

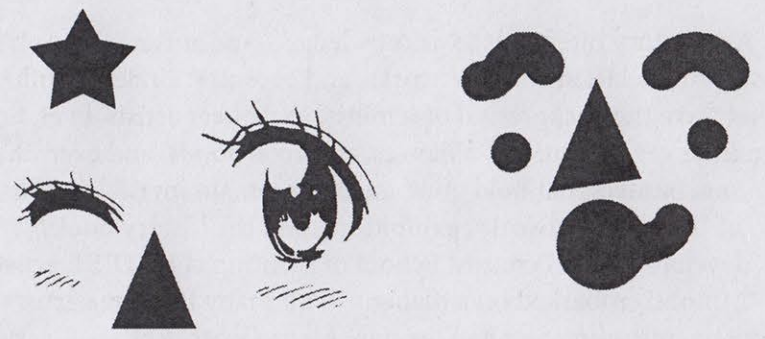
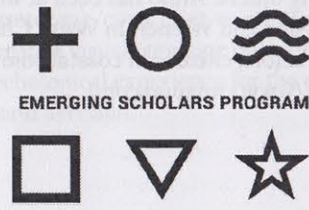
**fschool.kadist.org**

**qcc2.org**

**kadist.org**

This event is an incarnation of the Emerging Scholars Program (ESP), which brings together recent graduates in the disciplines of fine arts, humanities, social sciences, and environmental design whose work explores gender identity and issues relevant to queer and trans people of color. In collaboration with Bay Area nonprofit, community-based arts, and social service organizations, the program hosts conversations that bring local perspective and develop a network of queer scholars and like-minded partners.

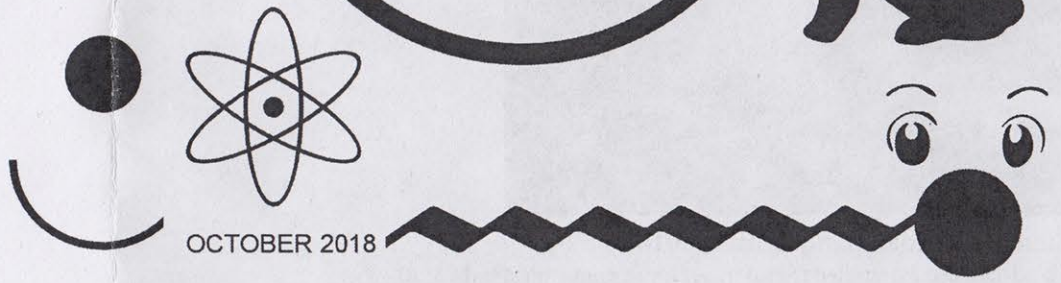
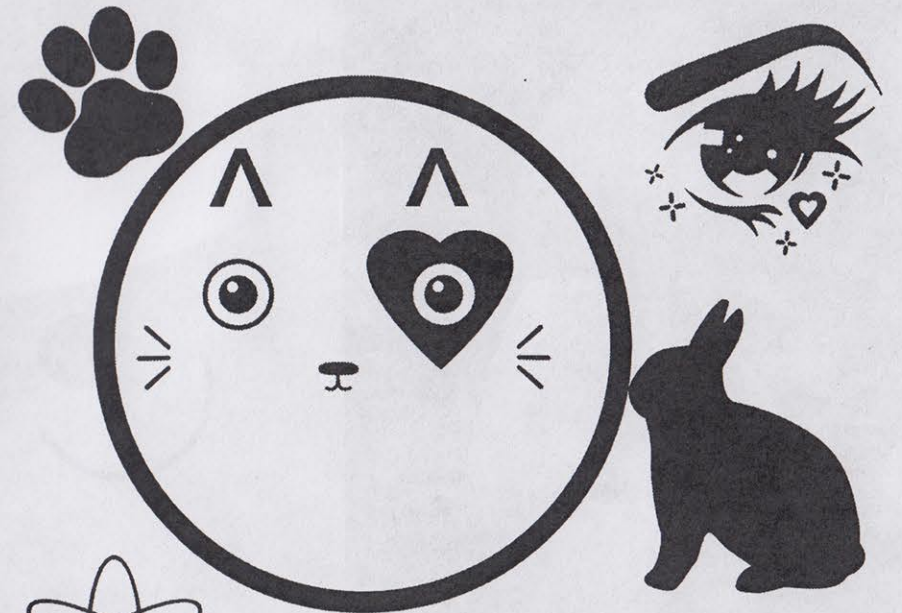
KADIST



