

Media Release  
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# BALTIC

## *For All At Last Return*

8 November 2025 – 7 June 2026

Monira Al Qadiri / Michele Allen / Bianca Bondi / Shezad Dawood / Taloi Havini  
and Michael Toisuta / Joan Jonas / Otobong Nkanga / Katja Novitskova /  
Kristina Öllek / Leticia Ramos / Emilija Škarnulytė / Rob Smith



This autumn, Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art will present a major new group exhibition focusing on marine ecosystems. *For All At Last Return* explores different ocean habitats, from near-shore and intertidal zones to coral reefs, the open ocean and the deep sea, considering our relationships with these fragile environments and their dependent communities.

Marine waters cover more than 70% of the Earth's surface, supporting a vast amount of life, from microbes to marine megafauna. The ocean is vital for our survival, providing us with oxygen, food, energy and medicines and absorbing excess carbon from the atmosphere. However, human activities such as the burning of fossil fuels, plastic and chemical pollution and overfishing are degrading marine habitats and pushing many species to the brink of extinction.

Opening 8 November 2025, *For All At Last Return* features the work of British and international artists for whom the health of the ocean is an enduring concern. This immersive exhibition journeys through underwater worlds from the ocean's surface to the seabed, examining the impact of human activity on marine habitats and aquatic life.

Working at the intersection of art and ecology, many of the artists in the exhibition have collaborated with marine biologists and oceanographers to raise awareness of the local, regional and global issues that threaten marine ecosystems, and to foster dialogue across disciplines.

**Joan Jonas'** multimedia installation *Moving Off The Land II* (2019) pays tribute to ocean life, its biodiversity, intelligence and complex ecologies. **Monira Al Qadiri's** *Zephyr* sculptures (2023) reimagine ancient marine fossils found in desert regions, reminding us that these delicate marine organisms have existed for millions of years, long before our seas receded.

**Taloi Havini and Michael Toisuta's** films *Dengung Hyena* and *Hyena Lullaby* (2019) explore the regeneration of coral reefs at night through mass coral-spawning, while **Shezad Dawood** addresses how coral species have been impacted by climate change in his *Ghost Reef* series (2024). New work by **Michele Allen** considers coastal ecologies in the North East of England, documenting the restoration of lost habitats and the recent die-off of marine species. **Leticia Ramos** presents panoramic prints capturing vast intertidal landscapes in southern Brazil.

A newly commissioned work by **Kristina Öllek** *Breathing Deep Currency* (2025) examines the metallic properties of deep-sea nodules, reflecting on the ocean as a site of extraction and exploitation. **Rob Smith** investigates the recent discovery of 'dark oxygen' generated by these nodules in a new multimedia work with a real-time data. **Katja Novitskova's** sculptural renderings of hydrothermal vents look at the processes of extraction from a speculative and imaginary perspective, while **Emilija Škarnulytė's** immersive film *Hypoxia* (2023) explores the man-made phenomenon of oxygen depletion in the Baltic Sea.

**Bianca Bondi's** sculptures *Red List Hector's Dolphin (The Fall and Rise)* and *Red List Amazon River Dolphin (The Fall and Rise)* (both 2021) are a poignant reminder that in some regions these charismatic creatures face extinction, which disrupts the nutrient cycle and affects other marine life. The cycle of life, death and rebirth is also the subject of **Otobong Nkanga's** woven tapestry *Tied to the Other Side* (2021), which considers the colonisation of marine frontiers and the loss of life at sea.

In highlighting the impact of human activity on marine biodiversity across the globe, from the coral reefs of the South Pacific to the rocky shores of the North Atlantic, the artists in the exhibition encourage us to reimagine our relationship with the ocean and its non-human inhabitants. We are invited to make kin with marine life, with the understanding that we are deeply connected and our futures are inextricably linked.

