

The Vasseur BALTIC Artists' Award 2022

Fernando García-Dory, Laleh Khorramian, Ima-Abasi Okon
9 April – 2 October 2022



l-r: Work by Fernando García-Dory, Laleh Khorramian and Ima-Abasi Okon

The UK's largest dedicated contemporary art institution, BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art celebrates its 20th Anniversary year in 2022. The milestone year will build on a legacy of exhibitions that have sought to create greater understanding of the world through outstanding, experimental and inspiring contemporary art.

In April 2022, BALTIC will present the third edition of The Vasseur BALTIC Artists' Award in memory of the late curator Isabel Vasseur – which will see artists including Mika Rottenberg, Hito Steyerl and Otobong Nkanga nominate a chosen artist to produce an ambitious new exhibition at BALTIC. This is the only international biennial art award to be judged solely by artists.

The biennial award recognises artists deserving of an international platform and offers them a step-change moment in their career, each receiving an exhibition at BALTIC, £25,000 to realise new work and a £5,000 artist fee.

- Selected by Otobong Nkanga, artist **Ima-Abasi Okon** works with sculpture, sound and video to produce installations that explore the historical and political charge of materials.
- Selected by Mika Rottenberg, artist **Laleh Khorramian**'s practice combines the cosmological thinking of ancient cultures, their complex mythologies, and spiritual vocabularies within her own imagined worlds — synthesizing them into histories that are both futuristic and ancient.
- Selected by Hito Steyerl, artist **Fernando García-Dory**'s work engages with the relationship between culture and nature, as manifested in multiple contexts, from landscape and the rural, to desires and expectations in relation to identity, utopia and the potential for social change.

In its 20th anniversary year, BALTIC has renamed the award The Vasseur BALTIC Artists' Award, in memory of the late Isabel Vasseur, an admired figure who inspired a generation of curators and artists with her fearless approach to putting art in the public realm. Through the 2022 Award, BALTIC Legacy Patron, Vasseur continues to support the growth of contemporary art.

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

About the award winning artists:

Fernando García-Dory

Fernando García-Dory's work engages with the relationship between culture and nature, as manifested in multiple contexts, from landscape and the rural, to desires and expectations in relation to identity, crisis, utopia and the potential for social change. Interested in the harmonic complexity of biological forms and processes, his work addresses connections and cooperation, microorganisms, social systems, traditional art languages and collaborative agro-ecological projects and actions. Since 2009, García-Dory has developed INLAND, a collaborative platform and para-institution dedicated to agricultural, social and cultural production.

García-Dory studied Fine Arts and Rural Sociology, and is now preparing his PhD in Agro-ecology.

His work has been shown at Tensta Konsthall, Stockholm; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Reina Sofía, Madrid; SFMOMA, San Francisco; amongst others. He has participated in biennials in Athens, Lisbon, Gwangju, Jeju, and in Documenta 13. He is a fellow of Council of Forms in Paris and a board member of the World Alliance of Nomadic Pastoralists. He was awarded the Creative Time's Leonore Annenberg Prize for Art and Social Change.

Laleh Khorramian

Laleh Khorramian's work spans animation, drawing, monotypes, collage, paintings, sculpture and clothing. Her practice combines the cosmological thinking of ancient cultures, their complex mythologies and spiritual vocabularies within her own imagined worlds, synthesising them into histories that are both futuristic and ancient. By removing cultural or historical specificity from her narratives, she uses the ordinary to portray the epic, the universal and the transient, in a search for worlds beyond our own.

Born in Tehran, Iran, Khorramian lives in Upstate New York. She studied at the Rhode Island School of Design and received her undergraduate degree from The Art Institute of Chicago, and her MFA from Columbia University, New York. She has exhibited in the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, US; Victoria and Albert Museum, London; Art Basel, Switzerland; Ballroom Marfa, Texas; Istanbul Museum of Art, Istanbul; the Sundance Film festival; Midnight Moment, Times Square, New York and Queensland Art Gallery, South Brisbane, Australia.

