

**Adriano Amaral**  
**Charlotte vander Borght**  
**Robert Brambora**  
**Ambra Castagnetti**  
**Xavier Robles de Medina**  
**Sophie Friedman-Pappas**  
**Gaby Sahhar**  
**Will Thompson**  
**Waldemar Zimbelmann**

## Party in the Blitz

January 27, 2023 – March 17, 2023  
Frist Floor & Lower Ground Floor

MAMOTH is pleased to present *Party in the Blitz*, featuring works by Adriano Amaral, Charlotte vander Borght, Robert Brambora, Ambra Castagnetti, Xavier Robles de Medina, Sophie Friedman-Pappas, Gaby Sahhar, Will Thompson, and Waldemar Zimbelmann.

Literature and art tap into an inherent human desire to imagine and to dream by expanding our common experience. One century ago, during the decade of the 1920's the genre of science fiction exploded in popularity. *RUR* by Karel Čapek, and the works of H.G. Wells found eager audiences whose zeitgeist pined for the deliverance of modernity. It was in this context that Fritz Lang directed the film *Metropolis* (1927) whose technological scepticism and reflections on damaged social order still ring true today. In this text, I analyse how contemporary artists return to similar themes as Fritz Lang addressed in the 1920's but from the positions of today. The medium of the moving image has since transformed our connection with reality and the imagined deep future and deep past.

*Party in the Blitz* includes work that comes together through a material and social analysis of our contemporary society. Like the authors of science-fiction, the artists imagine future archeologies - unresolved social wounds of the past bubble into the present. The exhibition is imbued with the aesthetics of the retro-future, the archeological or historical subject of the present day, as well as pictures of mob-psychology and fractured community. The title refers both to the impending atrocities of one century ago as well as the human search for survival in a broken world by finding joy amid agony, and beauty in the rubble.

The work of **Adriano Amaral** (b. 1982, Ribeirão Preto, Brazil) evokes the uncanny. It positions itself between the material and the ephemeral, often producing spiritual pursuits and analysis of the real. The objects create ontological quests in which mere traces of matter conjure other-worldly fantasms drawing from parallels in archeology and technology. The list of materials refer to medical or digital innovations that are currently transforming our societies. In Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* the machine requires worker's bodies to operate it and in turn, defines humanity itself. Amaral's works examine the changing material relationship between the body, identity, and its surroundings.

The *Prosthetic Painting* series is made with prosthetic silicone rubber. This medical-grade technology has been developed to mimic human flesh, it is anti-bacterial and hypo-allergenic to prevent irritation when in contact with or inside of the body. Amaral creates two double-takes with his subversion of the material - firstly, he shifts its usage from a sculptural addition to the flat container of gestural painting. In this enveloped case, traces of other animals float on surfaces that resemble a petri-dish or their archeological equivalent of amber. The petrified or preserved torso of a frog is visible on one while others contain images of close family members of the artist - all leave traces of their existence for an unforeseeable distant future.

Whether sculpture or photography, **Charlotte vander Borght's** (b. 1988, Brussels, BE) work focuses on the materiality of industry and architecture. Design is imbued with ideology, whether it be in the furniture that surrounds us or the architecture that we inhabit. The artist chooses subjects that directly relate to forms of utopian thinking such as the miracle of public transport. In her recent series *Someone, No one, Anyone* (2022-2023), the artist acquired original subway seats from New York's metro system, the city she works and lives in.

She created moulds from the acquired seats and has recreated several of these forms that questions and reinterprets the everyday beauty of a design object. The gesture of turning them on their side highlights this everyday object's design history with rounded features for comfort and references to origins in art deco. Within the subway lived the imagined dreams of common luxury in egalitarian societies that have been crushed as class boundaries remain intact to this day. They are glazed with coloured resins in dark black and brown hues creating an organic palette that seems to take its form from the process of staining used in furniture. The intervention of the hand of the artist is visible in painted patinas that streak across the objects - a reminder of the labour of art that removes the anonymization of industrial production. The strokes leave painterly surfaces while the sculptural structures reflect light off of their intended folds. A free-standing piece contains material that binds it to the floor that recalls the trace of passage of time and occupants on the seats.

**Robert Brambora** (b. 1984, Halle, Germany) creates psychological space with his work that often uses the cognitive device of the cut-out profile. The images depict faces with melancholic expressions and text interfering with the images. The people depicted show the strain of long working hours, tiredness, and mental overload that consume us on a daily basis. Image and object clash in our minds as disorder while the mind tries to separate elements into sense. The images become Deep Dreams that find eyes and faces everywhere - a machine learning algorithm that mirrors human instinct. The words play over tired faces with junk-food brands and stories of repression. With this bricolage of expression and speech, Brambora performs a Marxist analysis of emotion starting from the body.

