



ART
CUBE

MAX
BALATBAT
ANINO

Anino
Max Balatbat

Demon of Dark Days

In his latest exhibition, Anino, Max Balatbat presents his starkest, most intense works to date: a suite of monochromatic paintings and assemblages that expresses and embodies the mood, emotion, and interiority of the last two years plunged into the terror and uncertainty of the pandemic. They constitute what the artist considers as a visual diary chronicling the times when everyone was quarantining in their own homes, terrified of a virus of which little was known, dragging artificial shadows on sunless floors.

These all-black works establish a turning to point from Balatbat's previous creations characterized by color, layering, and definition. While the superimposition of layers of acrylic skin is still very much perceptible, a flattening effect takes hold because of the totality of the opaque pigment, as if an eclipse were passing over the works. What the viewer confronts is an unyielding surface punctuated with pockets of negative space, crisscrossing of filaments both taut and slack, the encroachment of what appears to be organic matter.

In his series, "Umbra," defined as the darkest part of the shadow, the surface also offers the same impenetrable quality, only there seems to be passages of a light hue breaking through. By the sixth painting, the darkness relents, and unmistakable strokes of blue waver and take hold, as if promising the coming of dawn. There is no mistaking that what maintains dominion in these works remains the imperative of the night, and yet what a relief to witness those faint emanations coruscate—a sign of hope against the desolate space.

His assemblages share the same aesthetic as his paintings, except that recognizable objects emerge from the sculptural composition as focal points. A faucet, a stethoscope, a carpenter's plummet—these represent some of the trades and professions severely affected by the pandemic. Their status as emblems of lost livelihood becomes all the more prominent when one finds out that these objects served an actual function in their former lives. By appropriating them in this series, Balatbat underscores the precarity of work, with the objects haphazardly tied together with strings as an insistence on normality.

Anino is a brute recognition of how the pandemic has altered us in ways we cannot even begin to imagine. As of today, we still don't have a way to measure, not least of which to reckon, the devastation that it has wrought. Despite resuming old routines and trying our best to make do with what's left from our pre-pandemic lives, we're still very much in the tight grip of this dark phase of history, what with the looming threat of possible variants unleashing their own set of devastations.

Balatbat, through his signature paint-on-paint method valiantly soldiering into the darkest of confines, captures the liminal shapes of the inchoate chaos that still surrounds us.

