

MAMOTH

Brittney Leeanne Williams

This Bitter Earth

28 November - 6 February 2021

3 Endsleigh Street, London WC1H 0DS





Brittney Leeanne Williams
This Bitter Earth
28 November - 6 February 2021

MAMOTH is very pleased to announce an exhibition of new paintings by Brittney Leeanne Williams, on view from 28 November 2020 to 6 February 2021.

This Bitter Earth presents a selection of Williams's iconic paintings depicting red, majestic women engaged in tumultuous embraces. This motif was developed during Williams's residency at Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Maine, and has evolved following the artist's latest research on motherhood and legacy. Echoing Dinah Washington's rendition of the classic R&B song, the narrative of the show leads the viewer to consider the kaleidoscopic relationship between mother and daughter on "this bitter earth."

Williams addresses the theme from the perspective of a grieving woman. The grief becomes a turning point where roles and responsibilities between the parent and her child begin to mutate. This consequential exchange, charged with emotion, appears on the canvasses in the form of female bodies who seem to be at once dancing and in combat with each other.

This body of work relies on a range of visual references from Cornelius Van Haarlem's masterpiece Two Followers of Cadmus Devoured by a Dragon, to Internet-sourced pictures of people hugging at airports. The resulting artworks, presented for the first time in the UK, revive an overlooked trope in the Western canon: that of the embrace. From religious depictions including the Mystical Nativity by Botticelli, to Klimt's golden couple, and Chagall's ethereal lovers, hugs have been depicted to showcase fidelity, sacrifice, romantic love, and sexual tension. Women were often displayed as passive recipients of male passions. In This Bitter Earth, Williams upends such traditions. Instead,



she shows prominent women enduring their grief and exploring their identities without the rhetoric of gentleness and angelic beauty.

A flamboyant mixture of cadmium reds sets the tone for sharing this part of the black female experience. Red is the colour of urgency and attention, and has become Williams's signature element. The format of the paintings and the contrast between the reds and a few select complementary colours is conceived to engulf the spectator. Overwhelming yet irresistible, the canvasses float between the realms of abstraction and hyperrealism. In almost every painting, the viewer is confronted with a central section, inhabited by plain muscles and flesh, against a peripheral backdrop of luxuriously depicted lemon trees, and gardens, and the night sky of Victorville, California. With the red silhouettes in the foreground, it is hard for the viewer to grasp the limit between one figure and the other. This evokes the flux of the emotional connections charging the portrayed subjects. Violence and tenderness go hand in hand conceptually as well as visually, through layers of pastel, acrylic, and oil.

What is it to inherit from a grieving woman? What is it to “mother” someone while also caring for one's self? What degree of resilience is needed for black women to live in the United States? Throughout the course of the exhibition, *This Bitter Earth* encourages visitors to ponder such questions while reflecting on their own journeys as parents, children, or kin of any other nature.

Brittney Leeanne Williams (b. 1990, Pasadena CA) is a Chicago-based artist, originally from Los Angeles. Her work has been exhibited in New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Miami (Untitled Art Fair), Venice, Italy (Venice Biennale), London, Copenhagen, and Hong Kong, as well as in Chicago and throughout the Midwestern United States. Williams attended the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture and the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (2008-2009). She is a Joan Mitchell Foundation grant recipient and a Luminarts Fellow. Williams' artist residencies include Arts + Public Life (University of Chicago) and the McColl Center for Art + Innovation, amongst others.

Red: An Urgent Exhaustion, 2020
Oil on Canvas
58 x 57 in
147 x 145 cm
(MH-BW005)







Naomi and Ruth: The Weight of a Curse, 2020
Oil on Canvas
64 x 64 in
163 x 163 cm
(MH-BW004)





Submerged, 2020
Oil on Canvas
44 1/2 x 32 1/2 in
113 x 83 cm
(MH-BW003)







Naomi and Ruth: An Embrace and a Prayer, 2020,
2020
Oil on Canvas
58 x 58 in
147 x 147 cm
(MH-BW001)

