



PRIMEVAL

*“And she could see contours of other worlds and other times, stretched out above and below ours.  
She could also see things that cannot be described in words.”*  
-Primeval and Other Times, Olga Tokarczuk

## Primeval

3 - 25 February 2023

Unit 1 Gallery | Workshop

Unit 1, 1 Bard Rd, London W10 6TP

Borrowing its title from the novel *Primeval and Other Times* by the Nobel Prize recipient Polish author Olga Tokarczuk, Primeval brings together eight women and LGBTQI+ artists, with a special focus on practitioners of Eastern European heritage.

Tokarczuk's novel is populated with anthropomorphic creatures, angels, ghosts and old gods that dwell in the ancient forest of its rural Poland, while the inhabitants of the neighbouring sheltered village are struggling to upkeep as modernity and the outside world seeps into their lives. In this peculiar microcosm myth and modernism, old and new religions, human and non-human exist on a non-linear chronology where time seems to cyclically collapse and be reborn.

The exhibition features a mix of media, including ceramics, glass, painting and clay, from artists whose diverse practice also interrogates questions of cosmogonies, and challenges our traditional understandings of existing systems of hierarchies.

Exhibited artists: Bartłomiej Hajduk, Jean-François Krebs, Karolina Dworska, Katia Kesic, Milda Lemberaitė, Rosie McLachlan, Simona Orentaitė, Sophie Birch

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## About Collective East

Collective East is an independent project promoting the work of artists and cultural practitioners from the Central and Eastern European region. Founded by artist Anya Kashina (b.1993, Yaroslavl, Russia) and independent curator & writer Borbala Komjathy (b.1993, Budapest, Hungary), C.E. was born out of a desire for more connection, collaboration and support between creatives of Central and Eastern European background based in the U.K.

The United Kingdom is home to a large population of Eastern European residents, yet there are few outlets to support artists from our geographical region. Our aim is to provide a platform and facilitate dialogues between those artists and their peers and institutions, both in the U.K. and abroad. Post - Brexit, it is even more important to strengthen our already established relationships and networks, and to promote our communities.

**COLLECTIVE EAST**

Unit 1 Gallery | Workshop

## Jean-Francois Krebs

Liquidity and touch, queer botany, sensual landscapes and spaces are recurring elements in Jean-François Krebs' multimedia and experimental practice. Interactive installations, haptic rituals or nest-like sculptures, most of their work is concerned with notions of metamorphosis and healing. He studied landscape architecture in Edinburgh College of Art and Ecole Nationale Supérieure du Paysage de Versailles, and horticulture in Ecole du Breuil in Paris. He was part of the Maumaus program in Lisbon and did an exchange in Malmö Art Academy.

He recently graduated from the MFA Fine Art at Goldsmiths University of London.

Krebs' work has exhibited widely including Ugly Duck, IMT Gallery, Chisenhale studios, Copeland Park, Goldsmiths St James Church (London), as well as Jeune Creation 72 and Galerie Jean-Collet (France).

In 2021 they were part of the Fondation Martell residency, and exhibited in Centre Tignous d'Art Contemporain (France), Korai Project Space (Cyprus), hArtslane Gallery and Access (London).

Past solo shows at Galerie du Granit (France), Umbigo magazine and Azan Space (Portugal).

In 2023, they will exhibit at the Smallest Gallery in Soho (London) Dunkirk Triennale and Kommet Space (France), and will take part in residencies in Cabana Georgina, Domaine de la Richardière, and Factatory (France).

*A Circlusion of Dolphins*

2023

Uranium glass, brass  
60 cm x 60 cm x 15 cm





*Champ de Poil*  
2023  
Glass, wool, silk  
Dimensions variable



*Untitled*  
2022  
Uranium Glass  
6 cm x 6 cm x 4 cm

## Rosie McLachlan

Rosie McLachlan draws on motifs from comparative mythology and her experience as an archaeologist and end of life doula to explore the mediumistic capacity of ceramic objects. She uses clay, which she digs from rivers and moorlands, to consider elemental forces such as death, regeneration and the natural world. Her work is informed by an ongoing study of archaeology, mythology, folklore and thanatology.

McLachlan's ceramic works are wood fired over 4 days and nights in an anagama kiln, an ancient type of pottery kiln brought to Japan from China via Korea in the 5th century. The long firing process is a devotional act, and the resulting sculptural works, transformed by heat, flame and ash accretions, have an elemental, totem-like quality.

The artist received her MFA from Newcastle University, and a BA in Archaeology from the Institute of Archaeology, University College London, during which time she also studied at the Slade School of Fine Art, London. Her work has been exhibited by Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art (UK), Arusha Gallery (UK) and Cavin Morris Gallery (New York), amongst others.