# Eccentric Conversations

with the Emerging Scholars Program

Co-presented by KADIST and the San Francisco Queer Cultural Center.



OCTOBER 2018



Art History often fails to acknowledge—and at times actively erases—the relationships, networks, and eccentric circles of influence that form the background of feminist and queer artists' lives. Social exchanges, affiliations, alliances, amorous bonds, and even chance encounters that hold great meaning remain invisible in the face of “finished” artworks, exhibitions, and the history books. While developing *The Feminist School of Painting* at KADIST, artist Ad Minoliti embarked on a dialogue with many Bay Area artists and writers, including Sienna Freeman, Elena Gross, Anthea Black, and Kim Anno. *Eccentric Conversations* opens their exchange through a series of short, commissioned presentations, an open forum, and the presentation of a new zine designed by Minoliti to mark the occasion.



Sienna Freeman, *Baby Maker*, 2018,  
Hand-cut and assembled found images, pigments, plastic, 16 x 20"

# KIM ANNO

## Ad Minoliti's Feminist School of Painting

Ad Minoliti's Feminist School of Painting The title of Ad Minoliti's painting and social practice project at KADIST brought me back at once to my own Feminist Art school education in the 1970's at the Woman's Building in Los Angeles, where I studied contemporary art in a program called the Feminist Studio Workshop (FSW). It was there that I embraced the contradictions between the euphoria of women artists creating a new world, and the utter disappointment of the second-wave feminist movement's blindness to race and class bias. As one of three artists of color who attended the school—and an internationally exhibiting artist and professor—I am to this day asked at FSW reunions if I was the secretary at the desk. Ad Minoliti's school, however, instantly levels the playing field of prejudice as one is transported to the primacy of childhood, when learning was a mode of joyful self-expression. Everything is a secondary color in *The Feminist School of Painting*.

Minoliti's fresh ideas are cathartic in that she places painting at the epicenter of a critical intersection of feminist consciousness, politics, and primary visual experience. There is a table central to the room surrounded by pyramids of color shape. Here, adults are invited to get comfortable in a school environment that suggests we re-learn how to study expectations of gender. To counterpose an intellectual framework with the effervescence of a monumental color experience is a purely feminist gesture. Ad Minoliti is an artist who quietly and precisely brings us together to create a new world at a time when it seems utterly imperative that we, once again, do this all over again. I am at play in this world.





# ELENA GROSS


October 12, 2018

## The Origin of the World: Life after the Break

Every historian dreams of having some new revelation dropped into their lap when they weren't even looking for it. This was the case for historian Claude Schopp, an Alexandre Dumas scholar, who, in discovering a mis-translation in some correspondences, uncovered a 150-year old mystery: the identity of the model depicted in Gustave Courbet's infamous 1866 painting "L'Origine du Monde," or "The Origin of the World." The perspective of the painting is a close-cropped view of a woman's naked torso—though, curiously only one breast—splayed legs, and outer vulva. She has no head, no face, and none of the other traditionally identifying features. But after more than a century of speculation, the model is believed to have been a Parisian ballet dancer named Constance Quéniaux. Her life before and after her experience posing for Courbet has now been chronicled by Schopp in a new biography "The Origin of the World: Life of the Model."

In a recent New York Times article, Schopp is quoted as saying: "My only contribution was to make this object a subject [...] Now she's something else besides flesh, I wanted to restore a person..." (1) While I agree that it is accurate and necessary to acknowledge a distinction between Quéniaux-the-Painting and Quéniaux-the-Person, I wonder if it is possible to ever truly reconcile the two. In imagining a posthumous Quéniaux being reunited with her lost "flesh," I am reminded that she was dismembered, in the first place.