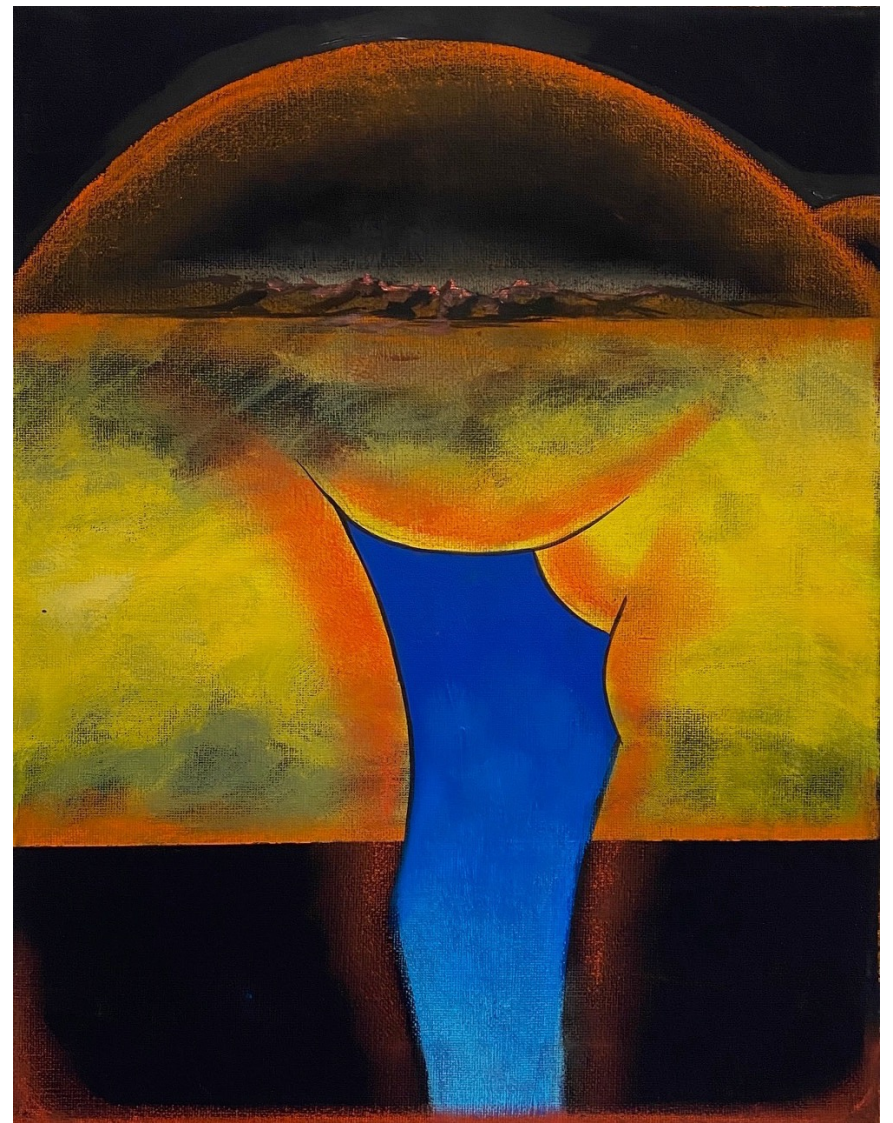








Untitled, 2020
Acrylic and Pastel on Canvas
14 x 11 in
36 x 28 cm
(MH-BW009)





Shared Grief, 2020
Oil on Canvas
51 1/2 x 75 in
131 x 191 cm
(MH-BW002)