*When the light is turned around*  
2022

Ceramic spirit house, heavily grogged clay body with River Eden and South Tyne river clays, anagama natural ash  
17 cm x 16 cm x 20 cm



*Be Wise, Be Wise*

2022

Wood fired ceramic, South  
Tyne and Riven Eden Clay slips,

anagama natural ash

20 cm x 17 cm x 17 cm



## Katia Kesic

Katia Kesic processes the intercultural experience of migration and shifting political identities, and weaves it into her ceramic works; she converts her own personal experiences into material manifestations, creating a complex yet comprehensive personal mythology through her works. Katia distances herself from layers of subjective memory and associations in order to get to the essence of her personal lived experiences, questioning how much one's identity is influenced by external factors. She investigates questions of immigration, sexuality, and certain localities.

Kesic is also deeply interested in the actual physical processes of working with her materials. She is drawn to ceramics both as a medium and a craft that is traditionally associated with functionality and labour. Vessels are also associated with an act of conjuring, thus bearing a connection to rituals and seances. Her objects allow her to merge various narratives together non-hierarchically into speculative assemblages of different worlds, while their three-dimensionality adds a textural and visceral dimension that grounds her process, experience and work firmly in the present.

Katia Kesic lives and works in London. Graduated Moscow State Academic Art College in memory of 1905, Stroganov Moscow State Art Academy of Arts and Industry, Chelsea College of Art (UAL) and London Metropolitan University. She has recently exhibited with APT Gallery (UK, 2023), Arusha Gallery (UK, 2022), Osh Projects (UK, 2022), White Crypt Gallery (UK, 2021), and East Contemporary (France, 2021) amongst others.

*Affirmation 1: Everybody enjoys what feels good*  
2022

Pyrography on wooden board, ceramic, resin  
40 cm x 60 cm



*Let me tell you what happens*

*next*

2019

Underglaze on stoneware,  
chains, glass eye

34 cm x 33 cm



# Bart Hajduk

Bart Hajduk is a Polish artist living and working in London. He holds a BA degree in Painting from the Camberwell College of Arts (2016) and recently completed his MA in Fine Art at the Slade School of Art (2022).

Bart's practice is influenced by the realm of personal mythologies, memories, sexuality, spirituality and cosmology, as well as Polish culture and rural sensibility. In his drawings and paintings Bart creates sensuous and intimate dreamscapes populated with animals, animal-human hybrids, plants, planets and biological forms. Part self-portraits, part mystical dreamscapes, his works reflect a desire to re-engage oneself with the natural world and the wider universe around us.

He's exhibited with Cedric Bardawil (UK, 2022), Galeria Monopol (Warsaw, 2022), VO Curations (UK, 2022), Sociedade Nacional de Belas Artes (Portugal, 2021), UTA Artist Space (Los Angeles, 2021), Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery (2021, Germany), Youkobo Art Space (2021, Tokyo) amongst others.

*Modły bałtyckie (Baltic Sun worshippers)*

2023

Coloured pencils on paper  
230 cm x 75 cm x 35 cm





*Kwiat żałobny (Mourning flower)*  
2022  
Thames driftwood and Polish silver birch  
230 cm x 75 cm x 35 cm  
£2500



*Manna z nieba (Manna from heaven)*  
2022  
Handmade watercolour on  
Thames driftwood panels  
170 cm x 135 cm  
NFS

## Simona Orentaite

Simona Orentaitė is a London-based Lithuanian artist creating intuitive, multi-layered paintings in oils and watercolours. Her work embarks on navigating the unknown through ambiguous and nebulous forms, which appear to her through time in brushstrokes and stains of layered paint. As a result of her meditative process, Simona's paintings remain indeterminate and unfixed. The figures in her work coalesce with one another and the environment – evoking a shared eternal consciousness, and the impermanence of material form.

Orentaite is currently undertaking a BA in Fine Art at the City and Guilds of London Art School. She has exhibited with Soho Revue (UK, 2023), Andrea Festa (Rome, 2023), Brushes with Greatness (UK, 2022), La Poudriere (Belgium, 2022), and Liliya Art Gallery (UK, 2022) amongst others.



*Fever Dream*

2021

Oil on wood panel

29.5 cm x 20.7 cm x 2 cm

*Imbued*  
2022  
Oil and watercolour on canvas  
30 cm x 40 cm



# Sophie Birch

Through painting, Birch explores relationships between nature and people and searches for connection between interior and exterior spaces. She begins with drawing, collecting marks from her experiences and surroundings such as: spiderwebs and chrysalis', moments between womxn, making colour studies of old science textbook lithography and the imagery found in novels and poetry. Combining these drawings in her oil paintings, Birch creates tensions by using a language that is on the threshold of abstraction and figuration.