The title of the exhibition is a quotation from the book *The Sea Around Us* (1951), by American marine biologist, writer and conservationist Rachel Carson (1907–1964). Research shows that if we reduce carbon emissions, protect and restore our ocean ecosystems and carefully manage the use of natural resources, it may be possible to preserve our marine habitats. The ocean is where all life began – as the climate emergency unfolds, can we find sustainable ways to co-exist, or will our seas reclaim us?

Baltic is located next to the River Tyne, a tidal river, and is built on land that was once salt meadow habitat, eight miles from the North Sea. In the development of the exhibition, the curators have been in conversation with artists, marine biologists, oceanographers, researchers and conservationists, and over the course of the next six months Baltic will host a public programme with talks, workshops, performances, and films expanding on the theme of the exhibition.

### **Artist Talk: Saturday 8 November 2025 / 18:30**

During the opening weekend, artists Shezad Dawood, Kristina Õllek and Leticia Ramos, will take part in an in conversation chaired by Alice Sharp, Artistic Director of Invisible Dust in the exhibition space at Baltic. Tickets will be bookable from [baltic.art/tickets](https://baltic.art/tickets) from 25 September 2025.

*For All At Last Return* is curated by Emma Dean, Senior Curator, with Amani Mitha, Assistant Curator.

### **Exhibition Partners**



With thanks to the Embassy of Estonia in London and the Estonian Contemporary Art Development Center (ECADC).

#### **Images Top Row L-R**

Joan Jonas, *Moving Off the Land II*, at Ocean Space, Chiesa di San Lorenzo, 2019. Commissioned by TBA21–Academy and co-produced with Luma Foundation. Photo: Enrico Fiorese

Shezad Dawood, *Disposable mementoes (Shell)*, 2018. Image courtesy the artist

#### **Images Top Row L-R**

Emilija Škarnulytė, *Hypoxia*, 2023. Image courtesy the artist

Katja Novitskova, *Hydrothermal Potential (East Scotia Ridge)*, 2015. Image courtesy the artist

### **Notes to Editors**

#### **About the Artists**

**Monira Al Qadiri** is a Kuwaiti artist born in Senegal and educated in Japan. Spanning sculpture, installation, film, and performance, Al Qadiri's multifaceted practice is based on research into the cultural histories of the Gulf region. Her interpretation of the Gulf's so-called 'petro-culture' is manifested through speculative scenarios that take inspiration from science fiction, autobiography, traditional practices, and pop culture, resulting in uncanny and covertly subversive works that destabilise mythologies of statecraft and modernisation as well as traditional notions of gender. Tracing the delicate ecologies threatened by the petroleum industry's relentless resource extraction, Al Qadiri's works envision a world in which oil is a relic of humanity's past. She is currently based in Berlin.

**Michele Allen** is a British artist and researcher based in Newcastle upon Tyne working with photography, sound, video, text and archival research. Her practice is deeply rooted in place, creating projects, which often span several years and involve work with communities, environmental experts and academics to explore our relationships with the natural world and each other. Her work is often resolved as site-specific installations in gallery and community settings including heritage sites, interventions in museum collections, video installations, and print multiples. Several recent projects have reflected on biodiversity and habitat restoration in relation to rare and protected landscapes, in the context of the climate emergency and species loss.

**Bianca Bondi** is a South African artist based in Paris. Her multidisciplinary practice involves the activation or elevation of mundane objects through the use of chemical reactions, most often by salt water. The materials she works with are chosen for their potential for mutation or their intrinsic and symbolic properties. Her aim being to promote experiences beyond the visual and advocate the life of matter with an emphasis on interconnectivity, transience, and the cycles of life and death. Passionate about ecology and the occult sciences, Bondi combines the two resulting in 'pluridisciplinary' works of a transformative nature through which the aura of objects is key. Often site-specific, the poetic results are very much connected to the places in which they are to exist.

