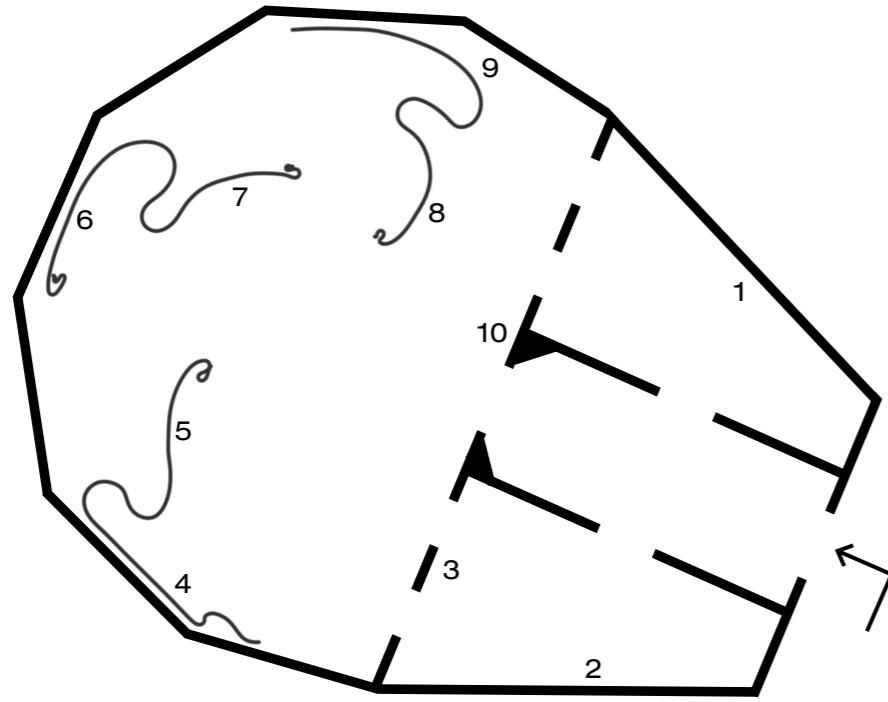


# KIOSK

EXHIBITS  
Thomas Hitchcock  
*Abstract Entities*  
25.01.2025 – 16.03.2025



1. *01 until the end*, 2025  
Antique glass, platinum, stainless steel, rubber
2. *A tender echo (articulations of the real)*, 2022  
Antique glass, platinum, stainless steel, rubber
3. *No modernity without its other*, 2025  
Enamel and Schwarzlot on colorescent glass
4. *Reign of interiority*, 2025  
Enamel and Schwarzlot on opalescent glass
5. *Circling the drain*, 2025  
Schwarzlot on colorescent glass
6. *Phantasmagories of the interior*, 2025  
Enamel and Schwarzlot on colorescent glass
7. *There is no such thing as a horizon*, 2025  
Schwarzlot on colorescent glass
8. *Now I know I knew*, 2025  
Schwarzlot on colorescent glass
9. *Guts*, 2025  
Enamel on colorescent glass
10. *Now is a good time to act (Bitte nicht so rechts)*, 2025  
Aluminium, found poster, light bulb, lamp socket, rubber, screws, cable

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## EN |

For his first institutional solo exhibition in Belgium, Austrian artist Thomas Hitchcock delves into the intersections of Art Nouveau and Europe's fin de siècle cultural period and contemporary technological developments: a timely response to the decadent and even apocalyptic times we are living in today, where some are experiencing a peak moment of incredible and unknown wealth and power.

The title of the show, *Abstract Entities*, is a critical reflection on capitalism and its dehumanizing forces. For Hitchcock, abstraction is not just an aesthetic choice but a symbol of capitalist functioning, where everything becomes interchangeable and commodified. "If you look at how capitalism works, everything is reduced to an abstract entity," Hitchcock explains. "Within this system, natural resources, workers and objects, become something to be optimized, consumed, and, at will, discarded for maximum profit."

However, *Abstract Entities* is not just a critique of global capitalist exploitation. The term entity also implies something elusive and ungraspable, suggesting that the exhibition aims to explore something beyond the realm of the concrete. "Abstract entities, in a spatial sense, are not completely definable. They resist full understanding." This ambiguity lures the viewer into a space of reflection and engagement, where meanings are not fixed but unfold through experience and personal interpretation.

## Whiplash Ornaments and the Aesthetic Legacies of Global Exploitation

Informed by a deep historical awareness, Hitchcock's exhibition engages directly with the architectural vocabulary of Art Nouveau, a movement that flourished at the turn of the 20th century. The flowing, organic lines of the ornamental designs—famously employed by Victor Horta and his contemporaries—are reimagined in Hitchcock's installation, where metal handrails extending from the walls and windows curve into the space, supporting delicate glassworks.

These railings, constructed from fragments of so-called whiplash ornaments particularly popular in Belgian Art Nouveau evoke the lianas of the rubber plant—an important resource exploited in Congo for the global rubber trade, which was foundational to Belgium's colonial wealth. The work makes a direct link between the aesthetic beauty of the Art Nouveau movement and the violence of colonial extraction, with specific reference to the "Style Congo"—a term used to describe the aesthetic manifestations of colonialist power through the lens of Art Nouveau.