A few years ago, there were claims that the missing head of the woman in "L'Origine" was found but this revelation was quickly refuted by Courbet scholars and experts at the Musee d'Orsay, where "L'Origine" lives. The possible existence of a head would suggest that the "L'Origine" we have known all of these years is but a fragment, and that there exists a missing piece that would make this picture whole.



In a way, Constance Quéniaux is also a missing piece—her existence provides a missing piece of information that serves to illuminate the context or "L'Origine." But she can never actually make the picture whole. With or without her existence, the painting itself was always a metonymic fragment—of the female body, of latent male desire, even of Courbet's body of work. (2)

It did not escape me that Schopp uses the word "restore" more than once in an article about a painting called "L'Origine du Monde." An origin, in and of itself, necessarily signifies a break; it marks a place or moment in time and space—before and after—where something was changed or lost, and a desire to recuperate that loss. But this desire is never satisfied—we can never return to before. In attempting to restore, or reclaim, or remember, we are reminded of the trauma of having lost. Constance Quéniaux is a reminder of the break.

(1) Nossiter, Adam. "Riddle of a Scandalous French Painting is Solved, Researcher Says." New York Times, October 1, 2018. Accessed October 8, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/01/arts/design/courbet-origin-of-the-world.html>.


(2) Nochlin, Linda. "Courbet's 'L'Origine du monde': The Origin without an Original." October, Vol. 37 (Summer, 1986): 76-86.

# SIENNA FREEMAN

In her 1986 book "The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths" American art historian Rosalind Krauss writes about a "Round Phallicism" evoked by Alberto Giacometti's sculpture Suspended Ball from 1931. The term is defined by a "collapse of distinction between what is properly masculine and what is properly feminine... (an) obliteration of difference... for logic what perversions are for eroticism: it is transgressive." (1)

Here, what is transgressive **declassifies**.





A transgressive approach to the symbolic and literal architectures of the gallery space, the traditional classroom, and the picture plane, Ad Minoliti's immersive exhibition *The Feminist School of Painting* arouses a version of Krauss' "Round Phallicism." Minoliti's multidirectional mural spans across table tops, walls, and the gallery floor, conflating and confusing forms of use, decoration, and structural function. Flat tempera paint shapes consume all surfaces continuously in kindergarten-esque hues. A gridded floor concurrently anchors and disorients my perceptual encounter: I am surrounded by a visual language of analogous icons that seem drawn from the margin between sameness and difference. On one wall, two parallel arches rest atop two parallel circles—are they winking cartoon animal eyes, upside down breasts, or parts of a Picasso face? Nearby a white circle has two smaller yellow circles nestled within it. I think about ovum, breakfast, spider eggs, the holy trinity, minimalist furniture design, and Giacometti.

Employing a visual language of monochromatic simple shapes in order to rethink ways in which we both read and communicate gender is an act of declassification by the artist—the symbols here are re-inscribed meaning by their viewers. With Minoliti borrowing from the lineage of South American mural painting, a love/hate relationship with such a history can further produce fertile ground for subversion. The figurative realism, color palate, and misogynist biographies associated with master muralists such as Diego Rivera are inescapable—but as Minoliti explained to me in recent conversation at the Kadist "you take the things you like."<sup>(2)</sup> You turn them inside out, flip them upside down, and transform them into something else.

Here, what is transgressive **subverts**.

As a collage artist, aspects of my process can be looked at much like a combination of stream of consciousness and constrained writing techniques, both methods which have roots in historic Surrealism. My work is concerned with the problems and possibilities offered

by historic Surrealism—how surrealist goals and tactics were driven by the desire to disrupt social norms and challenge oppressive systematic ideologies by tapping into the individual and collective subconscious. I embrace these techniques quite intentionally, despite their origination from a group of European men: homophobic and racially fetishistic, with little respect for their female counterparts, unless they served as some sort of muse. I suppose this contradiction is simultaneously revolting and compelling to me. A love/hate relationship can cause space for the birth of new terms, a locus for new language, offering alternate possibilities for expressing visions of our collective and individual futures.

