



Exhibition Guide

Giant Print 20pt

**Ad Minoliti**

**Biosfera Peluche / Biosphere Plush**

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the ticketing desk

## How to use this guide

This guide repeats the exhibition guide for Ad Minoliti's exhibition 'Biosfera Peluche / Biosphere Plush', reproduced in 20pt giant print. It gives information about the installation and the artworks included. It does not include a pre-defined route around the installation space.

In the gallery space please be aware of different areas of flooring, including some carpeted areas. There are seating areas and tables in the installation that you are welcome to use. There will also be activities happening in the space at different times. Please do not touch the paintings or 'Furry' sculptures.

Please speak to a gallery assistant if you require further information.

# Biosfera Peluche / Biosphere Plush

## Introduction

‘Ad Minoliti merges ideas from modern art, ethics, science and subcultures in a reflection on modern worldmaking’.

Ad Minoliti believes that many worlds exist within each other. ‘Biosfera Peluche’ is one. In this vibrant installation, colour, line, form – and plushness – are the building blocks for everything. The artist has reconstructed the gallery space as a vivid ‘Earthship’ environment that promotes inclusive values and ideas for our society.

‘Biosfera Peluche’ is modelled against late twentieth century experiments that explored if humans could sustain life in environments such as space stations. These projects aimed to generate data and information that could be used to occupy and profit

from other planets. Minoliti's biosphere overturns the colonial and capitalist ideas behind these social and scientific ventures. Instead of operating on exclusion and profit, Minoliti's version values all identities, experiences, and even abstract forms. In 'Biosfera Peluche', machines and humans co-create artworks, and colour and shape are applied to reform architecture or deconstruct gender roles.

Three trans-species furry creatures inhabit the installation. Through these hybrid 'Furries', Minoliti disrupts the binary divisions we often make — between male and female, terrestrial and alien, biology and technology, art and everyday life. The biosphere also hosts the 'Feminist School of Painting'. This anti-school of art welcomes all ages, bodies, and experiences. The artist invites you to join in with the programme of free classes, to spend time in the reflection areas, or browse the library of queer and feminist zines.

Minoliti's 'Earthship' roams between museum and gallery venues, gathering new ideas from the people who contribute. Developing a 'peluche' theory of deconstructing and rebuilding the world through cooperation instead of competition, Minoliti says 'I hope people enjoy 'Biosfera Peluche' as a place for reading, learning, resting, or getting together.'

Quote by Ad Minoliti: 'Biosfera Peluche' is a poetic alternative to rethink and spread caring and tenderness as political issues.

Ad Minoliti born 1980, Argentina

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## ‘Biosphere’

Quote by Ad Minoliti: ‘I don’t believe in competitive evolution. Capitalism took Darwin’s ‘survival of the fittest’ and used it to naturalize domination ... I want to create a system where life works on exchange and cooperation.’

‘Biosfera Peluche’ is Minoliti’s speculative criticism of Biosphere 2, ‘the world’s largest Earth science experiment’. This monumental biome housed eight white, cisgender people in a ‘closed mission’ in the Sonoran Desert, US (1991–3). Funded by the billionaire oil tycoon Ed Bass, it studied whether humans could sustain life in a sealed environment. It aimed to generate data and knowledge that could be used to colonise space and profit from other planets. The project considered Earth as ‘Biosphere 1’.

For Minoliti, Biosphere 2 reveals the space race as 'an extractivist and colonising endeavour that enhances the interests of the already powerful'.

'Biosfera Peluche' is intended as an antidote to this closed project and its destructive intentions. At this time of climate change and environmental crisis, Minoliti's imagined biosphere promotes inclusion, community and shared learning, and welcomes everyone to take part.

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## ‘Abstraction and Invention’

Quote by Ad Minoliti: ‘Painting is not limited to a technique. It is a visual language that can be manifested with diverse materials.’

Minoliti takes abstract landscape painting into outer-space and other worlds. Colours, lines and shapes transform the gallery architecture and the fabric of social spaces. Trained as a painter, Minoliti is influenced by the modern art history of Latin America. Groups like Arte Madí and Asociación Arte Concreto-Invención (both founded 1944–6, Argentina) broke away from traditional rules. Their work embraced progressive social values and used abstraction to distance their work from the realist imagery used in political propaganda. Their ‘inventions’ (artworks) consisted of simple lines, colours and planes (blocks and shapes). They



embraced playfulness, experimenting with irregularly shaped canvases and three-dimensional objects.

Minoliti extends this legacy of geometric abstraction with the spirit of childhood play. On one wall of the installation, six painted circles and a rectangle could be understood as a composition of shapes, but also suggest the face of the moon seen through a window.

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## 'Furries and Fashion'

Quote by Ad Minoliti: 'I don't believe we have authority over a natural world, I don't believe in nature on a different level from human-animals.'

Three 'Furries' bring a mutant dimension to 'Biosfera Peluche'. These hybrid creatures could be earthbound, alien or other. They reference cartoons and contemporary subcultures made popular by the internet. They have non-binary names and clothing. 'Osx (Dog)' wears a sweatshirt with art by Lam Hoi Sin (born 1986, Hong Kong).

Minoliti asks us to think beyond the categorisations that are prevalent in Western attitudes. Bringing together ideas from queer and feminist theory, animalism and childhood, Minoliti's 'Furries' suggest that all identities, orientations and subcultures hold equal agency here.

## Space Playset

Quote by Ad Minoliti: 'I don't strive for exploration of outer space, and even less at the cost of the only habitat we have. My fiction is not fed by a will to reach a possible future, but as a way to criticise what is going on now.'