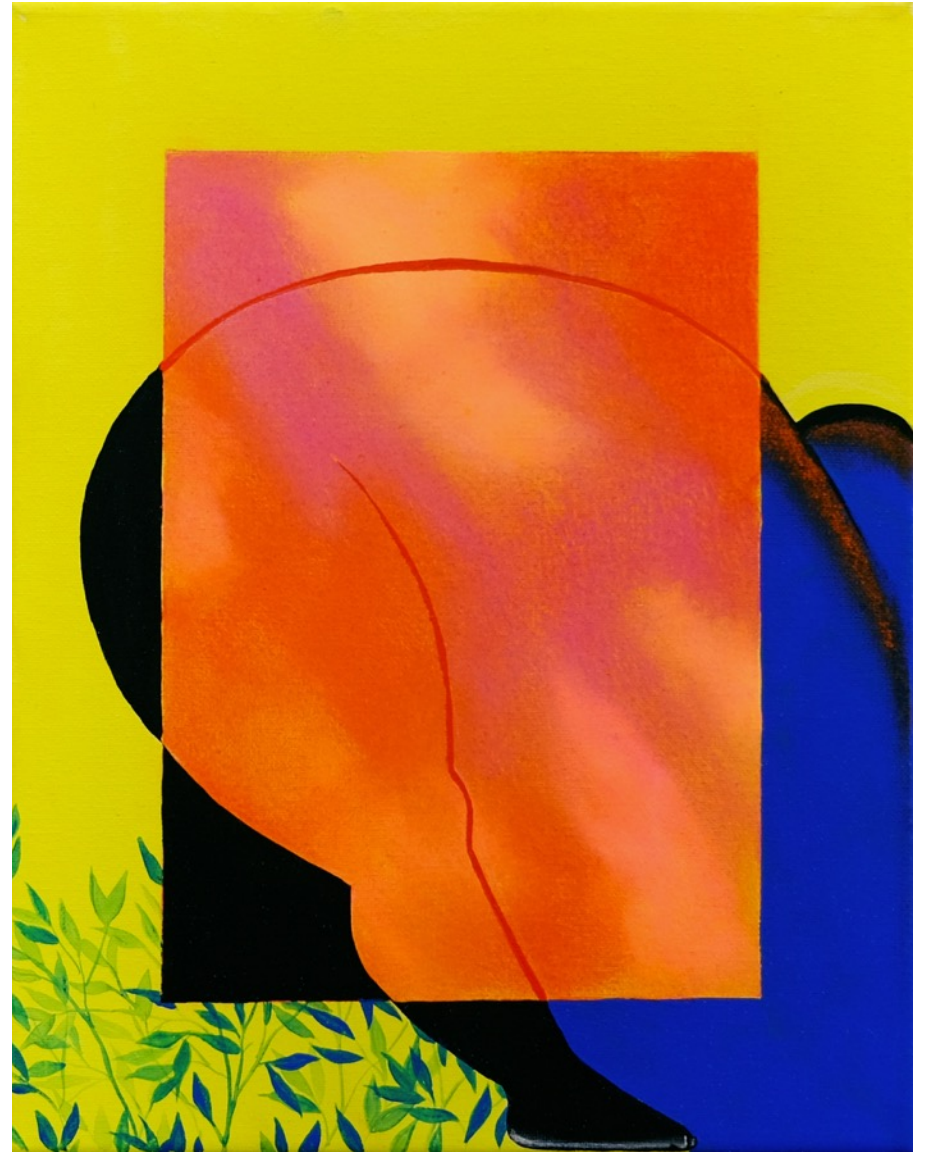
Curl In and Turn Away, 2020
Oil on Canvas
20 x 16 in
51 x 41 cm
(MH-BW006)







