

The VASSEUR BALTIC Artists' Award

9 Apr - 2 Oct 2022

Laleh Khorramian
Ima-Abasi Okon
Fernando García-Dory

BALTIC



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2022 is a significant year for BALTIC. As we recover from the pandemic, we are delighted to celebrate our 20th Birthday year with a series of ambitious new commissions and projects both in our galleries and embedded within our communities.

BALTIC is the largest non-collecting arts organisation in the UK. We don't have a collection but instead support artists through commissioning and producing ambitious new artworks, often in partnership with other UK or international organisations.

BALTIC has developed an international reputation among artists and audiences for our programme of exhibitions and learning programmes that are inspired by diverse perspectives and have the power to inspire new understandings, new ideas and new conversations about the world and our place in it.

Established in 2017, BALTIC's biennial award aims to provide artists with a major opportunity that offers a step change moment in their career, through a unique approach of selection and artists' mentorship. For this edition, we have invited three established international artists to nominate an artist at earlier stages of their career.

We are thrilled for the 2022 iteration, Otdong Nkanga has nominated Ima-Abasi Okon, Milka Rotenberg has nominated Laleh Khorramian and Hito Steyerl has nominated Fernando García-Dory. We would like to thank the three selectors for their commitment to championing the work of a younger generation of artists, and the exhibiting artists for their exciting and inspiring works.

We are also extremely proud to rename this third iteration of our award The Vasseur BALTIC Artists' Award, in memory of the late Isabel Vasseur. Isabel was a hugely admired figure who inspired a generation of curators and artists with her fearless approach to putting art in the public realm. She curated the Gateshead Garden Festival in 1990, which supported the ambitions of Gateshead to later establish BALTIC and commission Anthony Gormley's Angel of the North.

Vasseur's career spanned more than thirty years, encompassing photography and experimental film, important curatorial initiatives at festivals in Glasgow, Gateshead and Edinburgh.

Through her London agency, Art Office, she commissioned public art projects throughout the UK. Vasseur served on the Board of Trustees for BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art (2004-08) and lectured on the influential Curating Contemporary Art MA at the Royal College of Art (1993-2003).

Isabel Vasseur was deeply committed to supporting artists and passionate about citizens having opportunities to engage - values BALTIC holds at our heart. We could not be more grateful that through the 2022 Award, Vasseur, a Baltic Legacy Patron, continues to support the growth of contemporary art in the region and beyond.

Sarah Munro, Director

Works such as *infinity face in the company of statues (2021)* and *intlude (2021)* have a totemic quality, with abstracted and fragmented body-like forms hanging from the ceiling and fixed to the wall. Other hybrid male/female animal and spirit figures are defined by geometric shapes and patterns.

Laleh Khorramian's work explores fictional spaces and interior worlds that challenge linearity of time and place. She is inspired by the complex mythologies and cosmological thinking of ancient cultures such as ritual depictions of the afterlife and deities. Khorramian synthesises and detiles. Khorramian synthesises and detiles. Khorramian synthesises and detiles.

Khorramian approaches making as a series of experiments with serendipity as the starting point. She develops many of the works from her monotype prints. These are unique impressions made by applying oil paint onto polypropylene or glass and then transferring onto paper. The thickness of the paint allows for an unpredictable, resulting in imagery that resembles subterranean landscapes inhabited by human and non-human forms.

For the Vasseur BALTIC Artists' Award, Khorramian has populated the gallery with a cast of mythical beings in the form of large-scale banners, which are suspended before a wall-to-wall illuminated mural, flanked by glowing lightboxes. Each banner is the result of Khorramian's process of building form and surface in tandem. Employing collage and quilting techniques, Khorramian layers reclaimed materials including velvet, cotton, raw silk, metallic fabrics, mesh and hand-dyed fabric.

At the rear of the gallery, Khorramian has removed a wall to expose a window. Titled *Fontaine (2022)*, the vinyl mural depicts a surreal landscape composed of an enlarged section of a monotype, interspersed with minute cut-outs and gels. The artist encourages us to imagine our own stories in this magnified world, and to enter into a universe beyond our own.

Laleh Khorramian has been nominated by Milka Rotenberg

Since 2009, Garcia-Dory has developed INLAND, a collective dedicated to agricultural, social and cultural production. The collective's activities include shepherding, cheese-making, education, publishing and exhibition-making. INLAND develops their programmes from locations in Madrid, Mallorca and Northern Spain, in collaboration with organisations and individuals from multiple countries and diverse fields.

For BALTIC, Garcia-Dory and INLAND's installation is designed as a vessel and place for assembly, in reference to the mobile spaces for learning and creation it draws influence from. This includes the Travelling Gallery, a mobile exhibition space in a bus, which has toured communities throughout Scotland since 1978 and is travelling around the North East of England as part of a collaboration with BALTIC (February – July 2022); and the project titled *A Guest Through Europe, or, The Long Way Round To The Edinburgh Festival*, aboard the Marques sailing ship, organised by Edinburgh Arts in 1979. The exhibition departs from Garcia-Dory's interest in social systems, cooperation and cultural production, presenting a cultural strategy that proposes grassroots initiatives as key contributors to ethical futures.



Fernando Garcia-Dory

INLAND