**Shezad Dawood** is a British artist based in London. His multidisciplinary practice interweaves stories, realities and symbolism to create richly layered artworks, spanning painting, textiles, sculpture, film and digital media. Fascinated by ecologies and architecture, his work takes a philosophical approach, asking questions and exploring alternative futures through what Dawood describes as 'world-building'. His practice is animated by research, working with multiple audiences and communities to delve into narrative, history and embodiment. His fascination with marine ecology and the potential for hybrid thinking across both human and marine ecosystems has been presented internationally.

#### **Taloi Havini and Michael Toisuta**

**Taloi Havini** is a descendant from the Nakas clan of the Hakö (Haku) people of northeastern Buka in Papua New Guinea. Her research practice is shaped by her matrilineal ties to her land in the Autonomous Region of Bougainville and studies surrounding Indigenous Knowledge Systems and museum collections. She works across a range of media including sculpture, photography, moving image, installation and sound, to create immersive and site-specific experiences, often reflecting on ideas of transmission, mapping and representation. She continues to work collaboratively on cultural heritage projects with communities in Bougainville and is currently based in Brisbane.

**Michael Toisuta** grew up in Central Java, Indonesia. Now based in Sydney, he has worked internationally as a composer and sound designer for theatre, dance, film and video art installations. He has sound designed video art installations and short films.

**Joan Jonas** is a world-renowned American artist whose work encompasses a wide range of media including video, performance, installation, sound, text, and

sculpture. Jonas' experiments and productions in the late 1960s and early 1970s continue to be crucial to the development of many contemporary art genres, from performance and video to conceptual art and theatre. Since 1968, her practice has considered ways of seeing, the rhythms of rituals and the authority of objects and gestures and explored themes of myth, landscape, memory and ecological crisis, with drawing remaining a central thread throughout her multidisciplinary approach. Jonas lives and works in New York City.

**Otobong Nkanga** is a Nigerian-born artist based in Antwerp. Her work foregrounds ecological themes of relationality and becoming through a distilled poetics of entanglement. Her multidisciplinary practice examines the complex social, political, and material relationships between bodies, territories, minerals and the earth. Unsettling the divisions between minimal and conceptual or sensual and surreal approaches, the artist's research-based practice constellates humans and landscapes, organic and non-organic matter, Global North and Global South economies. Through drawing, installation, performance, photography, textiles and sculpture, Nkanga creates pathways translating the natural world – its plants, herbs, minerals and living organisms – into networked, aggregated situations evoking memory, labour, home, care, ownership, emotion, touch and smell.

**Katja Novitskova** is an Estonian artist who lives and works in Amsterdam. Her work tackles the complexity and eventual failures of depicting the world through technologically driven narratives. By uniting art and science to the level of nature, Novitskova brings awareness to the mediation and representation tools used to depict these realms. Focusing on the mapping of biological territories that are no longer outside but rather 'inside' biological bodies, her images that depict nature become models for future approximations of life and translations into more synthetic forms. Her works bring up memories of the 'alien' depicted by science fiction, as well as the role of the non-human in a hypothetical not so distant future.

**Kristina Õllek** is an Estonian artist currently based in Tallinn. She works with photography, video and installation, as well as microbial and chemical processes, with a focus on investigating aquatic ecosystems, geological matter, and the human-altered environments. In her practice she uses a research-based approach, but within this she also incorporates her own fictitious and speculative perspectives. In particular, she is focused on the marine habitat and the notion of new technologies, including the geopolitical and ecological conditions associated with them.

In 2024, Baltic invited Õllek to undertake a research residency as part of the Baltic|States Residency Exchange Programme, and to develop a new work for the exhibition. The Baltic|States Programme enables artist and curator research and professional development through a series of supported residencies, studio visits, curator study visits and commissions at Baltic, Gateshead and partner venues in the Baltic region. Õllek's residency and commission is supported by the Embassy of Estonia in London and the Estonian Contemporary Art Development Center (ECADC).

