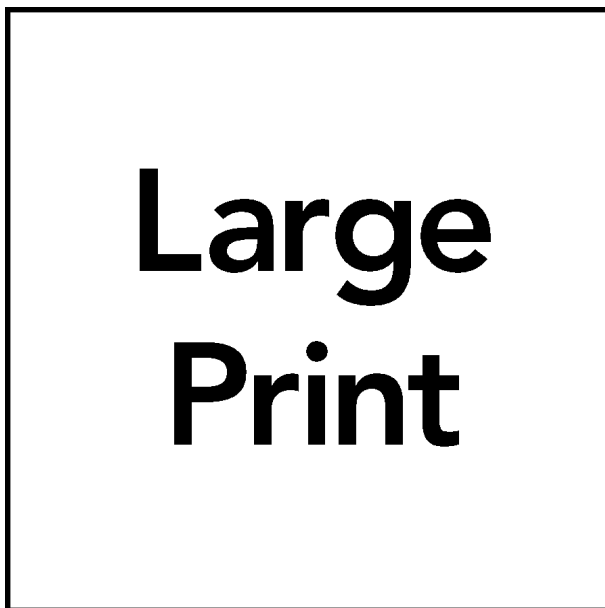


The Vasseur BALTIC Artists' Award 2022

Ima-Abasi Okon / Laleh Khorramian / Fernando

García-Dory

9 April – 2 October 2022



Supported by a bequest from Isabel Vasseur

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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 understanding, 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, Otobong Nkanga has nominated Ima-Abasi Okon, Mika Rottenberg 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

Laleh Khorramian

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 histories that are ancient and futuristic, human and fantastical. Her work imagines sci-fi worlds and openings into other dimensions.

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 unpredictability, 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.

Works such as **infinity face in the company of statues** (2021) and **interlude** (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.

Khorramian's lightboxes feature monotypes connected to cut-out shapes and coloured gels. These improvisations of colour and light radiate like stained glass windows. The trapezoidal window series (2022) includes repeated motifs such as spheres, platted braids, and tree branches. They form a central spine, snaking down the length of each box. With these works, Khorramian invites us to think about origin stories, space and time and the cosmos.

At the rear of the gallery, Khorramian has removed a wall to expose a window. Titled **Fontanelle** (2022), the vinyl mural depicts a surreal landscape composed of an enlarged section of a monotype, interposed 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 Mika Rottenberg

Ima-Abasi Okon

Ima-Abasi Okon has developed a preservation practice. The shelf-life of the healing properties of plants — including claimed anti-oxidant, anti-microbial, anti-fungal, anti-inflammatory, anti-diabetic and anti-atherosclerotic activity — can be extended using the probiotic benefits of fermentation. She explores this claim with an awareness of the gut's role in our general well-being, and its contribution to our defence against disease.

Because current political systems, legal policies and economical models, such as property ownership have been shown to be a cause of death, can these also be viewed structurally as fatal life threatening diseases?

The dehydration of foods adopts the Sunday 'Long Run' as a format to imagine hikes where endurance is pushed and sustenance is required.

~ S Y N T A X ~

The entrance at BALTIC contains administrative documents.

1. Food Safety & Hygiene L1 Certificate
2. Food Safety & Hygiene L2 Certificate
3. Allergy Awareness Certificate
4. Manual Handling Certificate

The hygiene certificates serve a bureaucratic function that the artist hopes can eventually proffer the materials in (d.) as edible after they are removed from display and subjected to bacteria testing.

- i. Warner Music Group Mechanical Licence for Part Time Lover, 1994 by H-Town
- ii. Sony Music Mechanical Licence for Part Time Lover, 1994 by H-Town
- iii. Universal Mechanical Licence for Adorn, 2012 by Miguel
- iv. Limited Manufacture Licence

Two of these licences acknowledge the intellectual property status of songs that the artist has sought permission to cover and may play from (a.) while the other two licences acknowledge the intellectual property status of Side A. of (e.) and protect the artist from claims of infringement.

In the gallery:

- a. Bespoke Leslie Speaker made from exotic hardwoods; pandauk, purple heart, variegated ebony, wenge, zebrano
- b. (Symbiotic Culture of Bacteria and Yeast) Mothers
- c. Screwed Audio Track

With collaborators, Okon built the speaker from decorative hardwoods. Leslie speakers have been used since the 1940s, alongside Hammond organs as a portable and more economically accessible substitutes for larger pipe organs. The Leslie replicates the spatial sound of the pipe organ by modifying the amplified sound of an electric instrument through a rotating chamber which sits in front of the projecting loudspeaker. The partially enclosed cabinet contributes to a unique tone affected by the resonance of the wood.

A mother is a living organism which grows to the size of the vessel that contains it. Refreshing the mother with sweet-tea makes more mothers. The mothers are inside the Leslie speaker alongside the screwed audio track.

A screwed audio track is a (licenced) cover track, or as the artist proposes, a karaoke rendition. Facing the Leslie speaker are cushions made of:

- d. Batches No. 1-4 of Dehydrated Vacuum Packed Oxtail Stew with Ashwaganda, Lion's mane, and Tulsi

These foods have been shown to relieve suffering, preserve and sustain the body during a long period of exertion.

Soon to be released:

- e. Self -published vinyl and insert with essay by Holly Pester and an edited conversation between Jody Simms, NTS host of monthly show Pu\$\$y Rap, and Feat. Ya Girl

Ima-Abasi Okon has been nominated by Otobong Nkanga

Fernando García-Dory

Fernando García-Dory's work engages with the relationship between culture and nature. He considers many contexts where this encounter happens, from landscapes and the rural, to crisis situations and utopias, and within them, the potential for social change. Interested in the harmonic complexity of biological forms and processes, his work addresses cooperation and interconnectedness, from microorganisms to social systems.

It connects traditional art-making to collaborative agro-ecological projects that study ecological processes applied to agricultural production systems.

Since 2009, García-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.

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The exhibition presents a small selection of handcrafted pottery and produce, made and harvested by local organisations that embrace social and climate justice and adhere to ethical production, seeking to combine

social value and financial profits. The exhibition also includes a sculpture made out of terracotta tiles and a quilt, both developed in collaboration with Spanish crafts people.

Related to García-Dory and INLAND's interest in shared space and inclusive citizenship, the exhibition makes connections with Newcastle's Town Moor – 960 acres of common land close to Newcastle city centre. The Town Moor is looked after by the Freemen, who have had the right to graze cattle there since 1774 by an Act of Parliament – updated in 1988, which guarantees public rights. This ensures that the land cannot be developed or built upon. The exhibition includes archival materials that relate to proposals to modify this common land by ornithologist and landscape architect John Hancock in 1868, alongside another plan from the 1960s and recent studies.

García-Dory and INLAND's project for BALTIC also includes a programme of events and the third session of the INLAND Academy, a new independent postgraduate programme for applied knowledge and training on art and agro-ecology land-based projects. The exhibition will host a series of public events over the summer. Further details of these events will be available through BALTIC's website.

Fernando García-Dory has been nominated by Hito Steyerl