

Atelier dell'Errore
PPP
pinkypussypunk

I encountered the work of Atelier dell'Errore (AdE) [Atelier of Mistakes] before I met the members of Atelier dell'Errore. The exhibition was *Hic sunt Dracones*, at GAM in Turin: when I came out, I was not the same person who had gone in. A seed – or perhaps it would be more appropriate to say a larva – had slipped into my flesh and taken up residence there. The creatures of Atelier dell'Errore, to paraphrase Goya, are monsters that generate thoughts. Since then they have never left me, and I have had the opportunity to work with and write about the collective's work on several occasions. This text gathers, in a generative and rhizomatic way, in keeping with the creatures of AdE, everything I have written so far, though I already know it is nothing more than a small portion of a larger design.

Prologue

In Reggio Emilia, on the third floor of the Collezione Maramotti, Atelier dell'Errore makes its home: a collective of eleven neurodivergent artists. It is impossible to say exactly when Atelier dell'Errore was born: it did not arise from a precise intention or from a premeditated plan. Atelier dell'Errore happened. It happened that Luca Santiago Mora, an artist and now the artistic director of Atelier, received a call twenty years ago from a friend asking him to replace her for a year in the expressive activities workshop of the Child Neuropsychiatry Department of the AUSL in Reggio Emilia. He never left that workshop. The hours spent with the young people became an experience among equals, where everyone learns and everyone makes mistakes, in the conviction that errors are only a convention.

For this reason, from the very beginning Santiago Mora decided to base the work on drawing, a technique he himself had never explored as an artist, so that everyone could start from the same line. Two further stakes marked out the perimeter within which to move: the subjects had to be inspired by the animal kingdom, and erasing was forbidden – no erasers, no correction fluid, no changing the sheet of paper. One always moves forward with what is there and with what one is. From these premises, and from the relentless practice of drawing, the processually metamorphic morphology of AdE's creatures was born.

Over more than twenty years of activity, Atelier dell'Errore has created a bestiary of hybrid beings: part insect, part underwater animal, rarely mammal. They are monstrous, unsettling, magnetic creatures, the result of a collective practice that has been engaging with large scale for years. In 2018, Atelier reached an important goal: the collective became a social cooperative art studio. The young people, by then adults, were hired as draftspeople. Their salaries depend on the sale of the works, "without European, regional, or municipal funding," while always keeping their distance from the worlds of art therapy and outsider art, and infiltrating ever more deeply the fabric of the official contemporary art world.

kaufmann repetto

From a workshop for neurodivergent children, Atelier dell'Errore has become a Renaissance bottega, where each member of the collective can give the best of themselves, experimenting with new techniques and materials. Although the works are the result of many hands, those hands collaborate harmoniously, giving rise to an imaginary that is always unified and coherent. Like a living organism, AdE evolves and takes on increasingly ambitious projects. It is through these challenges that the members of the collective have found their profession and their place in the world.

New York, February 2025

In February 2025, Atelier dell'Errore landed in New York City, in the spaces of Kaufmann Repetto, with *FREAK YOU!*, the collective's first exhibition on the other side of the Atlantic. Staying with the nautical metaphor, the exhibition opens with *AdEVelaAlpina 01*, a large sail originally presented at the ninth edition of Biennale Gherdeina, and with a domestic version in the main room, *AdEVelaAlpina 02*. The sails are the most recent result of a career-long experimentation with supports alternative to paper. With the help of a historic sailmaker, AdE transformed emergency thermal blankets – a material that in Italy immediately evokes the theme of migration – into a sail for the *Edipo Re*, the fishing boat that hosted Pasolini and Maria Callas and that, at the end of the Second World War, carried Istrian Italians fleeing the Iron Curtain to safety. That same glossy, almost mirror-like material has since been adopted as the surface for the drawings, later mounted on recovered remnants of silk. These works mark the return of color after a long age of gold, which had characterized AdE's works in recent years. The explosion of acrylic colors and flesh-pink tones goes hand in hand with the shift in subject matter in the new cycle of works: *Unknown Pleasures*.

Milan, May 2026

The exhibition *pinkypussypunk* brings together the works produced in this new phase in the lives of the members of the Atelier dell'Errore collective. The sexless insects of the age of gold have become pubescent creatures with new anatomical attributes, unmistakably sexual. The children from the workshops of twenty years ago have become young adults, and sex lies at the center of their imaginary, their thoughts, their impulses. The monstrous creatures once conceived as guardian animals against the bullying suffered at school become libidinous creatures, giving form to desire. The explosion of acrylic colors and flesh-pink tones goes hand in hand with the shift in subject matter in the new works from the *Unknown Pleasures* series, which makes that desire explicit and adopts the famously libertine deities of Greek mythology in order to speak of autoeroticism, arousal, loss of control: *Hyper Sexy Aphrodite* (2025) welcomes visitors and guards the space, imperious yet fragile. In the adjoining room, a special display designed by the collective recounts, like a classical frieze, the adventures of six characters from AdE's personal mythology. *Melusine Blow Up Doll*, *Countess BatHorny*, *Priapo Orchitico Capezzoluto*, *Urechis Ero-Thanatos*, *Hyper Sexy Aphrodite*, *Pegging Gimp Girl* – all from 2026 – are the materialization of a sexuality and a desire that loudly proclaims its own existence, even though it cannot be acted upon.

kaufmann repetto

On the opposite side of the gallery, a new series, *Black Pearls Penguins*, is less explicit but, if possible, even more disturbing, especially for those who suffer from tryphobia: a more or less intense form of repulsion that some people feel when faced with surfaces filled with small, irregular, closely clustered holes.