Brambora's workers are mentally and physically exhausted like those of Fritz Lang in the first scene that shows the workers dancing in harmony with the machine. From the back, the dance looks orderly and planned, but from the front the sweat and agony is visible on tired faces that struggle to keep up with the demand. The dance is unsustainable and eventually, one worker gives way in Freder's hallucination. Today, as technology is once again being posited as a means for liberation, Brambora's response is to remind us that it always has held this potential for both emancipation but also for increasing exploitation.

From a background in anthropology, **Ambra Castagnetti's** (b. 1993, Genoa, Italy) sculptures relate the body to a shifting technological understanding of identity. Driven by deep innate memories, Castagnetti harkens back to the Paleolithic belief of communal existence and fluidity. This mode of thought sees the body as being able to pass through states of human, and animal, unlimited by codified social terminologies. An admixture of simple materials such as wax and bronze refer to the body's relation with materials and the prehistory of technology.

In Castagnetti's sculpture *Kobraltar* (2023), a bronze form is covered in wax that drapes around the cast body of the artist's friend - a trans-woman wearing raver platform shoes. Castagnetti's sculptures are casts of her close friends, lovers, and constellations of characters that form her community. In this piece, the wiry body of her friend appears in an arched position in reference to Louise Bourgeois' Arch of Hysteria. The position in association with rave culture oscillates between joy and grief and acknowledges the still-present association of madness for women who call for liberation. The metallic gleam of the sculpture's surface brings about the imagination of the cyborg and the freedom of a transforming body that technology could provide - whether used for control or for emancipation, technology always contains the potential of a future.

The figurative paintings of **Xavier Robles de Medina** (b. 1990, Paramaribo, Surinam) always begin from the image. Taken from an extensive personal archive, the moments chosen are emblematic in our political and cultural memory or, alternatively, deeply personal private moments. His work *Metropolis* directed by Fritz Lang 1927, *UFA* (2022) gives the prompt to this exhibition - in it, robot Maria towers above us on her seven-headed throne. The scene is one of the most memorable from the film - in the gentlemen's club, a rich pastiche of cliches and exotic symbolism reference the machine's unleashing of social chaos on society.

Robles de Medina's fascination with painting is present in his diligent application of pigment to create simulacrum. The surface of the painting is textured with evenly-spaced yet voluminous strokes of the brush that are divisible into unique individualities. It is in these breaks of the image that are also its base and composition that the surface reveals the fabrication of its content. The titles of Robles de Medina's paintings provide necessary context for the archival subject matter such as the drawing *Removal of the statue of Queen Wilhelmina (Gerard van Lom) from Independence Square, Paramaribo, Suriname. 1975.* right: visual artist Stuart Robles de Medina. (source: Stichting Surinaams Museum, archive nr: 20-162), (2019-2020) which references the year of independence of Suriname from the Netherlands and the immediate removal of the symbolic monarch. By exhibiting it today it connects with the recent Dutch apology for slavery in December 2022 which many commentators say has fallen short.

In another painting, Marina Ovsyannikova disrupts live TV broadcast, *Vremya, Channel One Russia, 14 March 2022* (2022) is an image that sticks to our common

memory relating to the ongoing war that Russia continues to wage on Ukrainian soil. The media worker Marina Ovsyannikova bravely rushed onto a live broadcast with an anti-war message to combat state propaganda. Image has always been used as a tool to create narrative and common memory, and it can be used by artists to restore multiple ways of seeing.

In the tactile material quality of the retro-future, **Sophie Friedman-Pappas** (b. 1995, New York, USA) creates work of ambiguous origins and times. Her practice is informed by the recent history of industrialisation starting from her family's origins in the island of Samos. There, a large complex of 58 tanneries was once the economic centre of the island. Today, the unused factories lie in ruins as a fragmentary monument to the promise of industry - some of which has been preserved to make way for apartments and Airbnbs that once again, promise the arrival of wealth from today's new chains of decentralised tourist industry. The buildings contain the haunting glimmers of the leather of animals and the hides they once produced. This follows Friedman-Pappas to her life in New York City where the drawing Hudson and Duane indicates its position in Tribeca which today hosts scores of galleries dedicated to contemporary art. The drawing depicts a bird flying over a languid hide stuck and splayed across slanted cellar doors - birds are famously omens of what is to come within Greek mythology as well as the producers of the sought-after fertilizing guano which is nitrogen-rich pigeon shit.

