are what bring people together.

— Lillian Davies