Ima-Abasi Okon

Ima-Abasi Okon works with sculpture, sound and video to produce installations that explore the historical and political charge of materials. She employs exhibition-making as an exercise in syntax, adopting linguistic and grammatical structures as a way of complicating the construction of knowledge. In her recent works, Okon has repurposed industrial and handmade objects, removing their use-value or function in order to explore the formation of taste, subjectivity, productivity and excess.

Okon lives between London and Amsterdam. She has exhibited at Turf Projects, London and Void, Derry-Londonderry; Chisenhale Gallery, London; Kingsgate Project Space, London; 13th Dak'Art Biennale, Dakar, Senegal and The Showroom, London. In 2018, she was awarded the Nigel Greenwood Research Prize and the Summer Residency at Hospitalfield, Scotland. She participated in the residency programme at Rijksakademie voor beeldende kunsten (Academy for Fine Arts), Amsterdam.

Contact: Fiona@suttoncomms.com

About the Artist Judges

Mika Rottenberg (born 1976, Buenos Aires) Argentina-born, New York-based artist Mika Rottenberg is devoted to a rigorous practice that combines film, architectural installation, and sculpture to explore ideas of labor and the production of value in our contemporary hyper-capitalist world.

Selected artist: **Laleh Khorramian**

Otobong Nkanga (born 194, Kano, Nigeria) Otobong Nkanga's drawings, installations, photographs, sculptures and performances examine the social and topographical relationship with our everyday environment. By exploring the notion of land as a place of non-belonging, Nkanga provides an alternative meaning to the social ideas of identity. Paradoxically, she brings to light the memories and historical impacts provoked by humans and nature. She lays out the inherent complexities of resources like soil and earth and their potential values in order to provoke narratives and stories connected to land.

Selected artist: **Ima-Abasi Okon**

Hito Steyerl (born 1966, Munich, Germany) is a filmmaker, visual artist, writer, and innovator of the essay documentary. Her prolific filmmaking and writing occupies a highly discursive position between the fields of art, philosophy and politics, constituting a deep exploration of late capitalism's social, cultural and financial imaginaries. Her films and lectures have increasingly addressed the presentational context of art, while her writing has circulated widely through publication in both academic and art journals, often online.

Selected artist: **Fernando García-Dory**

Director of BALTIC, Sarah Munro, commented: *“We’re thrilled to welcome such a strong line-up of judges and nominees to our third Artists’ Award, which represents an important extension of our aims to support and encourage talent development of artists. This year we are proud to recognise Isabel Vasseur’s monumental impact on the art world and on those who knew and worked with her.”*

Notes to Editors:

Press Contacts:

Fiona Russell, fiona@suttoncomms.com

About the Vasseur BALTIC Artists’ Award

BALTIC has always supported global creative exchange, with a passion for supporting artists and engaging audiences. BALTIC’s ambition is for the international Artists’ Award to present a significant new biennial platform for nurturing emerging global talent and create discursive space for key issues for art, artists and audiences.

The award does not impose any restrictions on age, media or nationality, BALTIC’s ambition is to offer an unparalleled, step-change opportunity to make a significant new presentation with mentoring from some of the most exciting and experienced contemporary artists working today.

BALTIC’s approach is unprecedented in that artists as judges are at the centre of the award process. This new model presents a glimpse into the relationship between artists at different stages in their careers. At the core of this project is not an award ceremony but a commitment to talent development and dialogue with BALTIC’s audiences at a local, national and international level.

In 2022, BALTIC renamed the award The Vasseur BALTIC Artists’ Award, in memory of the late Isabel Vasseur.

About BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art

BALTIC is a major international centre for contemporary art situated on the south bank of the River Tyne in Gateshead, England and has welcomed over eight million visitors since opening to the public in July 2002. BALTIC presents a distinctive and ambitious programme of 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 consists of 2,600 square metres of art space, making it the UK’s largest dedicated contemporary art institution. BALTIC has gained an international reputation for its commissioning of cutting-edge temporary exhibitions. It has presented the work of over 460 artists of 60 nationalities in 220 exhibitions to date.

www.baltic.art
[#balticgateshead](https://twitter.com/balticgateshead)

  
balticgateshead

 Supported by
ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND

 **Gateshead**
Council