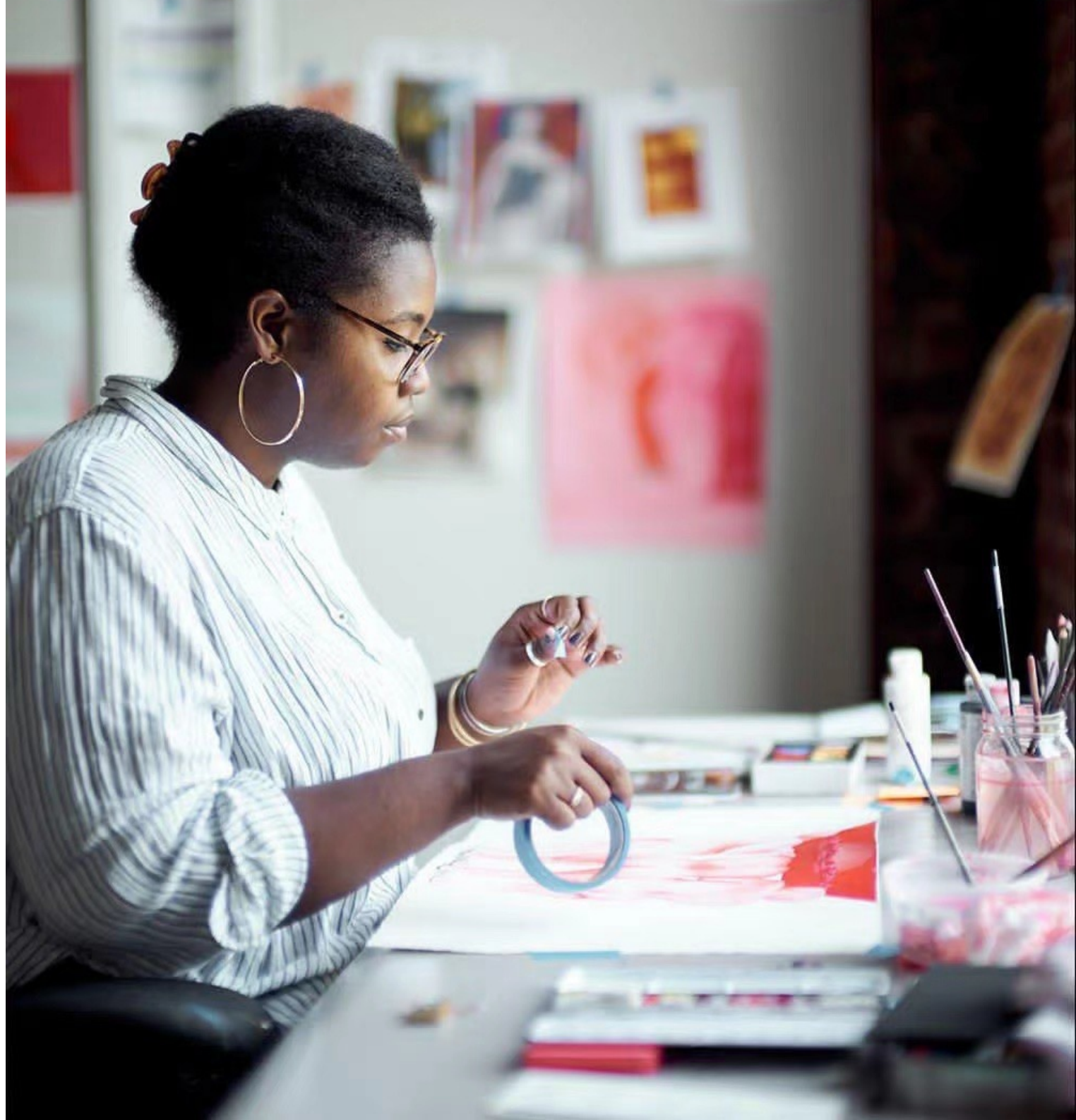
Untitled, 2020
Acrylic, Gouache and Pastel on Canvas
14 x 11 in
36 x 28 cm
(MH-BW007)





The Bend of a Storm, 2020
Acrylic and Pastel on Paper (Framed)
11 x 8 1/2 in
28 x 22 cm
(MH-BW008)





Brittney Leeanne Williams (b. 1990, Pasadena CA)

www.brittneyleeannewilliams.com

EDUCATION

2017 Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Skowhegan ME

2008-2009 School of the Art Institute of Chicago, BFA Program, Chicago IL

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2020 *This Bitter Earth*, MAMOTH, London UK

2019 *To Tarry in Prayer/To Terri in Prayer*, Zevitas Marcus, Los Angeles CA

2017 *Neither Free | Nor*, Dittmar Gallery, Northwestern University, Evanston IL

2016 *It Can See You*, HUME Gallery, Chicago IL

SELECTED GROUP & TWO-PERSON EXHIBITIONS

2021 (Upcoming) Kathmandu Triennale, Kathmandu NP

2020 *Ma Was Heavy*, Newchild Gallery, Antwerp BE

2020 *This Sacred Vessel (pt. 3)*, Arsenal Contemporary, New York NY

2020 Enter Art Fair, The Hole, Copenhagen DK

2020 *Sit Still*, Anna Zorina Gallery, New York NY

2020 *We Begin with Noticing*, Deli Gallery, Brooklyn NY

2020 *Garden of Six Seasons*, Para Site Gallery, Hong Kong

2020 *Second Smile*, The Hole, New York NY

2020 *No Time Like the Present*, PUBLIC Gallery, London UK

2020 *Quarters*, Alexander Berggruen, New York NY

2020 *Blackstract*, TAG Gallery, Los Angeles CA

2020 *Circle Within a Square*, LVL3 Gallery, Chicago IL (Two-person)