In her sculptural work, Friedman-Pappas uses uncommon elements such as birdshit to age and manipulate the patina of ash-glazed ceramic works. *WHA - Gasped awake but spit the words back out they (were bitter)* (2022) is a remaking of the decorative alcoves that adorn pigeon houses found on the island of Tinos, Greece. Dovecotes, also known as pigeon houses or columbariums, are freestanding structures erected in order to house pigeons or doves. Like the old tanneries, they are conserved to varying degrees; some collapsed into ruin, others converted into human homes.

Working in London, **Gaby Sahhar's** (b. 1992, London, UK) multi-media art practice sees the human body as an infinite flow that operates within the spatial conditions of the network and social relativity. Queering plays an important role here in its affront to the dominating patriarchal narrative of hetero-normativity of bodies and binary sets of workers. These themes were already present in the science-fiction films of the 1920's at a time when gender liberation was part of revolutionary ideologies. Sahhar's paintings depict the situation today of loneliness and alienation of urban environments in which everybody is piled together but emotionally distanced. It is in the strength and values of the LGBTQI+ community where power is found to fight against the existing boxes that cater to convenience and economic output rather than humanity.

In the film *Fragile Existence* (2022) Sahhar focuses on the personal and migrant body. The film revolves around their own Palestinian relatives' experience of migration to the UK. Flitted through interrogative spaces that force the body into states of psychological duress and physical discomfort, individuality and identity is here positioned as a symbolic threat that can be useful or turned against you. In the film, blurred images and costumes serve to anonymize the subjects therefore protecting them by obscuring their identities. At the same time, the wardrobe is composed of ripped brightly-covered stockings that are thin enough to reveal the presence of body hair reinforcing the individuality of the body. The clinical spaces are symbolic boxes that reject our human nature that can only find oppression within these confines especially from any marginalised position. The costumes

provide the hope that also lies in the energetic surfaces of Sahhar's paintings - the palette is electric, infusing an otherwise bland space and depressive existence with an awareness beyond the grey.

**Will Thompson's** (b. 1987, Nottingham, UK) portraits focus on the fractured individual within contemporary society. The characters eyes can see, yet they are often glazed-over signifying an inward vision rather than an outward reaction. Deep in thought, the characters are symbols of the active human potential that surrounds us versus the material conditions that dictate many aspects of our lives. The personas and the subjects of these paintings all share that they are pictured on a couch - this piece of furniture is significant for Thompson who sees comfort as a potential suffocation through the slang word "burritoing" that implies wrapping yourself in many layers in order to feel at ease. A man reclines on the couch whose size is awkwardly too small for him or the perfect size for the neck and feet to need lifting above the armrests. A woman crawls into herself gazing out at the scene while taking up less than half of the space on the couch as if in a cage.

In Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* there is a scene that takes place in the Eternal Garden - a leisure club for the wealthy elite populated by exotically dressed women who prance around the garden to entertain the businessmen and their sons. Freder, accustomed to this garden of earthly delights is at first uncomfortable, running from the women, until one of them catches his attention. At that moment, Maria makes an appearance with working-class children into the garden and in this moment Freder realises that he is lacking something in his life - the element of the human soul. Thompson's environments show the disillusion of a Global North made of hyped-up material promises that never reach the promised conditions of its marketing - walls are dappled with marks of age. It is the characters themselves that peer in a state of material perdition, looking into their own minds for a purpose, a reason to be, and the manifold dreams lost to preserving material conditions in working-class England.

The paintings and haunting silhouettes of **Waldemar Zimbelmann** (b. 1984, Agadyr, Kazakhstan) form an uncanny mishmash of art history through mesmerising material combinations on the surface of the canvas. His recent works focus on compositions created through the collision of human bodies in space. Their calm demeanors contrast with the surreal clashes of bodies that pierce and meld one into the other. The pictorial style of Zimbelmann is reminiscent of great masters of art history such as Marc Chagall whose use of pigment reaches into the inherent vibrational symbolism of colour. Meanwhile, his compositional styles recall Marcel Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase No. 2* (1912) in which the human body overlays and fragments itself leaving traces of its material body through a time-register. His portraits have the unflinching face of Paul Klee's *Angelus Novus* (1920).

