



**WE CAN
ALL BE
ARTISTS**



INTRODUCTION

BALTIC believes that contemporary art is important.

It provides a lens through which to view the world and introduces new ways of seeing and thinking about what happens around us.

BALTIC believes that artists are important.

Their work, be it painting, drawing, sculpture, installation, film or performance offers us the opportunity to question, wonder, play and make, without the fear of being wrong.

Because of this, BALTIC is delighted to launch the BALTIC Artists' Award, the first worldwide biennial art award to be judged solely by artists. The four selected artists are Jose Dávila, Eric N. Mack, Toni Schmale and Shen Xin.

Here, BALTIC presents the *We Can All Be Artists* book; a compilation of reflective questions, games, wonders and activities to embed the themes, ideas and inspirations of our four Artist Award winners into the everyday.

Share your *We Can All Be Artists* moments with family, friends, colleagues and neighbours and remember to pass this book along to someone else when you are done.

The BALTIC Artists' Award 2017 runs between 30 June and 1 October in BALTIC's Level 3 and 4 spaces. We invite you to bring your thoughts, opinions, questions and ideas to the gallery and experience the work in person.

Visitors will be able to vote for the artist presentation they have the greatest connection to. This will inform an additional legacy commission project for the communities of Gateshead.

BALTIC believes contemporary art is important. Contemporary art is for everyone.

Top Left: Jose Dávila, *Joint Effort* 2016. Courtesy Travesia Cuarto Madrid and artist. Photo: Sebastiano Pellion di Persano. Top Right: Eric N. Mack, *Domestic Umbrella as Backyard Band* 2016. Photo: Bjarne Jonasson. Bottom Left: Toni Schmale, *Lap* 2013. Photo: Courtesy Christine König Galerie and the artist. Bottom Right: Shen Xin, Still, *Provocation of the Nightingale #1*, digital video, 22mins. 2017. Courtesy, the artist.

JOSE DÁVILA

Born in 1974, Jose Dávila lives and works in Guadalajara, Mexico. The artist is interested in architecture and art history. He makes sculpture, photography and installation.

Originally intending to study art, Dávila couldn't afford to attend a university outside of Guadalajara and so enrolled in architecture school instead. He took sculpture and photography classes in his summer holidays.

Dávila's sculptures demonstrate his architectural beginnings. They shun traditional art materials for those normally found on a **construction site**.

*"In many poor areas of the world, cheap and found materials are reconfigured to create something else than [what] these materials or objects were originally created for. I like that cue. It is a very interesting form of recycling; reusing... that comes out of the scarcity of resources."**

Inspired by the simple lines and pared-down shapes of 1950s' Minimalism, Dávila's sculptures, made from glass, stone, marble, metal and nylon ratchet straps, are carefully arranged and kept in tense, but perfect, **balance**.

As a self-taught art historian, Dávila talks about how devouring book after book in pursuit of knowledge led to an awareness of artists that would ultimately inspire and shape his practice.

*"I'm an artist but I'm also obviously an art lover, and since Guadalajara is not an art capital in the sense of Paris or New York or London or LA or Mexico City, even. The way I got to know was through books. And the result of consulting all these books...was natural contamination, if you will."***

