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GióMARCONI

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## **MOTHERBOY**

**Curated by Stella Bottai and Gray Wielebinski**

**Artists: Sophia Al Maria; Jonathan Lyndon Chase; Patrizio Di Massimo; Bracha L. Ettinger; Hadi Falapishi; Jes Fan; Apostolos Georgiou; Allison Katz; Leigh Ledare; Maia Ruth Lee; Gaetano Pesce; Jenna Sutela; Gray Wielebinski; Kandis Williams; Bruno Zhu**

**Opening: Thursday, 23 November 2023; 6pm-9pm**

**23 November 2023 – 17 February 2024**

**Tuesday-Saturday; 11am-6pm**

**Gió Marconi, Via Tadino 15, Milano**

Gió Marconi is pleased to announce *Motherboy*, a group exhibition born out of the dialogue between curator Stella Bottai and artist Gray Wielebinski around the so-called “mammone” (mummy’s boy) – a notion that their own embodied experiences – as mother and son respectively – celebrate, critique, and reconfigure.

The exhibition draws on queer, feminist, and psychoanalytic understandings of the highly charged and symbolically rich relationality between mothers and sons to attend to themes of sacrifice, co-dependency, desire, identity, denial, hierarchies, possessiveness, and betrayal. *Motherboy* takes up the strange convergence of power encoded in the mother’s boy – the undervalued, often invisibilized labor of the mother versus the overindulged, privileged lot of the “Mama’s boy” – treating this as a starting point of broader political critique.

At the same time, it thinks expansively about the category of the motherboy, examining variations on this kinship form across different gendered, racial, and cultural configurations. Indexing the many abstracted modes in which we encounter this relation – through the imaginary of the mother tongue, motherland, the Holy Mother, and the prodigal son – *Motherboy* offers a point of entry into fundamental questions of love, power, and asymmetry.

The show features new and recent works selected in close dialogue with the participating artists. Spanning painting, collage, sculpture, video and installation, these pieces articulate different atmospheres across three floors of the gallery. Bodily postures form a motif across the show, contemplating the significance of certain actions – such as standing, posing, sleeping, hitting, or embracing – in connection to interpersonal hierarchies and emotional language.

*Motherboy* is rooted in the Italian context and yet casting a wider lens beyond national identities. The term *mammismo* (“motherism”) is an example of an invented tradition from the post-war period, when – according to historian Marina d’Amelio – writers such as Corrado Alvaro, who first coined the term in 1952, were looking for reasons to explain Italy’s social ills. Poor mothering was made accountable for the shortcomings of Italian men and therefore of Italian society at large – a concept that in great part seeps

through today's wider culture, as noted by academic Jacqueline Rose, who writes "*mothers are socially the ultimate scapegoat for our personal and political failings, for everything which is wrong with the world.*"

Overall, the exhibition stages a reflection on the horrifying, tender and comic aspects of the mother-son relationship as a mirror of both association and dissociation, addressing its repercussions on collective social imagination. By way of reflecting on authority, emancipation, love, and vulnerability, *Motherboy* attempts a generative withdrawal from patriarchal constructs of this notion, in pursuit of a familial bond which is conscious yet liberated from its own history.

The exhibition *Motherboy* is accompanied by a new essay by Asa Seresin, available at the gallery and online on [giomarconi.com](http://giomarconi.com)

Stella Bottai (1986, Bologna. Lives and works in London) is Curator-at-Large at the Aspen Art Museum, Colorado, USA, and co-curator of *Pompeii Commitment. Archaeological Matters* at the Archaeological Park of Pompeii.

Gray Wielebinski (1991 Dallas, TX, USA. Lives and works in London) graduated with an MFA from the Slade School of Fine Art, London, in 2018. His first institutional solo show, *The Red Sun is High, the Blue Low*, runs at the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) in London from 20 September to 23 December 2023.

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