2019 *A Tale of Today*, Driehaus Museum and EXPO Chicago, Chicago IL

2019 *The Barn Show*, Johannes Vogt, New York NY/East Hampton NY

2019 *Show Me Yours*, Monique Meloche, Chicago IL

2019 *Fresh Fruit*, curated by Benjamin Tischer, Situations Gallery, New York NY

2019 *Give Me Body!*, MoCADA, Brooklyn NY

2018 UNTITLED, ART, Zevitas Marcus Gallery, Miami FL
2018 EXPO Chicago, Spudnik Press Cooperative, Chicago IL
2018 *The Annual*, Chicago Artists Coalition, Chicago IL
2018 *Cosmic Traffic Jam*, Zevitas Marcus, Los Angeles CA
2018 *Not An Inert Box*, Triumph, curated by Danny Floyd, Chicago IL
2018 *Home/Lands*, The Object Press, Venice Architecture Biennale, Venice Italy
2018 *Noonlight*, EFA Blackburn 20|20, New York NY

2017 *Petty Biennial*, curated by La Kiesha Leek, Arts Incubator, Chicago IL
2017 *Art at the Margin*, Hunter College Project Space, Hunter College, New York NY
2017 *Lil Swim*, Luggage Store Gallery, San Francisco CA
2017 *Here + Now*, Urban Institute of Contemporary Art, Grand Rapids MI

2016 *The Art of Blackness*, Block 37, Chicago IL
2016 *Women We Love*, Gallery 19, Chicago IL
2016 *Shared History: 150 SAIC Anniversary*, South Side Community Art Center, Chicago IL (Juried)
2016 *Abandoned Margins: Policing The Black Female Body*, WomanMade, Chicago IL

2015 *I Can't Breathe*, ARC Gallery, Chicago IL (Juried)
2015 *(N)either (N)or*, Curatorial Lab, Chazen Museum, University of Wisconsin, Madison WI (Juried)

FELLOWSHIPS/GRANTS

2020 Luminarts Fellow
2020 Coney Family Fund Award
2019 McColl Center for Art + Innovation Artist-in-Residence, Charlotte NC
2018 Joan Mitchell Foundation Painters and Sculptors Grant
2017-2018 Arts + Public Life Residency (University of Chicago CSRPC), Chicago IL
2017-2018 The Center Program Residency, Hyde Park Art Center, Chicago IL
2016-2017 HATCH Project Residency, Chicago Artists Coalition, Chicago IL

BIBLIOGRAPHY

2020 Uma Karavadra, *Artist to Watch*, Contemporary Art Society, London UK
2020 Mark Westall, *View Over Thirty Artists in Online Exhibition Second Smile*, Fad Magazine
2020 Rebecca Fulleylove, *Brittney Leeanne Williams' Deep Red Bodies Signal Female Trauma*, Elephant Magazine, London UK
2020 Nicole Mauser, *Breakout Artists 2020: Chicago's Next Generation of Image Makers*, Newcity

2020 Ashley Mahoney, *Brittney Leeanne Williams' McColl Center Residency Isn't for Rest*, Charlotte Post

2019 Caira Moreira-Brown, *Identity, Psyche and Gender Through the Black Body: A Review of Show Me Yours at Monique Meloche*, Newcity

2019 Katherine Keener, *Show Me Yours: Exploring the Nude Figure in Novel Ways*, Art Critique

2019 *Show Me Yours Group Show at Monique Meloche Gallery in Chicago, IL*, Juxtapoz

2019 John Martin Tilley, *Mad Fresh*, Office

2018 Contributor, *The Artists' Artists: Best of 2018*, ArtForum

2018 Shana Nys Dambrot, *Get Caught in a Cosmic Traffic Jam in Culver City*, LA Weekly

2018 Ellen C. Caldwell, *Detouring Through Art, History and Language in Cosmic Traffic Jam*, Riot Material

2018 *Cosmic Traffic Jam at Zevitas Marcus*, Flaunt Magazine

2017 *Art Examines the State of Blackness*, The Citizen

2017 *Dittmar Exhibit Dramatizes Chasm Between Blacks and Whites*, Chicago Tribune

2016 *Abandoned Margins: Policing the Black Female Body*, Human Stages (blog)

2016 Featured Artist, *Black Contemporary Art*

2015 Featured Artist, *365 Artist 365 Days Project*

MAMOTH

3 Endsleigh Street
London WC1H 0DS

Wednesday–Saturday 12pm–5pm
Open by appointment

www.mamoth.co.uk
contact@mamothcontemporary.com

All images courtesy of the artist and MAMOTH.