Here, what is transgressive disrupts, but offers new potential for connectivity.

(1) Rosalind E. Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986, 63.

(2) In person conversation with Ad Minoliti at the Kadist SF, September 26, 2018.


# ANTHEA BLACK

**Three thoughts held together in relation form a triangle: texture, scale, and feeling or teacher, student, and learning object, or art, activism, and queer feminism**

...whatever the scale, one bump on the surface, or even three, won't constitute texture. A repeated pattern like polka dots might, but it depends on how big they are or how close you are: from across the room you might see them as a flat sheet of gray; at a few feet, the dots make a visible texture; through a magnifying glass you'll see an underlying texture of paper or fabric unrelated to the two or three rounded shapes that make a big design. Texture in short,








comprises an array of perceptual data that includes repetition, but whose degree of organization hovers just below the level of shape or structure.

-Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*

In my first conversation with Ad Minolti, she said discovering queer theory 'gave words to feelings, and made sense of intuitions' that guide her work. I've wanted to do a piece of art writing that uses this very beautiful paragraph as a starting point for a long time, and Minolti's Feminist School of Painting allows me to pull it into the gallery. The exhibition is already full of quotation, of exchange, of meeting points: Minolti brings together a picture of the surface of the moon, (1) a ceramic piece that mimics corrugated cardboard, (2) a pinned-up bandana and an triangular hole, both green, (3) a collection of books people are encouraged to pick up and read, (4) and a constellation of people to work with, of which I am one. With this assembly loosely in mind, I turn into the gallery spaces she has painted top-to-bottom with hard-edge shapes that look like cats, faces, and birds. At first sight of these huge super-flat characters, I lose a firm grasp on my own scale.

Working with Sedgwick's description involves moving the body (and in many cases the eye, or the finger) nearer to or further from a thing. We see changes in texture with our bare eyes, but we can also perceive and create texture by using technologies to assist us. Some are designed for looking more closely, such as the magnifying glass Sedgwick mentions, but many technologies are designed for other purposes, such as shelter, space travel, or school. As these technologies allow us to see and do more — to learn — they create a certain relation between our bodies and the scale and texture of the world around us. We become Alice in Wonderlandish, shrinking and expanding along with our perceptions, and gradually organizing aesthetic and sensory data into the repetitive structures of our day-to-day lives.

Despite its varied forms, the texture of Modernism can often be felt as flat. In my own art education, it loomed large as a structural



organizing principle that magnified certain forms of thought, aesthetics, and bodies at a much higher power than others. With the Feminist School of Painting, Minoliti chooses a different filter; "feminism" is a language, a looking glass, or a pattern of thought that allows us to feel and do differently. To move along and beyond the surface. As the Sedgwick passage and Minoliti's flexible array of teachers, students, and learning objects in her exhibition-cum-school both suggest, one way to perceive and organize learning is as a deeply textured, folded field we move in and out of. In her school, we even look more closely at modernism and its others. In this way, queer-feminist pedagogy can hover productively just below (or just above) the level of shape or structure, to examine it, while making sure that we're always able to revise our perceptions and re-organize meaning.

If there is a shape that most exemplifies Minoliti's pedagogy, it is the triangle. The triangle is a modest attempt defy the straight line, by plotting a third point, and thus breaking the binary between A and B. In so doing, it becomes a remarkably strong shape, and a constellation of points that shift in relation to each other. As a feminist code, the green triangle moves promiscuously across language and visibility. It is both the folded bandana and public graffiti on a sidewalk in Buenos Aires that signify the Movement for legal abortion, and Minoliti's intervention on the facade of a modern art gallery. At Kadist, the triangle becomes a hole in the wall rimmed with lighter green face. From across the room, the triangle opens like a mouth, or perhaps a third eye, to suggest that the school is ready to open wide, reframe, and symbolically hold the space all at once.