**Leticia Ramos** is a Brazilian artist who lives and works in São Paulo. Her artistic research focuses on creating photographic apparatus for capturing and

reconstructing movement and presenting it through video, photography and installation. She experiments with photography and the artistic process, exploring the limits of production and the science of fiction, developing installations, objects, publications, and performances. Using rigorous technical and formal procedures as a point of departure, she emulates aspects of scientific expeditions to guide us along ambiguous and atemporal objects and themes.

Ramos is participating in this exhibition as part of *The Ocean's Edge Litoral do Limite*, in partnership with Pivô (Brazil) and Invisible Dust (UK), blending art, ocean science and Indigenous philosophies to explore the future of the Brazilian and UK Atlantics, with major support from the British Council's UK/Brazil Season of Culture 2025–26 and Instituto Guimarães Rosa.

**Emilija Škarnulytė** is a Lithuanian-born artist and filmmaker. Working between the realms of the documentary and the imaginary, Škarnulytė makes films and immersive installations exploring deep time and invisible structures. She works in realms that range from the cosmic and geological to the ecological and political. In her emerging cosmology, she binds the ancient and the future through the mythological. With a future archaeologist's perspective, the artist's films take us into decommissioned nuclear power plants and deep-sea data storage units, forgotten underwater cities, and uncanny natural phenomena. She is a founder and currently co-directs Polar Film Lab, a collective for analogue film practice located in Tromsø, Norway and is a member of the artist duo New Mineral Collective.

**Rob Smith** is a British artist and researcher based in Newcastle upon Tyne. His work explores human relationships with marine environments, and the ways digital technologies can materialise these remote and inaccessible places. His practice combines critical investigation with material and situated approaches to develop new understandings and narratives for the deep sea in the context of climate change. He is currently a member of the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) research project Visualising the Deep Sea in the Age of Climate Change, working alongside scientists, historians, and artists to question how technological mediation both reveals and obscures the ocean's depths. His projects bring together fieldwork, photography, and digital imaging processes with sculptural and site-based practices, testing how artworks can open speculative encounters with deep ocean environments.

### **About the Partners**

**Invisible Dust** (UK) creates new thinking to address urgent climate futures through ambitious collaborations between leading artists and scientists. Founded in 2009 by Artistic Director Alice Sharp, Invisible Dust inspires UK and global audiences to engage with critical environmental issues through contemporary art commissions, events, and pioneering scientific ideas.

**Pivô** (Brazil) is an autonomous contemporary art platform founded in 2012, dedicated to artistic exchange, research, and experimentation. At its core, the institution seeks to reflect on artistic practice and advance its understanding as a distinct form of thought and active participation in visual culture, society, and politics – operating as a space for proposing, investigating, exploring, and

experimenting. This purpose unfolds through an ongoing programme that includes commissioned projects, exhibitions, artist residencies, publications, and public programmes, creating conditions for the creation and circulation of ideas in direct collaboration with artists, curators, and publics, both nationally and internationally.

**Schmidt Ocean Institute** (US) was established in 2009 by Eric and Wendy Schmidt to catalyse the discoveries needed to understand our Ocean, sustain life, and ensure the health of our planet through the pursuit of impactful scientific research and intelligent observation, technological advancement, open sharing of information, and public engagement. The Schmidt Ocean Artist-at-Sea programme, launched in 2015, engages art to illuminate a deeper understanding of and connection with the ocean. The programme is uniquely positioned to facilitate collaborations between artists and the world's leading marine scientists, providing the Research Vessel *Falkor (too)* as a platform for advanced technology-based ocean research, that lends to artistic exploration and dialogues across disciplines.

**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.

[www.baltic.art](http://www.baltic.art)

Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art  
South Shore Road, Gateshead NE8 3BA  
Open Wednesday – Sunday, 10am–6pm. Free entry.

Baltic is supported by



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