- Carlomar Arcangel Daoana





ANINO

183cm x 183cm

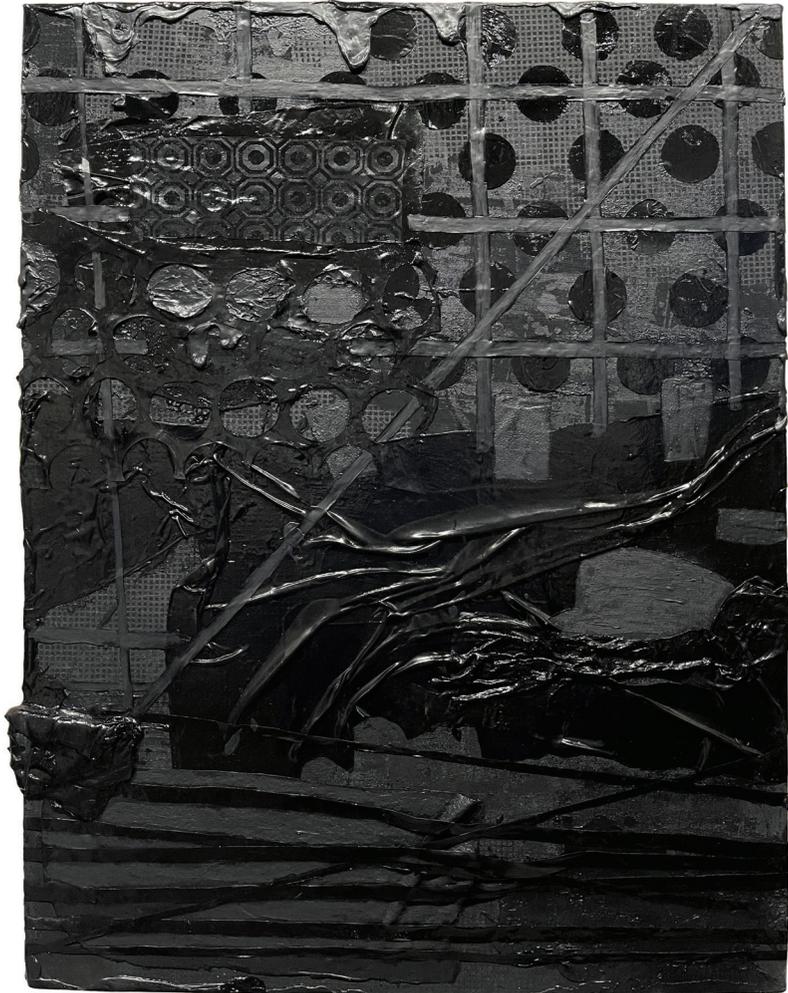
acrylic skin on canvas



ANINO UNO

123cm x 91cm

acrylic skin on canvas



ANINO DOS

123cm x 91cm

acrylic skin on canvas



DARK

183cm x 123cm

acrylic skin on canvas



UMBRA 001

61cm x 61cm

acrylic skin on canvas



UMBRA 002

61cm x 61cm

acrylic skin on canvas



UMBRA 003

61cm x 61cm

acrylic skin on canvas



UMBRA 004

61cm x 61cm

acrylic skin on canvas



