

Catalogue
Aaliyah Fakier-Alatovic
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The processes that form this ecosystem installation refuse the division between high art and low craft. Scrapbooking, collage, the decoration of cakes—all gestures often relegated to domestic labor and latch—become structural methods for making worlds. This woman's work is reclaimed from the province of cliché and put to work, critically. The found objects within the installation appear as exploded reliques of an "old world," now transfigured into new life-forms, imbued with the misplaced wishes and dreams of girls everywhere. Every sticker, bead, or bauble becomes a fragment of affective labor, preserved and reanimated in this new ecology.

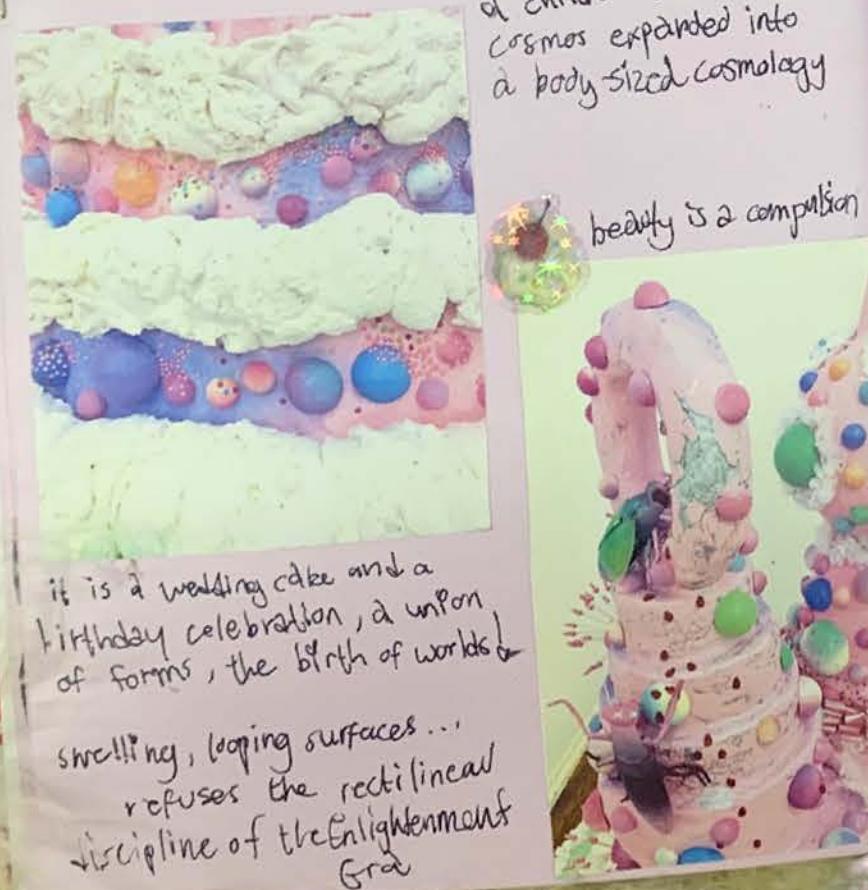
"I want to rescue the plastic girls that already exist, giving these objects space to live outside the male gaze and beyond their original, commodified purpose. Plastic becomes relic and companion, preserved and remade, a reminder that survival, care, and transformation are possible even within materials the world has long discarded. In Warren-Crow's words, "girly vocational aesthetics are a vector of exploitation, bringing our attention to the ways in which girliness is a kind of easily appropriated affective labor" (2011, p. 495). My installation, however, proposes a reversal: a space where all the appropriated affect, the wasted cuteness, the dismissed girl-labor, is reclaimed and stored, where it ceases to be exploited and instead nourishes the living system of the work.

the cutie pie crusaders!





"Decoration is often derided in Western art history, cast as frivolous or feminine. "The glitter-loving crowd, the untutored artisan doer, and the banal repetition of traditional pattern and motif point up the political dimension of decoration-shaming, neatly articulated by Le Corbusier: "There is a hierarchy in the arts, decorative art at the bottom and the human form at the top." Adolf Loos famously declared ornament a crime, equating decoration with degeneracy. (Casey 2021) But what if ornament is instead a practice of care? Each rhinestone and sticker insists on pleasure as a legitimate motive. It makes visible a mode of feminine production that is often trivialized but is in fact generative: craft, scrapbooking, decoration, play.