Tryphobia does not appear in diagnostic manuals, but in many cases it provokes reactions of disgust, discomfort, or even fear that are incomprehensible to those who do not experience it. You may discover that you are affected by it by looking closely at *All Yours* or *Venus birthing from an egg*. But even if you do not belong to that ten to fifteen percent of the population for whom these images produce shivers and a sense of unease, they will certainly not leave you indifferent – just as the titles that accompany them cannot help but elicit a smile and a sense of admiration: *Daphne Brood Mother*, *Jumping Pleasure*, *Tickle me till I shiver*, *I melt with desire*, *Put your finger in my ribs*, *I fuck you till you love me*, *Penguin Milking Gland*, *Amikiri spreading for birth*, *Surgery Gender Affirmation Operationing*. As one might intuit, each of these characters has a story to tell, of which its visual materialization is only the loose end of the thread. Some of these stories can be heard in the living voices of their creators thanks to the video *PINK! IS THE WARMEST COLOUR*, a special tour of the exhibition filmed in a single sequence shot and included in the show. In the final room, the path concludes with an almost mystical vision, thanks to a new experiment with materials that gives rise to *Glowing Vulvae*. Three vulvae drawn by the collective with acrylic colors and markers on a transparent material, Melinex, transform the last room into a chapel bathed in the colors of a psychedelic sunset.

On the basement floor, the play of mythological references continues: the acronym of Atelier dell'Errore is AdE, the god who presides over the underworld. The collective that bears his name has interpreted the lower level of the gallery as a chthonic world, renamed the *Chamber of Vulvae (Cueva Tito Bustillo)*, where everything is drawn in pencil on paper, a return to the collective's origins. The title of this room comes from another very famous "hole": the Cueva de Tito Bustillo, a cave decorated by human beings before 10,000 BCE and discovered in 1968 by a group of young speleologists in Asturias. In the original cave, alongside many drawings of horses, deer, and other animals, there appears a series of representations of female genitalia outlined in red, believed to have been intended as invocations of fertility. The *Vulvae Family Tree* is the collective's own invocation: a family tree in which thirty vulvae are represented as proud, hypertrophic creatures, a gallery of portraits whose underlying theme seems to be the genesis of life. This family tree also offers a possible key to reading the large work *Arakne's SexToy*, which appears as the point of connection between the works on the ground floor and those in this room. In scale and explicitly sexual content, the work engages with the colorful deities of the *Unknown Pleasures* series, but the pencil line that extends to the edges of the paper, creating an inextricable web, seems to distance it from those noisy creatures, as though this were the wise ancestor that generated them all. A great spider mother – the insects of the beginning return – from whom all the others have emerged, one by one, to conquer the world.

- Marta Papini

Atelier dell'Errore (AdE) [Atelier of Mistakes] is an artist collective dedicated to visual arts and performance, based in Reggio Emilia, Italy. Founded in 2002 by the artist Luca Santiago Mora, who today leads the group as its artistic director, AdE began as a visual arts workshop for neurodivergent children within the pediatric healthcare system in Reggio Emilia and Bergamo. In an artistic practice spanning drawing, painting, sculpture, photography, and performance, AdE is guided by two core rules: animals are the only subject matter, and during the creative phase nothing is ever erased, preserving the transformative potential of every so-called mistake. Today, AdE is composed of 12 neurodivergent artists. They approach their most ambitious projects much like a Renaissance workshop, with each artist specializing in a specific aspect of the work's execution. Luca Santiago Mora often compares AdE's creative process to the functioning of an "organism," where each part plays a vital, essential role. Here, works are not only collective creative endeavors but also part of a larger relational process.

Atelier dell'Errore is currently the subject of a solo show at kaufmann repetto Milan, and the collective is also present in *Tragicomica* at MAXXI, Roma, a contemporary art survey. AdE was recently the subject of *TEN*, a solo retrospective at GAMEC - Galleria d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Bergamo (2025-26). Other recent exhibitions include: *Ar/Ge Kunst*, Bolzano (2026); kaufmann repetto, New York (2025); *Panorama - Monferrato*, Castagnole (2024); *Kaunas Biennial*, Lithuania (2024); *Laboratorio degli Angeli*, Bologna (2024); *Palazzo Nuñez-Torlonia*, Rome (2024 - permanent); *Biennale Gherdëina 9*, Ortisei (2024); *GAM - Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea*, Turin (2022); *Generali Foundation*, Venice (2021); *Teatrino di Palazzo Grassi*, Venice (2021); and *MASSIMODECARLO*, Milan (2021).