UMBRA 005

61cm x 61cm

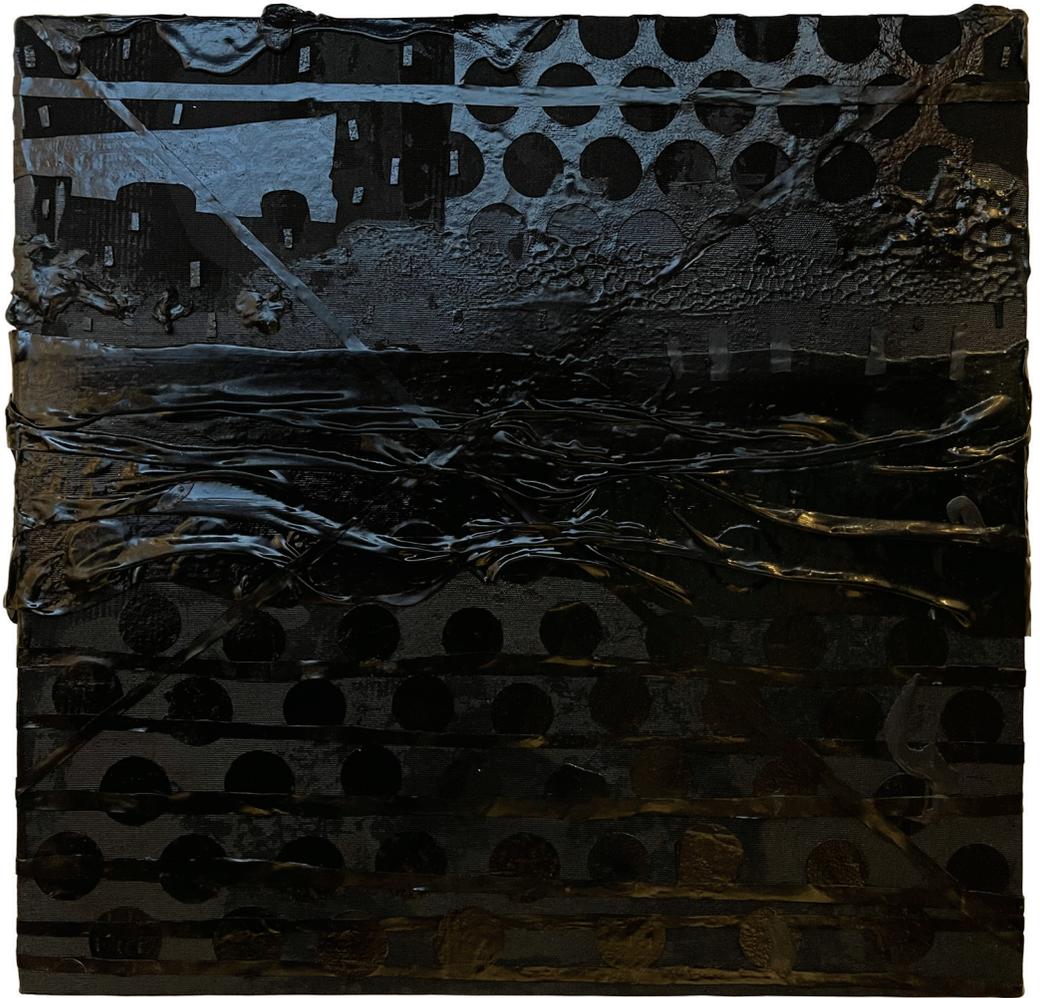
acrylic skin on canvas



UMBRA 006

61cm x 61cm

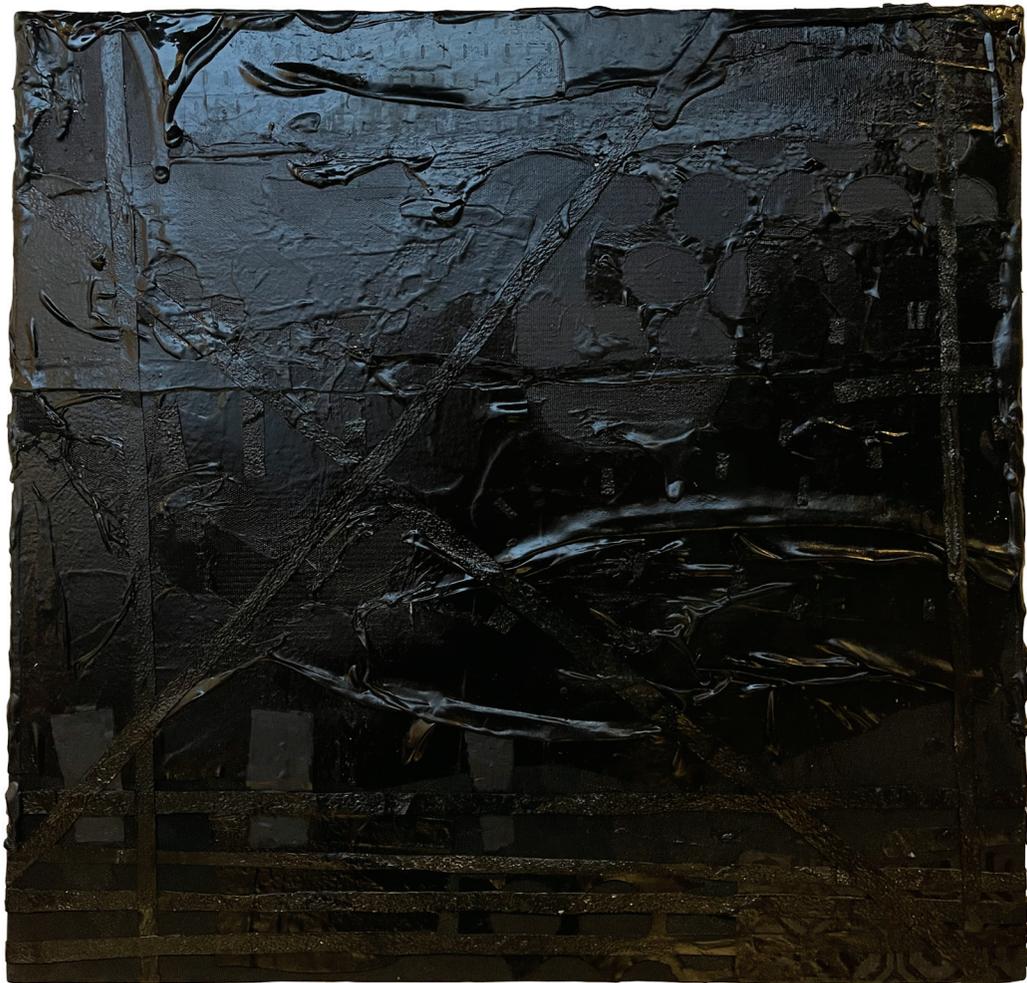
acrylic skin on canvas



UMBRA 007

61cm x 61cm

acrylic skin on canvas



UMBRA 008

61cm x 61cm

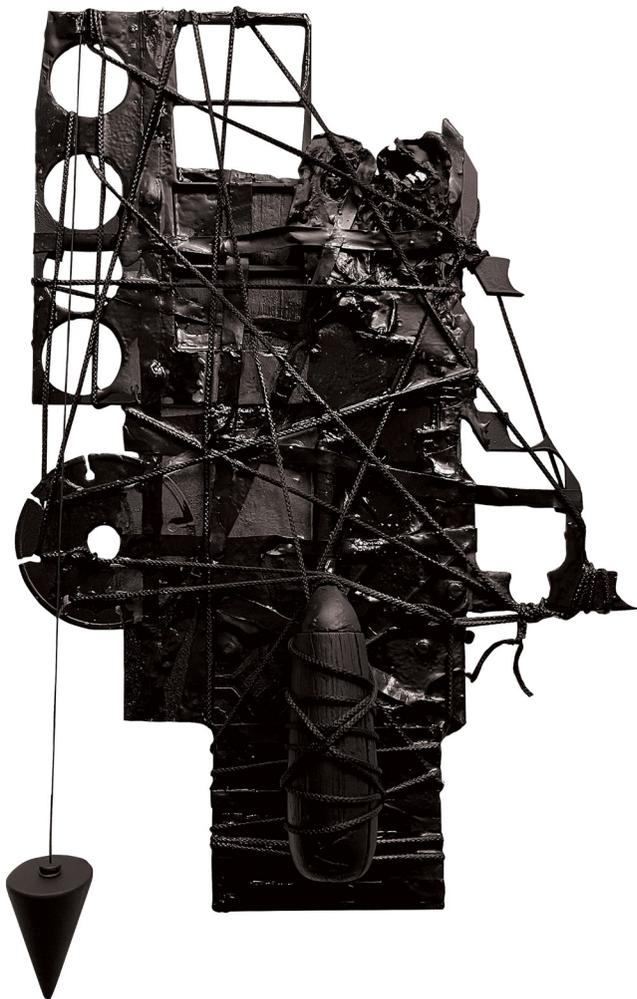
acrylic skin on canvas



STILL LIFE 001

43cm x 43cm

assemblage



STILL LIFE 002

43cm x 43cm

assemblage



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