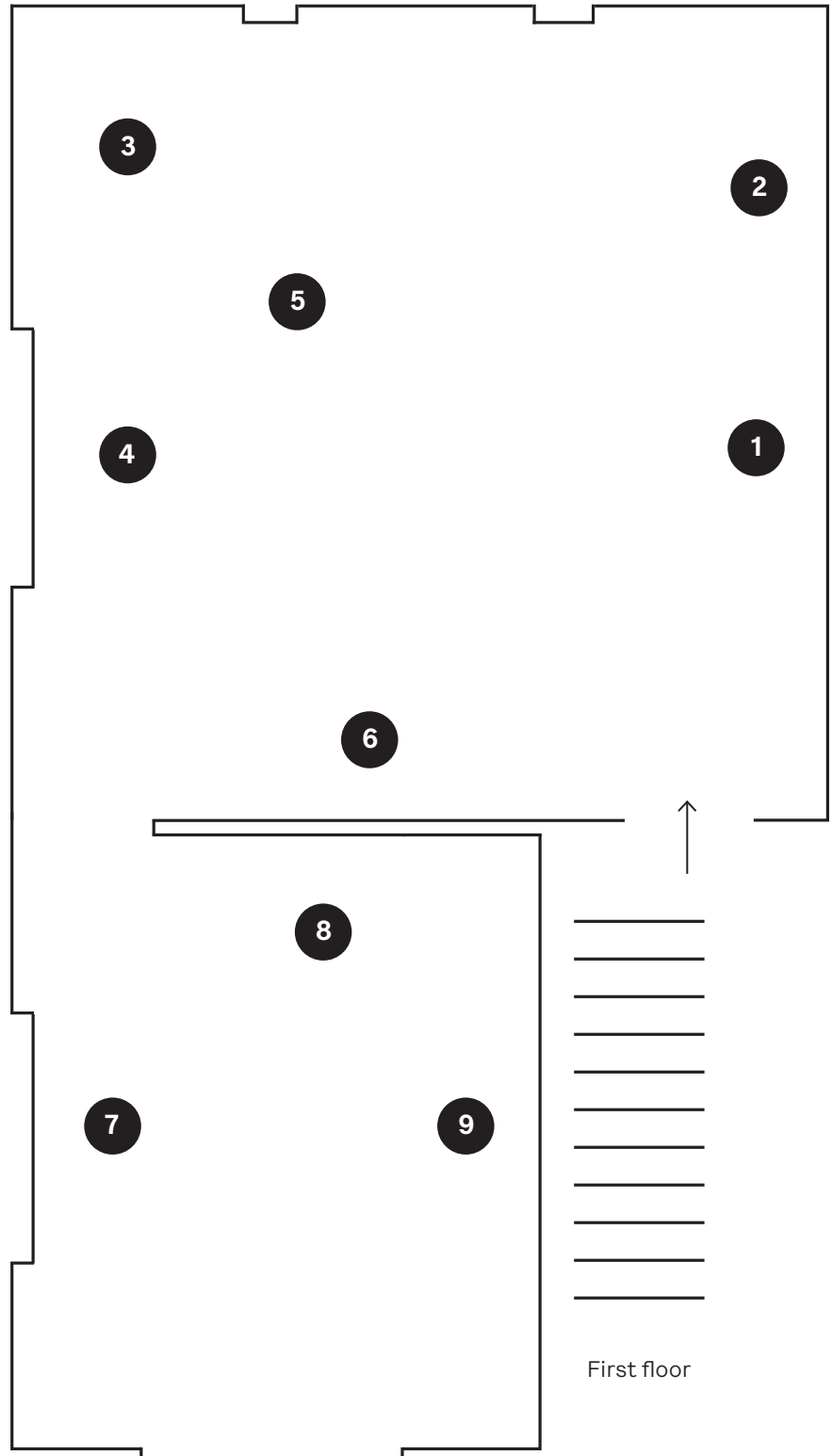
The *Angelus Novus* became one of Klee's most famous works after the philosopher Walter Benjamin used it as the prototype for his "angel of history." Benjamin describes the painting "His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet." (Walter Benjamin, *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, 1940). This context of the 1920's situates a historical referent of Zimbelmann in the context of Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*, where the churning of history already foresaw the wreckage of a future war that would bring Benjamin to his death after fleeing Germany too late to avoid his fate. Yet, Zimbelmann's surface is markedly contemporary with a kind of trace-making reminiscent of Cy Twombly's famous scrawl. The surface is textured, scratched, and mangled. The language of

urban deterioration and scrapyards formations that serve to remind us that we were never really modern.