In recent work, 'Press' Birch uses scale and texture to shape the act of looking. She depicts a large amphibious creature close-up, forcing the viewer to inspect the surface. By using washes and sanding, she aims to create a diffused luminousness that is engulfing. Images appear on the cusp of transformation - paused on metamorphic thresholds - in a continuous state of becoming.

Sophie Birch is a British artist who lives and works in London. She holds her MA from the Royal Drawing School, and gained her BA in Fine Art at Wimbledon College of Art.

Selected exhibitions include Andrea Festa Fine Art (Rome, 2023), Darts (UK, 2022), The Contemporary British Painting Prize (UK, 2022) Terrace Gallery (UK, 2022), Boisdale Contemporary (UK, 2021) and Gallery Maison Bertaux (UK, 2021). Sophie was artist in residence in Borgo Pignano, Italy in Autumn, and at High House Working Residency, Antony Gormley Studios UK Spring.

*To Press*

2022

Oil on canvas

203 x 213 cm



## Karolina Dworska

Karolina is a British-based Polish artist who works predominantly in sculpture and rug-making. Her artistic practice explores dreams, toying with myth and folklore, and delves into the subject matter of the in-between; the grey area between dream and reality, and fantasy spaces, balancing precariously between definitions. Her multidisciplinary practice focuses on dreamscapes, in which things are not quite right, undefined and uncomfortable, littered with surreal motifs and mysterious inhabitants. She uses the meditative state of dreaming to examine the strangeness of inhabiting a body and its fragility, and as a lens to reconfigure the everyday, constructing new mythologies.

Dworska was one of the artists selected for the 2021 Bloomberg New Contemporaries. Her work has been exhibited internationally, in Madrid and Seoul, and featured in numerous International publications, such as *Sztuka and Dokumentacja* and *El País*, as well as *Time Out Magazine*.

Dworska has exhibited with JMG Gallery (UK, 2022), StartArt Fair (Seoul, 2022), Pradiauto (Madrid, 2022), and Saathi Gallery (UK, 2022) amongst others. She is the recipient of the art prize Goldsmiths BA Fine Art Junior Fellowship and has pieces in numerous private collections.



*Awaiting Day*

2022

Machine-knitted tapestry, metal chain

70 cm x 79 cm

# Milda Lembertaite

Milda Lembertaite is a Lithuanian artist who lives and works in London. By weaving together natural and technological objects, and drawing from personal, collective and geological histories, Lembertaite blurs the boundary between human and non-human experiences. She nods to what is sometimes beautiful, sometimes tragic, but always shared, fate and asks: how can we remember where we came from? What does it mean 'to protect' using technologies that intrinsically are also harmful?

Milda received her MA in Fine Art from Chelsea College of Art and BA in Performance Design and Practice from Central Saint Martins, London.

Selected exhibitions and residencies include: Swiss Performance Art Award (Kunstmuseum Luzern, 2022), The Echo System (Thames-Side Studios Gallery, London, 2021), VOLUMES (Kunsthalle, Zurich, 2019), Can You Feel It? (Last Tango, Zurich, 2019), Beep (DANCE4, Nottingham, 2019), Swiss Art Awards 2019 (Halle 4, Art Basel, 2019), RA Lates: Transcendence (London, 2019), The Day Of The Dead (British Library, London, 2019), Air Berlin (Alexanderplatz, Berlin, 2018-19), Labverde, Art/ Nature/ Science Programme (The Amazon, Brazil, 2018), I Scream, You Scream, We All Scream For Ice Cream (Fondazione Baruchello, Rome, 2017), 5 Proposals (HGB Gallery, Leipzig, 2017), Perímetro: Cine Expandido, (Centro de Cultura Digital, Mexico City, 2016), Che c'è di nuovo? (MASI, Lugano, 2016), TATE Modern/Britain, Artists-in Residence/ Schools Workshops (2015- 2016).

## *Arapaima*

2018 - 2021

Found wood (Valentine Court in Perry Vale and Millwall FC, London),  
obsidian, oil paint, synthetic eyelashes, plaster of paris, arapaima scales,  
pewter

197 cm x 132 cm x 67 cm





*Give Yourself New Life*  
2021  
Found wood (Maryon Park,  
London), synthetic eyelashes,  
oil paint, synthetic eyelashes,  
WWI prosthetic leg, acupunc-  
ture needles, pewter  
225 cm x 107 cm x 47 cm



*December 31*  
2020-2021  
Found wood (Richmond Park,  
London), obsidian, oil paint, fire,  
synthetic eyelashes, silver leaf,  
rubber  
61 cm x 158 cm x 72 cm