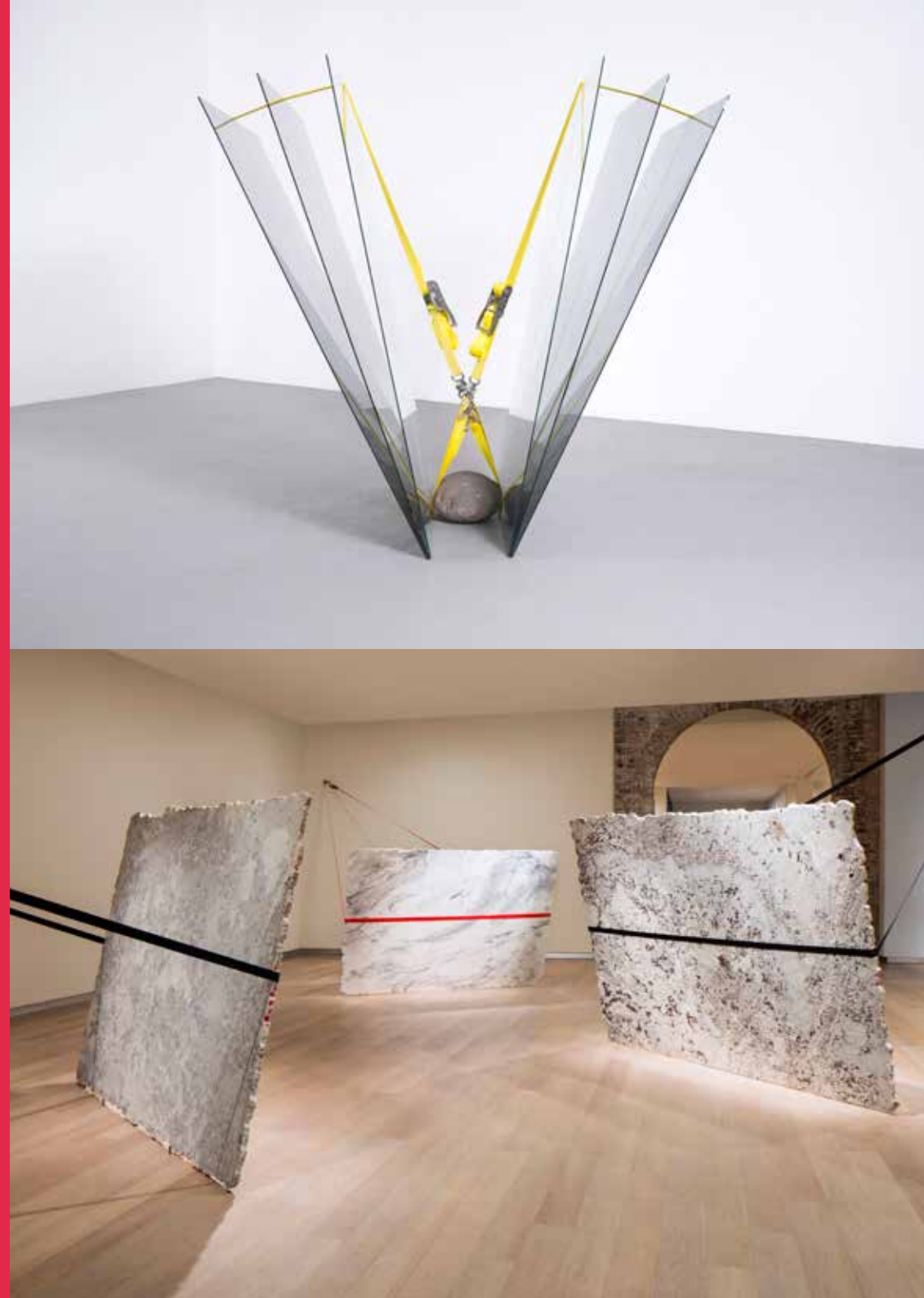
Other artists, similar to Jose Dávila, are Josef Albers, Hélio Oiticica and Richard Serra.

Jose Dávila was selected by Pedro Cabrita Reis.

Top: Jose Dávila, *Joint Effort* 2016. Courtesy Travesía Cuarto Madrid and artist. Bottom: Jose Dávila, *Practical Structures* 2016. Photo: John Mckinnon. Courtesy of Savannah College of Art and Design.

* Lindquist, Greg, "Jose Dávila" *Arte al Día Internacional* 143. Jul. 2013: 32-39. Print

**Goldstein, Andrew M.. (2015, February 5). "Jose Dávila on the Poetry of Precarious Balances". Artspace. Retrieved from www.artspace.com/magazine/interviews_features/meet_the_artist/jose-dávila-interview-52590



ASK

- Is architecture art?
- How do different styles of architecture make you feel?
- What does place mean to you?
- Do buildings hold memories?
- What and where is your favourite space?
- Can any materials be used in, or for, art?
- How important is colour in Dávila's work?
- Do you associate certain colours with different feelings?
- How do you stay balanced?

MAKE

Build a bridge...

Collect your own non-traditional art materials; use stones, sofa cushions, plastic cups, tins of beans, straws, plastic tubes, belts and buckles.

Think about your bridge's purpose, strength, design, balance and tension. Share a picture using #balticartistsaward.

Now, break your bridge... **make it topple!**

Take the Balance Challenge...

Balance on one leg; balance on the other.

Walk for one minute on your tip toes.

Stretch up to the sky, as far as your fingers will take you.

What other bits of your body can you balance on?

PLAY

Play Rock-Paper-Scissors...

Find an opponent and get competitive

Rock Blunts Scissors

Scissors Cuts Paper

Paper Wraps Rock

Best of three?

Give your game a dose of Dávila. What does Boulder-Glass-Strap look like?

WONDER

Architecture is all around...

This summer, remember to **look up, down, across and out** at the buildings, monuments and sculptures all around you.

Record what you see. Draw, photograph, write or commit to memory.

Hey, Eye-spy..!

Eye spy, with my little eye...