Magical girl aesthetics inform the temporal logic of the videos. The *magou shōjo* or magical girl genre is a subgenre of Japanese anime and manga that has for decades centered on young girls who gain magical powers, often through a transformation ritual, to protect or change the world. It is both escapist and aspirational: designed in many cases to give young girls ideals of agency, corporeal transformation, beauty, and responsibility. The genre is visually defined by vibrant color palettes, transformation sequences, glitter, ribbons, frills, and a tension between domestic femininity and cosmic stakes. Typical protagonists are school-aged girls who lead dual lives—ordinary and magical—and who express strength through emotion, friendship, and sacrifice. According to *Magic, Shōjo, and Metamorphosis*, the magical girl has “provided female ideals for young girls since the 1960s,” serving as an “antithesis to adulthood, in which women are expected to undertake domestic duties” (Saitō, 2014, p. 146). These ideas show up in my video works, which perform magical-girl logics of transformation across flesh, landscape, and commodity. In one sequence, a cracked earth landscape is flattened and layered with looping stock video of flowers blooming through fissures—this conflates geological desolation with floral rebirth, the ordinary with the magical.

An ancient windmill, windmill's wind leaf opens likely thwing, rotates against the wind, with the green grass, the wild







In alignment with cyberfeminist principles, I aim to emphasize the porous boundaries between bodies, machines, and information networks. As Sadie Plant (1997) writes, "Cyberfeminism destabilizes binary divisions imposed by Enlightenment rationality and opens space for alternative modes of being" (p. 45). In my work technology and biology interweave; interactivity is a mode of care, not mastery.

Donna Haraway's Cyborg Manifesto (1991) provides another framework for understanding my practice. She argues that cyborgs unsettle rigid boundaries: "The cyborg is a creature in a post-gender world; it has no truck with the tentacular patriarchy" (Haraway, 1991, p. 150). Like Haraway's cyborg, my installation collapses categories-human/animal, organic/digital, sacred/profan into a hybrid ecology. Glitch feminism similarly theorizes the potential of error, disruption, and collapse to generate freedom. Legacy Russell notes, "Glitches expose the limitations of inherited systems and make visible new possibilities for being" (Russell, 2020, p. 32). My videos' flattened planes, sculptures' entanglements, jump cuts and the pony washing basin's hybrid ritual enact this logic, making the limits of Enlightenment categories tangible and playful.













In *Puella Magi Madoka Magica* (2011), the genre is deeply reworked. *Puella Magi Madoka Magica* (2011) follows Madoka Kaname, an ordinary girl offered the chance to become a magical girl-bestowed with powers to fight witches born from the despair of young girls. Beneath its glittering surface, however, the series reveals that magical girls are secretly exploited: their empathy and emotional intensity are harvested as energy to sustain the universe.

The very qualities that make them powerful-care, love, hope-become the source of their undoing. Madoka's final act rewrites this system entirely. Her compassion grows so vast it exceeds the limits of the human body, (fig.5) and she sacrifices herself to liberate all magical girls from the cycle of despair, transforming into a cosmic force of care that exists beyond form or time. Watching *Madoka Magica* as an early teenager reshaped my understanding of femininity and transformation; it revealed that empathy could be both a wound and a weapon, that sweetness could remake worlds. That vision continues to guide the affective and ethical foundations of my work.

the witch
she Dorothy Motherfucker...
she takes over the body of
Embryo Eve



a witch born of
magical girls despair
a spinning, aimless
witch
her every i is fugating
'Walpurgisnacht'

'labyrinths'
from the
series
'Madoka
Magica'
rave spaces
generated
from the overwhelming
energetic byproducts of
a girl in pain



sheen caps from 'madoka magical girl'
Atsuyuki Shikubo, Yuka Ito Magimodo

So,
when I say the
work is cute,
I mean it's a
protocol for
coexistence
under
conditions of
ambiguity.

Cuteness has long been read as a trap. Sianne Ngai famously frames it as an "affective response to weakness" that invites domination and even harm; as Simon May glosses her, "violence is 'always implicit in our relation to the cute object'" (Ngai, via May 2019, 14-16). There are reasons as to how this reading persists: cuteness can be weaponized by commodity culture, and it can lubricate care-as-control. But my practice leans in elsewhere: toward cute as futuritive, metabolic, subversive and world-making. The feeling tone is not bait but engine-soft propulsion that lets unlike things touch, slide, and co-compose. Empirically, cuteness isn't only sedation; it retunes attention toward carefulness. In a three-experiment study, Nittono et al. found that viewing cute images "improves behavioral performance on tasks that require carefulness" and "narrows the breadth of attentional focus," consistent with a shift toward systematic, approach-motivated processing (Nittono et al. 2012, esp. Abstract: 6-8, 93-97). That's not manipulation so much as a somatic pedagogy: cute hones micro-care. In the installation, this is the logic of the basin and the videos alike-rose water, water beads, sparkly voids-all training the body toward slower, more attentive relations.

May's broader account helps here too. He argues that Cute's charge lies not only in innocence but in its menacing "subversion of boundaries," its "uncertainty," its tease of "becoming" over being (May 2019, 5-8, 14). My body of work does not aim truth; it aims to dissolve old containers so new truths can precipitate. I reject the instinct to read all "kawaii" through a cynical lens. Ngai's caution about cuteness as commodity remains invaluable for diagnosing capture, but I'm more persuaded by evidence that cute perception can cultivate careful, reparative attention (Nittono et al. 2012)..









