

PRESS RELEASE

MURATCENTOVENTIDUE ARTECONTEMPORANEA

TREES

***Manolis Baboussis, Lydia Dambassina, Lello Gelao, Gabriela Golder,
Carolina Jonsson, Clare Langan, Margarida Paiva***

Muratcentoventidue Artecontemporanea is pleased to present **Trees**, a group exhibition featuring works by Manolis Baboussis, Lydia Dambassina, Lello Gelao, Gabriela Golder, Carolina Jonsson, Clare Langan, and Margarida Paiva.

Today, the tree is recognized as a fundamental pillar of the ecosystem—a being endowed with collective intelligence and a model of resilience indispensable to our survival. Contemporary art has played a crucial role in overcoming "Plant Blindness" (the historical inability of humans to perceive plants as vital organisms), transforming the botanical element from a mere backdrop into an active "co-author" of the work and a symbol of climate urgency.

The modern artistic journey reflects this deep bond through diverse sensibilities: from the "social sculpture" of Joseph Beuys, who viewed planting trees as an act of moral regeneration, to the investigations of Giuseppe Penone, who carves into trunks to reveal their memory and time. While Ai Weiwei utilizes deadwood to denounce deforestation and the loss of cultural roots, artists like Tomás Saraceno leverage digital technologies to unveil the "Wood Wide Web"—the complex underground communication network of forests.

In conclusion, the tree is no longer a static icon, but a necessary ethical pivot for rethinking our relationship with the biosphere. Through languages ranging from photography to installation, the artists in this exhibition invite us to move beyond an anthropocentric vision and finally recognize the tree in its complex and vital entirety.

Manolis Baboussis is a Greek multidisciplinary artist, architect by training and photographer, known for a body of work that critically explores themes of institutions, memory, and the relationship between humanity and the environment. He has extensively documented prison spaces and psychiatric hospitals (such as Volterra in the 1970s), analyzing architecture as a tool of control. In recent years, his research has focused on the concept of the "garden," not only as a physical space but as a philosophy of resistance and inner cultivation. His photographic practice often captures empty spaces, monuments, or natural details (such as the trees on the island of Kea) that engage in a dialogue with his three-dimensional installations.

The installation ***They Grew Together*** (2022), originally conceived for the solo exhibition *The Garden* at the Athens School of Fine Arts, is presented here in Bari in a version resized for the space, which nevertheless preserves the core synthesis of the artist's thought intact. The work is configured

as an assemblage of heterogeneous materials: concrete cubes, a tree trunk, some architecture books, all dominated by a photograph projected on the wall.

The central theme is the permanent struggle between the organic element (the wood/tree) and the artificial one (the concrete). Baboussis portrays branches that, despite appearing imprisoned by the concrete, symbolize a vital force that persists and intertwines with man-made structures.

Lydia Dambassina, a Greek artist trained in Lyon, Grenoble, and Paris with studies in art, psychopathology, and pedagogy, has developed a multidisciplinary practice spanning painting, photography, video, and installation. Her works offer a profound reflection on contemporary social and philosophical issues—such as economic inequality, the environmental crisis, personal and collective identity, the role of women, and the impact of immigration—combining aesthetic rigor with political engagement.

The artist utilizes the video *Lorem Ipsum* to investigate the broken bond between humanity and the environment, transforming nature into a mirror of the ecological crisis. The title refers to a language devoid of actual meaning, reflecting the impossibility of giving voice to a profound pain.

In this work, trees are no longer symbols of flourishing life; instead, they become ghostly crosses swaying under a cold moonlight. This hypnotic rocking suggests a suffering nature, reduced to an arboreal cemetery that denounces the destructive impact of anthropization. The wooden silhouettes, resembling sacred simulacra, evoke a sense of universal guilt and a definitive loss of harmony with the cosmos.

Lello Gelao, an artist from Bari, develops his pictorial research primarily through an essential figuration focused on portraiture. His works are known for their rarefied and suspended atmospheres, which often evoke a sense of solitude and melancholy. Although the portrait is his main theme, his landscapes featuring trees are permeated by the same introspective sensitivity. In these paintings, nature is not a mere realistic representation but becomes a mirror of emotional states. The trees are often stylized—as seen in the four small mixed-media works on display titled "*Paesaggi*" (Landscapes)—appearing almost as silhouettes set within environments that suggest a frozen time, outside the chronological flow. Gelao's technique, which occasionally crosses into other expressive fields, utilizes color and light to create almost metaphysical scenarios. These arboreal landscapes thus become symbolic places, spaces of the soul where the artist investigates the relationship between man and the surrounding environment, leaving the observer with the task of deciphering the silence and the void that permeate the canvas.

Gabriela Golder represents one of the most authoritative and profound voices in the contemporary Argentine art scene, distinguished by her unique ability to intertwine the language of video art with civil commitment and philosophical reflection. Also known as a curator and professor, she explores themes of collective memory, political resistance, and social precariousness in her work, using video as a tool for historical and human inquiry. Her work often questions how the body and language react to the traumas of state violence and economic crises.