Something older than me,

Something made of glass,

Something with no corners,

Something in perfect balance,

A building that looks like it has **A REALLY LOUD VOICE.**

ERIC N. MACK

Eric N. Mack was born in 1987 in Columbia, Maryland, USA. His parents both worked at the National Gallery in Washington DC. Although good at art, Mack originally wanted to be a zoologist. It was attending an arts-led high school that gave him the opportunity to explore painting and sculpture, and experiment with his artistic style.

Now living and working in New York his artwork is fuelled by a passion for **fashion, fabrics and form**. Mack describes himself as a painter, using abstract marks and gestures in acrylic paint, ink, lacquer and dye to change the surface of second-hand clothing, rugs, blankets and other fabrics. He then adds these to structures and supports that create free-standing, **three-dimensional paintings**.

A lot of Mack's work revolves around fashion's endless **cycle of novelty and newness**; where a particular trend rises to become the in-thing before eventually being resigned to the back of the wardrobe and the charity shop bag.

"Everything gets done" he says, "...everything ends. Everything is gonna be vintage in some secondhand shop." *

Mack re-uses the vintage in his artwork; choosing garments by particular designers, items from iconic moments in fashion, silken pieces given by friends, industrial moving blankets with thick, rough weave and his own carefully chosen clothing to create patchwork, **sculptural paintings of texture, pattern and colour**.

Other artists, similar to Eric N. Mack, are Robert Rauschenberg and David Hammons.

Eric N. Mack was selected by Lorna Simpson.

Eric N. Mack, 2 FANS 2015. Courtesy, the artist.

*Gassel, Harry, "Visual Identity: Meet Eric N. Mack, the New York Artist Breathing New Life Into Old Clothes", *The Fader*, June 24, 2004, <http://www.thefader.com/2014/06/24/visual-identity-meet-eric-n-mack-the-new-york-artist-breathing-new-life-into-old-clothes> [accessed 24/04/17]



ASK

- What do you value most?
- What does what we value say about our society?
- How sustainable is fashion?
- Does 'pre-loved' have the same value as 'brand new'?
- How beautiful is second-hand?
- What makes something beautiful?
- Who, or what, defines beauty?
- How important is what you wear? Why?
- What do your clothes say about you?
- Do you dress to stand out or to fit in?
- What makes you beautiful?

MAKE

Build a den...

Use duvets, blankets, sheets, cushions, scarves, dressing gowns and jumpers to drape, peg, hang, dangle, wrap and line your own safe space.

Make yourself at home.

Wrap yourself in fashion...

Find new ways to wear your clothes; pop your jumper arms on your legs and jump around, put your gloves on your feet; wiggle those toes, tie your scarf around your waist and shake that tailfeather!

PLAY

"I paid attention to the way people walked down the street, what people wore and what I was interested in wearing as well... There's something about the energy in fashion, the energy in the garment."

Be energetic with your fashion. Roll a dice. Follow the corresponding instruction.

- 1 Wear odd socks for a week.
- 2 Choose a piece of clothing that makes you feel beautiful.
- 3 Wear one colour, head to toe; the brighter the better.
- 4 Make your own pin-badges or buttons. Model them, distribute them; every artist starts small.
- 5 Mix up the seasons; wear your best festive outfit.
- 6 Create an alter-ego. Dress to suit their personality. #balticartistsaward

WONDER

Imagine a world inside Eric's artwork and go on a "Fabric Adventure"

What would it **feel** like to wear feather-lined duvet pyjamas?

What would it **sound** like to stomp around in bubble-wrap shoes?

What would you **say** if you met an embroidered elephant wearing fancy faux-fur?

What would it **look** like if the sky was made of soft, silky sweatpants with cotton-quilted clouds?

TONI SCHMALE

Toni Schmale was born in Hamburg, Germany in 1980 and lives and works in Vienna, Austria.

Schmale initially pursued a career in professional football and played in regional and national leagues until she was 22. Her continued interest in **the body** and pushing it as far as it can physically go can be seen in her artistic practice.

As a sculptor, Toni Schmale uses metals, concrete and plastics to create **machine-like objects** in black and grey. The artist is interested in **male and female stereotypes** and the body's capacity to experience desire, pain, tiredness and other sensations.

Her sculptures suggest an element of **everyday usability**; sports equipment that could be from outdoor trim trails; baking paraphernalia, medieval torture devices, medical apparatus or massage tables; and she invites discussion on their usage.

Other artists, similar to Toni Schmale are the Guerrilla Girls, Barbara Kruger and Yoko Ono.

Toni Schmale was selected by Monica Bonvicini.