1. picture of the surface of the moon provided by Megan Prelinger
2. corrugated hand is by Laura Rokas
3. green bandana is from the legal abortion movement in Argentina, the triangle repeats across several of Minoliti's works.
4. the objects of study are Devon Bella's idea

\*\*\*





## Elena Gross

is an independent writer and cultural critic living in Oakland, CA. She received an MA in Visual & Critical Studies from the California College of the Arts in 2016, and her BA in Art History and Women, Gender & Sexuality Studies from St. Mary's College of Maryland in 2012. She specializes in representations of identity through fine art, photography, and popular media. Elena is the host of the arts & visual culture podcast, what are you looking at, published by Art Practical. Her most recent research has been centered around the work of artist Lorna Simpson and conceptual and material abstractions of the body in photography.


<https://www.artpractical.com/archive/contributor/elena-gross/>

## Sienna Freeman

: “My work draws upon significant personal experiences that illuminate the extremities of human consciousness: altered or heightened states of physical, psychological, or emotional condition. In these cumulative moments, which are characterized by their intense, transgressive, revelatory, and often dream-like nature, I find terrain for contemplation and investigation. Seeming to exist simultaneously in dichotomous spaces, perhaps pulled inside out through opposing forces, these dialectical moments expose the complexity of territories between the intellect and the senses, places where the logical mind and subconscious interface with a deeper sense of being.

Through the fragmented, layered, and surgical process of collage, I seek to investigate surreal areas of radical juxtaposition. Symbolic cultural imagery related to the body, birth, death, marriage, sexuality, and “right of passage” rituals is often employed to discuss fears, desires, and anxieties concerning the transitory nature of life and the contemporary human condition. I am particularly interested in paradoxical symbolism associated with ceremonies that both celebrate and mourn beginnings, endings, and the idea of forever, as these traditions often hold a mirror to the fact that we exist concurrently in both fixed and in-between spaces. Exploring tensions between beauty and the grotesque, constraint vs. comfort, and dominance vs. submission, I intend to create a visual language of archetypal imagery that can trigger an introspective psychological experience for the viewer, transpired by coinciding feelings of intrigue and aversion.”

<http://www.siennafreeman.com/>



## Anthea Black

is a Canadian artist, writer, and cultural worker based in San Francisco and Toronto. Her studio work addresses feminist and queer history, collaboration, materiality, and labour and has been exhibited in Canada, the US, France, Germany, The Netherlands, and Norway, most recently with the publication of *The HIV Howler: Transmitting Art and Activism*, an artist newspaper in collaboration with Jessica Whitbread. Black is co-editor of *Handbook: Supporting Queer and Trans Students in Art and Design Education* with Shamina Chherawala and *Craft on Demand: The New Politics of the Handmade* with Nicole Burisch, and curator of *SUPERSTRING*, and the ongoing exhibition platform *NO PLACE: Queer Geographies on Screen*. She is an Assistant Professor in Printmedia and Graduate Fine Arts at California College of the Arts. <https://antheablack.com/>

*HANDBOOK* is a collaborative intervention in art and design pedagogy. It offers faculty a radical rethink on how to work with queer and transgender students on their path to becoming artists and designers – from the first day of school through to seminars, studio classes, and critiques. *HANDBOOK* draws directly from student experiences to help faculty of all orientations bring equitable teaching practices and queer curricula into art and design classes. Queer Publishing Project is a working group of over 100 students, alumni, staff and faculty at OCAD University and beyond who identify as queer and/or transgender.

## Moderator: Kim Anno

Director, Producer. Anno is a painter, photographer, book artist and filmmaker/video artist whose work has been exhibited by museums nationally and internationally. SFMOMA, Brooklyn Museum, Honolulu Museum, Berkeley Art Museum, Crocker Museum, Oakland Museum, Getty Research Institute, Library of Congress, Columbia University, University of Texas, Austin, Walker Museum, Koopman Collection, The Hague, and Newberry Library have collected her work among others. Anno has been at work on an epic social practice filmmaking project: *Men and Women In Water Cities*, which is a longer term work made with local actors, citizens in coastal communities who are grappling with sea level rise. <http://www.kimanno.com/>