Minoliti is interested in the relationship between gender equality and science fiction, exploration and discovery. These paintings imagine space travel and far-distant settlements that are free from hierarchies and conquests. Part of Minoliti's 'Dollhouse' series 2016, they depict rooms for non-gendered fantasy and play.

'Space Playset' reflects on commercial toys that are designed to promote STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) to girls.

Minoliti has reduced these popular toys to blocks of

shape and colour, rejecting the idea that toys should be suitable for boys or girls. The artist wants to remove this discriminatory gender distinction that upholds heteronormative gender roles.

Minoliti calls these works 'cyborg paintings'. They begin as a spray-painted image that is digitally manipulated, printed, and then overpainted by hand. Created by both human and machine, the artist seeks to question the distinctions we make between biology and technology.

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## Fable Series: Butterflies and Flowers

Quote by Ad Minoliti: 'We are shaped by toys and cartoons, and we have to subvert them. I'm still looking to translate how they work in me. Toys can be ageless tools if we want, if we change the usability.'

This series of paintings is inspired by the fictional children's character 'Sarah Kay'. Created by Australian artist Vivien Kubbos in the 1970s, she represented values of friendship, kindness and the natural world. 'Butterflies and Flowers' respond to these cute and camp illustrations. At the time the images became popular, Argentina was oppressed under a violent regime that disappeared young mothers and abducted their children into pro-party families.

Activated in that context, the character of Sarah Kay also upheld conservative expectations about gender roles and socially acceptable behaviours.

Minoliti says 'I don't have the answers, I want to invite people to ask the questions, but we know we must abolish the systems of oppression and recognize how they operate on many levels'. By deconstructing the recognisable elements of Sarah Kay imagery and reforming them through shape and colour, Minoliti reappropriates the relationships between people, flowers and animals, without gender restrictions.

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# Feminist School of Painting Manifesto

(concise)

The school is an anti-school

The school welcomes all ages, bodies, experiences and skills

The school promotes cooperation, not competition

The school is colourful in both environment and atmosphere

Approach to 'doing':

Classes invite participants to move, use, and claim the space

Classes are open to all and free to attend

Classes are practical (making) and theoretical (thinking and exchanging)

Classes break the binary categories of knowledge

There are no great geniuses of painting: we are all experts and learners

Genres are for playing with. They should not limit us

We have a tool for open dialogue – questioning –  
always respectfully

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## FEMINIST SCHOOL OF PAINTING OPEN WORKSHOPS

Quote by Ad Minoliti: 'Imagine our universe if this were art history'

Minoliti's Feminist School of Painting hosts a series of workshops developed by creative and non-art practitioners. They apply ideas from feminist and queer theory to reimagine portraiture, still life and landscape, in relation to power, gender and sexuality.

The experimental sessions involve discussion and practical art activities. They promote creative curiosity, exchange and cooperation, and don't require any knowledge of art or skills in making to join in.

Workshops are free and open to visitors of all ages. Children are welcome to accompany their adult. Ask a member of staff for more information.

## Queer and feminist zine library

'Biosfera Peluche' includes a library of queer and feminist zines by a range of authors. You are welcome to browse the library and spend time in the reflection areas. Please return the zines after reading.

'Zine' (pronounced 'zeen'). Derived from 'fanzine', a zine is an independent noncommercial booklet, usually self-published and printed in small circulations. Zines grew out of the amateur press movement of the late 19th century, later developed by science fiction enthusiasts and then infused with a grunge aesthetic in the 1970s punk scene. The format has often been adopted by dissident or marginalized individuals and groups as a way to express opinions and ideas.

## Eight ideas behind 'Biosfera Peluche', by Ad Minoliti

Four inclusive values:

'Animalism': A concept that asserts humans (Homo sapiens) as animals and emphasises the equality of all sentient and living beings.

'Non-binary': Binary systems classify things into two distinct and opposite forms or parts. People whose identity does not sit comfortably with the opposites of 'man' or 'woman' (also referred to as genderqueer), may use non-binary to describe themselves.

'Peluche/Plush': Suggesting softness and comfort, often with an element of generosity. Plush can also be used to describe soft toys or furry fabrics

‘Queer theory’: A critical discourse developed in the 1990s from queer and women’s studies. It explores how inequalities shape social and economic life, and the oppressive dominance of established norms.

Four ideas to disrupt:

‘Eco-Fascism’: Eco-fascism conflates environmental activism with white-supremacist beliefs. Eco-fascists think that the planet’s climate crisis can be resolved by controlling populations and migration, using environmental concern to disguise misogyny, racism and inequalities in human rights.

‘Heteronormativity’: The expectation that heterosexuality is the norm or default sexual orientation. It categorises people into distinct and ‘complementary’ genders (men and

women) with 'natural' roles in life. It aligns biological sex with sexuality, gender identity and gender roles

'Hierarchy': A hierarchical system ranks members of an organisation or society by giving status and authority to the few.

'Othering': Othering is a process of marginalization and exclusion based on the perceived differences of others. It privileges those who are considered to belong and disadvantages 'outsiders'.

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## Exhibition credits and information

Originated by BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art and re-presented at Tate St Ives. Ad Minoliti:

‘Biosfera Peluche / Biosphere Plush’ has been produced by BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, curated by Irene Aristizábal. This presentation has been created in collaboration with Anne Barlow, Director, Tate St Ives, with Giles Jackson, Assistant Curator, Tate St Ives. Supported by the Ad Minoliti Exhibition Supporters Circle: Christen and Derek Wilson, Erica Roberts, Teresa Bulgerhoni, Tate Americas Foundation, Tate Members.

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