Top: Toni Schmale, *hl. Antonia* 2015. Photo: Uwe Boek. Courtesy Christine König Galerie and the artist. Bottom: Toni Schmale, *Waltraud* 2016. Photo: Sofia Goscinski. Courtesy Christine König Galerie and the artist.

ASK

- Are there some things in life that only men or women can do?
- How are these reflected in the media or advertising?
- What do you value about yourself?
- What do you love about your body?
- What do other people think of you?
- Which opinion do you think holds the most value? Why?
- What are the characteristics of power?
- Are you a powerful person? Why?
- Who is the most powerful person you know?
- How powerful is art?

MAKE

Make a machine.

Collect junk. Build a bot like Toni Schmale.

- How many **legs** would it have?
- One, two or seven **heads**?
- Where would it **live**?
- How might it **move**?
- What might you **tell** people about your bot?

PLAY

Take part in the Contraption-Pentathlon...

- 1 Get your robot-dance on! Who can last the longest?
- 2 Work together like a well-oiled machine in a three-legged race.
- 3 Compose the best **robot rap**; spit your rhymes in a battle-style performance. Share at #balticartistsaward
- 4 Be a machinery-mimic... who can make the best machine-like sounds; chug, whirrrrrr, brrrrrrr!
- 5 Be a movement-mime... work as a pair reflecting a set of movements like a mirroring-machine

WONDER

Give Toni's machines names and personalities...

Who's the **grumpiest**, the **friendliest**, the **meanest** and the most thoughtful? **Who's the best dancer?**

What happens to Toni's machines at night? Where do they go? What do they do?

Imagine if our bodies were different...

What if we all had **shark mouths** and could eat everything in one snappy bite? Imagine if humans had **wings** and we could soar instead of walk. How different might the world appear?

Wonder what it would be like if, instead of legs, we had shiny, mirrored, glorious **mer-tails**. How would we move?

SHEN XIN

Shen Xin was born in 1990 in Chengdu, China. She now lives in London, UK.

As a filmmaker, Shen works with **moving image** and creates carefully edited artworks.

Shen's films often make comment about the **society we live in**. They are documentary-like and feature close observations of human relationships. Her work includes recordings of scripted and choreographed conversations and imagined meetings performed by actors and dancers alongside found footage from the internet and real-life video shared on social media.

Emotion, judgement, power, identity, the role of women and truth are key themes and the artist aims to encourage people watching her work to question the world around them and reflect, not just on their place within it, but how, as individuals, we all have power to make change.

Shen graduated from the Slade School of Fine Art, London in 2014, and has previously produced films that document her family, cultural and religious identity and the female body. The role of women and particularly, Asian women, is a recurring thread running through her work.

Other artists similar to Shen Xin are Heather Phillipson, Gail Pickering, Lorna Simpson and Fiona Tan.

Shen Xin was selected by Mike Nelson.



ASK

- How accurately does film capture a moment in time?
- What does film not show?
- To what extent do you believe everything you see?
- What do you think about fake news?
- Who, or what, has a duty to be truthful?
- Do you always tell the truth?
- How important is truth to our world today?
- How important is it for art to be honest?
- How does society benefit from having artists?
- Should artists make work that contributes to a better world?

MAKE

Five ways with film

- 1 Capture a moment in time. **Your memory is the best camera.**
- 2 Use a mobile phone to document and **record the everyday.** Edit reality with different perspectives.
- 3 **Make images move** with a flick book or a spinning thaumatrope.*
- 4 Play with torch light and projection; **make shadow stories** on a blank wall. Share them with #balticartistsaward
- 5 **Become an inventor.** Make a camera obscura or pin hole camera.**

* <http://www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Thaumatrope>

** <http://www.instructables.com/id/How-To-Make-A-Pinhole-Camera/>

PLAY

Act out the following pair of emotions or states using gesture and body language only.

Can anyone guess what you are describing?

Power / Vulnerability

Truth / Lies

Happiness / Sadness

Silence / Noise

Fear / Peace

WONDER

Colour code how you feel...

Colours are often associated with feelings.

Give your own colours to the following feelings:

Hopeful / Worried / Confident / Jealous / Indifferent

Excited / Happy / Safe / Misunderstood

Create artwork that expresses how you feel. Use your code to record your feelings throughout the day.

Add new feelings and code them with a colour as you go along.

Remember to make colours lighter or darker if you start to run out.

Think about extending this to visually colour-code your feelings over a week; a month; even a year. **Make a Colour Journal to diary the days.**

WHAT WOULD
THE WORLD
BE LIKE
WITHOUT
ARTISTS?



BALTIC Artists' Award
2017



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