

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

[Gallery One]

**Itziar Barrio, *did not feel low, was sleeping***

**March 11-April 23, 2023**

**Opening Reception: Sat. March 11, 6-8PM**



Itziar Barrio, *ROBOTA MML* (video still), 2023, 4K video.

[Public Programs]

Artist-Led Tour

**Sat. March 25, 2pm**

**Itziar Barrio: *ROBOTA MML***

**Screening and conversation with Dr. Laura Forlano  
at e-flux Screening Room, 172 Classon Avenue, Brooklyn**

**Tues. April 4, 7PM**

**Performance: *Particle Matter***

**In collaboration with Seth Cluett**

**Sat. April 15, 7PM**

## Itziar Barrio, *did not feel low, was sleeping*

Smack Mellon presents *did not feel low, was sleeping*, premiering Itziar Barrio's multidisciplinary trilogy *Material* (2016-2023) as a site specific installation in the main gallery space. The exhibition comprises film based projects *A Demon that Slips into Your Telescope While You're Dead Tired and Blocks the Light*; *ROBOTA MML*; and *Particle Matter* alongside a new series of sculptures, some of which are robotic. The exhibition unfolds across multiple screens and objects through speculative narratives and non-linear timelines to investigate the intersections between technology, labor, identity, and matter. Barrio poetically interlaces discourses between a wide array of experts, including: scientists, technologists, fiction writers, actors, a bodybuilder, a robotics engineer, and a composer, as well as non-human agents such as celestial bodies, robots, matter, telescopes, and data. The trilogy is further bound by material elements that exist at the edge of human perception. Brown dwarfs (*A Demon*), smoke (*ROBOTA MML*), and gaseous particles (*Particle Matter*), appear as both specters and substances to demarcate the potentials and limits of human sensing.

*A Demon* (2019), the first project in this series, shifts between interviews with scientists, aerial footage from NASA's archive, and dramatized speculative fiction by Laia, illuminating how those working in science and technology shape common understandings of "objective" information. The film explores the importance of the indeterminate and non-visible, via gaps and fissures in the construction of scientific knowledge. *ROBOTA MML* (2023) looks at the many valences of work and traces the etymological origins of "robot." Coined by Czech writer Karel Capek in his science fiction play *R.U.R.* (1920), the term derives from the word *robot*, meaning work or forced labor. Barrio relocates *R.U.R.*'s characters into an indeterminate future-present sensitive to biopower, class consciousness, identity, and gender fluidity. In Barrio's interpretation, the agent capable of affecting the human psyche appears in physical form as smoke. *Particle Matter* (2020), made in collaboration with composer Seth Cluett, uses the filmic language of montage to approach its subject rhizomatically. For this film, sound recordings of dust particles were created at the historic anechoic chamber at Nokia Bell Labs, which is considered one of the quietest places on Earth.

Barrio draws the exhibition's title from one of the robotic sculptures, made with data from her collaborator Dr. Laura Forlano, a social scientist and design researcher. Some of the sculptures are programmed and inscribed with text that Forlano, a Type 1 diabetic, transcribed from the alert and alarm history from her "smart" insulin pump and then annotated with field notes. Composed of the artist's disused spandex pants and concrete molded from packaging of products that she has consumed, the sculptures invoke desire and an uncanny sense of bodily intimacy through their subtle mimicry of human forms and movements. The title further divulges the exhaustive toll of capitalist labor systems on the body by machines that are increasingly essential for human survival. Following a blurring of boundaries between humans and machines, mechanistic behaviors are internalized into bodily functions as we continuously adapt to technological upgrades. *did not feel low, was sleeping* poignantly elucidates humanity's current relationship to technology, which continues to rely on human labor.

# S m a c k M e l l o n

## BIO

Itziar Barrio is a multimedia artist based in NYC. She is internationally recognized for her contributions to the intersections of art, film, and technology. Her interdisciplinary, boundary breaking work has been exhibited at art institutions across the United States, Latin America, and Europe including: PARTICIPANT INC (NYC), MACRO Museum (Rome), MACBA Museum (Barcelona), Belgrade's Contemporary Art Museum, Museo del Banco de la República (Bogotá), Salzburger Kunstverein, and the Havana Biennial. Her monographic exhibition, *BY ALL MEANS* (2018), was curated by Johanna Burton, and her forthcoming monograph will be published by SKIRA in 2023. She teaches at the School of Visual Arts (NYC) and Sarah Lawrence College (NY), and has lectured internationally. Barrio's work has been written about in ARTFORUM, Art in America, The New York Times, The Brooklyn Rail, ART PAPERS, and BOMB. Barrio has received awards by NYSCA, the Brooklyn Art Council, Ministry of Culture of Spain, NYC Department of Cultural Affairs, Foundation for Contemporary Arts, and the Spanish Academy in Rome. She is currently a member of the New Museum's NEW INC incubator, where she began developing the robotics works that will be on display at Smack Mellon.

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*did not feel low, was sleeping* is made possible by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the Office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature. Since 2020, Barrio has been developing *ROBOTA MML* and *Particle Matter* as a member at the New Museum's incubator NEW INC.

The artist would like to thank: Eric Alba, Dr. Lori Allen, Sarah Anderson, Bayyina Black, Benny (La Caverna), Georgina Berrozpe, David Brooks, Dr. Jacky Faherty, Mateo Feijóo, Joanne Flores, Laura Forlano, Lia Gangitano, Steve B. Howell, Chelsea Knight, Tora López, Lisa Messeri, Julia Morandiera, New Museum's NEW INC incubator, Carolina Olivares, Dr. Stephen M. Pompea, Jessica Rose, Robert Sparks, La TEA Theater, Javier Vaquero Ollero, Rachel Vera Steinberg, Tatiana Tarragó and Alexis Wilkinson.

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