The whiplash ornamentation also conjures the image of the native whip made from hippopotamus skin, a tool of discipline and violence employed against the Congolese People under Belgian rule. This duality—between the grace of the ornamental and the cruelty of colonial violence—defines the tone of Hitchcock's work, creating a space of tension and reflection. By foregrounding these historical undercurrents, Hitchcock positions the viewer to confront uncomfortable truths about the aesthetic legacies of global exploitation.

## The Glass Works: Floating Motifs and Dreamlike Perception

Central to the exhibition are Hitchcock's glass works—pieces that combine traditional painting techniques with modern concerns about perception, identity, and the virtual realm. Hitchcock's approach to the glass is as much about ambiguity as it is about form.

The glass pieces, with their partial opacity and abstract forms, act as metaphors for inner worlds—spaces of the mind that are often difficult to articulate, shifting, and elusive. Hitchcock's work draws from late 19th-century psychological theories and the upcoming of psychoanalysis, and a fascination with the "inner space" that was prevalent at the time, echoing themes of dreams, the fantastique, and the virtual.

The motifs painted on the glass—delicate and dreamlike—appear to hover in space, shifting as the viewer moves around them. With their elusive forms and shifting transparency, the glass works are invitations to reflect on how

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we navigate the digital world—how we curate our identities, furnish our “inner spaces” and how much of ourselves we decide to reveal or obscure.

This connection to the virtual realm is particularly relevant in the context of today’s digital age, where technology increasingly mediates our understanding of the world. Hitchcock acknowledges the role of the internet and social media in shaping contemporary identity, while also recognizing the alienation that these platforms can engender. “*We live in an attention economy,*” he reflects. “*Everything is designed to keep us engaged. But what happens to our sense of self in this constant flow of images and information?*”

Screens are also evoked in the two striking glass works presented in the side space of KIOSK. Deeply intrigued by how the material interacts with space, particularly in terms of its abstract volume, Hitchcock bridges the ancient material of mouth-blown antique glass with contemporary technologies. Yet, there remains an element of mystery surrounding both the material and the works themselves, prompting viewers to question what they are experiencing during these moments of confusion and doubt.

## Now is a good time to act (*Bitte nicht so rechts*)

Presented above the central platform is a lamp, part of a series of metallic sculptures with torn posters inside, defined by Thomas Hitchcock as “*spontaneous and direct pieces*”. The metal casing that holds the poster has an industrial, serial quality, further emphasizing the tension between mass production and the unique, accidental beauty of the found material. The laser-cut perforations in the sculpture are intentionally irregular, with deliberate “errors” that disrupt the perfection of the form.

The poster inside this particular lamp was found by Thomas Hitchcock in Winter 2024 in the streets of Vienna and bears the message *Bitte nicht so rechts* (*Please, not so far to the right*). The presence of the work in the exhibition speaks to the current political climate, subtly connecting the work to contemporary debates around nationalism and the rise of right-wing politics. In this piece, Hitchcock invites viewers to reflect on

the interplay between everyday objects, political messaging, and the powerful role of art in making visible the urgent issues of our time.

## Stage for Interventions: A Shared Dialogue

A distinctive feature of *Abstract Entities* is the active involvement of students from Belgian art academies, whose temporary interventions will unfold throughout the exhibition’s run. These interventions are not merely supplementary but form an integral part of the exhibition, transforming the space into a forum for collective engagement.

Hitchcock, who himself graduated seven years ago, views these interventions as more than just an educational opportunity—they represent a way to break the solitude of the gallery space, opening it up for moments of dialogue, exchange, and unanticipated creativity.

The student interventions are designed to echo and expand upon the core themes of *Abstract Entities*, offering a range of viewpoints that enhance the exhibition’s focus on historical and contemporary complexities. These interventions are framed by four key themes that invite creative reflection:

- 1. The Elasticity of Time:** Interventions that explore the fluidity of time, investigating how different temporalities and perceptions of time intersect and inform our understanding of the present.
- 2. The Virtual Space:** Works that reflect on the in-betweenness of analog and digital realities, as well as the psychological dimensions of inner space, tapping into the growing fascination with virtual worlds and their influence on human consciousness.
- 3. The Colonial Present:** Pieces that address the ongoing effects of colonialism within global capitalist structures, highlighting the ways in which historical exploitation continues to shape the world today.
- 4. The Portrayed Nature:** Interventions that focus on the representation and commodification of nature, interrogating how the natural world is depicted, consumed, and transformed within contemporary contexts.

The central platform of the exhibition serves both as a stage for student interventions and as a space for contemplation for the visitors. By inviting students to engage with the installation, Hitchcock encourages a communal experience—a contrast to the deeply individualistic nature of the abstract entities themselves.

Our deepest gratitude goes to the artists involved in the interventions throughout the exhibition period.

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