

Chitra Ganesh
Journey to the Great Below
4 July 2026 – 17 January 2027

BALTIC

Press Preview: Friday 3 July 2026



Chitra Ganesh, *Journey to the Great Below* (animation still), 2026. Courtesy the artist

Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art is pleased to announce the first major solo exhibition in a UK institution by artist Chitra Ganesh. *Journey to the Great Below*, opening 4 July 2026, will feature a new animation, newly commissioned sculptural works and a site-specific wall drawing, alongside a selection of recent paintings, prints, works on paper and mixed media works.

Ganesh's practice is rooted in drawing and painting and has a distinctive multidisciplinary approach. Over the past twenty-five years, she has developed an expansive body of work that encompasses wall drawings, collage, animation, installation, and sculpture. Informed by her studies in literature, semiotics, and contemporary social theory, her visual vocabulary also draws from histories of surrealism, science fiction, anime, and South Asian visual culture including ancient statuary, popular Indian comics and graphic design.

Ganesh creates richly layered worlds that probe epic myths and historical narratives to offer speculative visions of society. Reorienting traditional forms of storytelling around queer and femme protagonists, Ganesh's world building explores themes such as psychic transformation, sexuality, power, and loss. Centring figures that have long been marginalised, her shape-shifting characters occupy liminal spaces, inviting us to consider utopian possibilities in moments of precarity and turbulence.

For this exhibition at Baltic, Ganesh will premiere a new large-scale animation titled *Journey to the Great Below*, inspired by what is widely considered to be the world's oldest recorded myth, *The Descent of Inanna into the Underworld*. Written c. 1900–1600 BCE in Mesopotamia

(modern-day Iraq), the story follows Inanna, the Sumerian Goddess of love, fecundity, and war, also known as the 'Queen of Heaven', on her treacherous journey to face her sister (and darker half) Ereshkigal, the 'Queen of the Underworld'. The poem describes Inanna's confrontation with death and her eventual return to the world of the living.

In *Journey to the Great Below*, history, myth, and contemporary life converge. Vibrant scenes interweave three-dimensional speculative mapping with archaeological materials and artefacts, infusing Mesopotamia and Indus Valley cosmologies with the language of futurism. Inanna's tumultuous journey into the underworld resonates deeply with the current moment marked by political and ecological upheaval. Her shattered and renewed life is a potent metaphor for navigating our increasingly dark times with resilience and courage, offering a message of hope for our contemporary situation.

A new body of related sculptures, commissioned by Baltic, create a three-dimensional staging of *The Descent of Inanna* in real space and time. Fragmented architectural forms evoke the 'Great Below', inviting us to experience a world imagined thousands of years ago. Large-scale sculptures inspired by Inanna's passage through the underworld – including an oversized eye (symbolising piety, devotion, fear, and destruction in Mesopotamian culture), and a descending staircase – draw upon artefacts held in the collections of The British Museum in London and The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. A site-specific wall drawing with collaged elements, also commissioned especially for the exhibition, features vignettes from the poem.

As the story unfolds across the gallery space, mixed media works from Ganesh's studio, including *Open Expectations of the Unknown Event* and *Untitled (Staircase)* (both 2021), and the paintings *Tree of Life* and *Breathing Water and Air* (both 2024) explore recurring ideas such as bodily transformation and states of becoming. Heads and bodies have turned into animals, trees, and flowers, creating hybrid beings. The sculpture *Manuscript* (2018) constructed from aluminium and raw silk, replicates the artist's hand magnified twelvefold. Informed by Ganesh's embodied experience of monumental statuary in India, the hand's otherworldly scale, combined with futuristic animated scenes mapped onto its surface, immerses us in the imaginary.

Major Exhibition Supporters: **Bagri Foundation / Bukhman Foundation**

Exhibition Supporter: **Henry Moore Foundation**



RELATED EVENT

Journey to the Great Below: Artist & Curator Tour **Saturday 4 July 2026 | 16:00**

Chitra Ganesh will discuss her work and exhibition with Senior Curator Emma Dean in a guided tour of *Journey to the Great Below*. Booking essential. Tickets available from www.baltic.art/tickets

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NOTES TO EDITORS

About Chitra Ganesh

Chitra Ganesh was born in 1975 in Brooklyn, New York. She received a BA in Art-Semiotics and Comparative Literature from Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island in 1996. She attended the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Madison, Maine in 2001 and received her MFA in Visual Arts from Columbia University, New York in 2002. Ganesh lives and works in Brooklyn.

Ganesh's work has been widely exhibited in the United States and internationally. Solo exhibitions and projects include: *Regeneration*, New York Penn Station, New York (2024); *Astral Dance*, Contemporary Calgary, Calgary (2022); *Dreaming in Multiverse*, Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum, St. Louis, Missouri (2022); *QUEERPOWER*, Leslie-Lohman Museum of Art, New York (2020); *Chitra Ganesh: Her Garden, a mirror*, The Kitchen, New York (2018); *The Scorpion Gesture and Face of the Future*, The Rubin Museum of Art, New York (2018); *The Scorpion Gesture, Midnight Moments*, Times Square, New York (2018); *Afterlives of Blacksites: The Seen Unseen, Index of the Disappeared, Mining Warm Data*, Dhaka Art Summit, Shilpakala Academy, Dhaka (2016); *Eyes of Time*, Brooklyn Museum, New York (2014); *She, the Question*, Gothenburg Kunsthalle, Gothenburg (2012); *Word of God(ess): Chitra Ganesh's Tales of Amnesia*, The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh (2011); *On Site 2: The Silhouette Returns*, MoMA PS1, Long Island City, New York (2009).

Ganesh's work is represented in the collections of leading art institutions including: Guggenheim, New York; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco; Baltimore Museum of Art, Baltimore; Brooklyn Museum, New York; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.; Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago; Cleveland Art Museum, Ohio; San Jose Museum of Art, San Jose; the Devi Art Foundation, New Delhi; Kiran Nadar Museum, Delhi; Saatchi Collection, London; Gwangju Museum of Art, Gwangju; Denver Art Museum, Denver; Detroit Institute of Art, Detroit; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia.

About Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art

Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art is a major international centre for art situated on the south bank of the River Tyne in Gateshead, England. It has welcomed over 10 million visitors since opening in July 2002. Baltic presents a distinctive and ambitious programme of temporary exhibitions and events and is a world leader in the presentation and commissioning of contemporary visual art. Housed in a landmark ex-industrial building, Baltic houses 2,600 square metres of art space, making it one of Europe's largest dedicated contemporary art institutions.

Baltic has presented the work of over 877 artists of 78 nationalities in 266 exhibitions to date including Joy Labinjo, Hew Locke, Heather Phillipson, Antony Gormley, Cornelia Parker, Daniel Buren, Lubaina Himid, Steve McQueen, Jenny Holzer, Judy Chicago, Lorna Simpson, Imran Perretta, Huma Bhabha and John Akomfrah.

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