*Party in the Blitz* positions time as a complex mechanism through the return to events of a century ago. The history of film is recent in light of our species' journey and future conditions that can only be seen through the imagination. Science-fiction as a genre is one that allows us to analyse our contemporary problems through thought-experiments and speculations as well as critical analyses to help solve our most pressing problems. Overall, in a world cursed by conflict, war, and loss - the artworks all speak to the force of survival and joy through moments of decadence and pain. The rubble of the past will be needed to build the cities of tomorrow, and if we want it to be a better place, we need to know what to look for.

Text by Àngels Miralda

1. **Xavier Robles de Medina**  
*Metropolis. Directed by Fritz Lang, UFA, 1927, 2022*  
 Acrylic on wood  
 114 x 152 cm
2. **Xavier Robles de Medina**  
*Removal of the statue of Queen Wilhelmina (Gerard van Lom) from Independence Square, Paramaribo, Suriname. 1975. right: visual artist Stuart Robles de Medina. (source: Stichting Surinaams Museum, archive nr: 20-162), 2019-2020*  
 Graphite on paper  
 23 x 20 cm (37 x 34 cm incl. border)
3. **Charlotte vander Borgh**  
*Someone, No One, Anyone, 2022*  
 Resin, fiberglass, urethane, pigments  
 94.3 x 50 x 50 cm
4. **Charlotte vander Borgh**  
*Someone, No One, Anyone, 2022*  
 Resin, fiberglass, urethane, pigments  
 94.3 x 50 x 50 cm
5. **Charlotte vander Borgh**  
*Someone, No One, Anyone, 2022*  
 Resin, fiberglass, urethane, pigments  
 183.6 x 56 x 55 cm
6. **Adriano Amaral**  
*Untitled, from the Prosthetic Paintings series, 2022*  
 Anti-glare acrylic, prosthetic silicone rubber, felt, nylon, string, ink, printing, graphite, iron powder, aluminum support  
 Edition: Unique  
 90 x 86 x 6 cm
7. **Waldemar Zimbelmann**  
*Some nubelae do not dissolve an eye, 2022*  
 Oil on canvas  
 103 x 70 cm
8. **Robert Brambora**  
*Untitled 2, 2023*  
 Oil, acrylic, silk screen, pastel on wood  
 115 x 75 x 2cm  
 unique
9. **Robert Brambora**  
*Untitled 1, 2023*  
 Oil, acrylic, silk screen, pastel on wood  
 115 x 75 x 2cm  
 unique



First floor

10. Will Thompson

*Untitled*, 2023  
Oil on wood  
60.9 cm x 68.4 cm

11. Gaby Sahhar

*Intrusive Sound*, 2022  
Oil on canvas  
180 x 90 cm each

12. Xavier Robles de Medina

*Marina Ovsyannikova disrupts live TV broadcast, Vremya, Channel One Russia, 14 March 2022*, 2023  
Acrylic on wood  
56 x 43 cm

13. Waldemar Zimbelmann

*The red color, the yellow, the dark green, the sky ELLENO*, 2022  
Oil on canvas  
180 x 95 cm

14. Waldemar Zimbelmann

*Collision between people and figures II*, 2022  
Oil on canvas  
175 x 95 cm

15. Sophie Friedman-Pappas Gaby Sahhar

*Hudson and Duane*, 2021  
Graphite, colored pencil, and watercolor on paper  
10 x 14 inches (without frame)  
16 x 20.25 inches (with frame)

16. Sophie Friedman-Pappas Gaby Sahhar

*'WHA — ' Gasped awake but spit the words back out they [were bitter]*, 2022  
Ash glazed stoneware, duct tape, bird poop  
24 x 44.5 in / 61 x 113 cm

17. Will Thompson

*Untitled*, 2023  
Oil on wood  
57 cm x 46.7 cm

18. Ambra Castagnetti

*Kobraltar*, 2023  
Wax, bronze, crystal  
150 x 30 x 60 cm

19. Adriano Amaral

*Untitled, from the Prosthetic Paintings series*, 2022  
Anti-glare acrylic, adapted wooden frame, prosthetic silicone rubber, metallic goat leather, nylon, ink, printing, graphite, iron powder

Edition: Unique

70 x 66 x 6 cm

20. Gaby Sahhar

*Fragile Existence*, 2022  
Shot in 4K and on Iphone  
Three part 8:54 minutes