In the video *Tierra Quemada* (Burnt Earth), filmed in 2015, Golder documents the aftermath of the devastating fire that struck the city of Valparaíso, Chile. The work does not focus solely on material destruction but captures the pain and resilience of those who lost everything. Through slow shots and a suspended narrative, the artist transforms the ash-blackened landscape into a space for profound reflection on the fragility of existence and the strength of reconstruction. The video avoids media sensationalism to give voice to the silence of the ruins, making visible the invisible bond between territory and identity. *Terra Queimada* thus becomes a universal metaphor for the wounds opened by human neglect, inviting the viewer into an act of empathy and witness.

Swedish artist **Carolina Jonsson** explores the boundary between reality and perception, focusing on the symbiotic and ancestral relationship between humanity and nature. Her works emerge from the observation of Nordic landscapes, transfigured through layering techniques and a painterly approach to light. Through her visual language, defined as the "**Ecolonia Archive**," the artist seeks to capture what lies beyond a superficial gaze, reinterpreting both everyday life and the natural landscape.

The artist presents a piece from the series "**The Rhythm Between Us**," created during the period of isolation caused by the pandemic. The photographs in this series—which, much like her video works, often display an almost pictorial aesthetic—explore the relationship between time, childhood, and the landscape. Jonsson draws a parallel between the solitary figure of a child and the surrounding environment, perceiving both as a single voice describing the passage of time. The series focuses on the concept of "solitude as closeness," where the empty space between images and the distance between subjects become elements of a profound connection between nature and the human being.

Clare Langan is an Irish artist and filmmaker renowned for her video works, which explore the fragility of human existence and the conflicted relationship with nature. Through the masterful use of 16mm film and lenses treated with hand-painted glass filters, the artist creates dreamlike, suspended atmospheres. Her works transcend mere documentation, offering poetic visions that urgently address the themes of climate change and environmental degradation; these issues are explored not only as ecological crises, but as profound fractures of the soul.

The Heart of a Tree (2020) reflects on the crucial role these giants of nature play in the survival of both the planet and our species. Trees safeguard the very air we breathe, and the work offers a glimpse into a future where human beings have been forced to evolve and adapt in order to avoid extinction.

The film serves as a necessary metaphor for a world overturned by a disregard for the environment. Set in barren and desolate landscapes—a vision of a future Earth or perhaps an alien planet—the film shows survivors navigating inhospitable environments to harvest air, which has become the "new gold." In a final gesture of hope, they plant trees on a deserted black beach, attempting to restore the planet's vital source of oxygen.

The work explores the profound fracture between humanity and nature, reflecting the inner imbalance that dwells within us. The film urges us to mend this rift, which has now reached a point of no return, reminding us that global ecology is a fragile balancing act.

Margarida Paiva is a Portuguese visual artist based in Oslo, known for her work that blends film, photography, and installation. Her artistic research explores the mystical dimension of the natural world, drawing heavily on folklore, fairy tales, and ancient animist myths. Her style is characterized by an often melancholy and surreal atmosphere, which transforms the landscape into a mirror of the psyche.

In the photographic series "**I Am The Forest**," the artist stages a symbolic fusion between the human body and the natural element, creating an oniric and melancholic atmosphere. The images show figures immersed in dense woods, where the landscape is not a mere backdrop but an extension of the subjects' psychological state. Through the skillful use of light and desaturated tones, Paiva transforms the forest into a space of deep introspection and emotional refuge. The title suggests a total identification: the individual loses themselves in nature to find themselves again. This visual symbiosis evokes themes related to vulnerability and the desire to belong to an ancestral world. Her minimalist and poetic compositions invite the observer to reflect on the indissoluble bond between humanity and the environment.

Venue

Muratcentoventidue-Artecontemporanea

Via G. Murat 122/b – Bari

Opening

Saturday, February 21, 2026, 7:00 PM

Date

February 21 – March 31, 2026

Opening Hours

The exhibition will be open only by appointment.

Information

3348714094 – 392.5985840

http://info@muratcentoventidue.com

<http://www.muratcentoventidue.com>

<http://www.facebook.com/MuratcentoventidueArtecontemporanea>

https://www.instagram.com/muratcentoventidue_bari

BIO

Manolis Baboussis (Athens, 1950) is an artist, architect and photographer who has successfully blended projective rigor with acute social and institutional critique. His training is rooted in the Italy of the 1970s: he studied architecture at the University of Florence under the guidance of Adolfo Natalini (founder of Superstudio) and specialized in restoration at ICCROM in Rome. This solid technical foundation evolved into a multidisciplinary artistic practice that, since 1973, has ranged from photography and poetry to installations and videos.

His research addresses urgent themes such as environmental degradation, the global economy, and the critique of the structures of the art world, proposing a "utopian everyday life" as an alternative. In 2003, the National Museum of Contemporary Art, Greece (EMST) dedicated a fundamental retrospective to him covering thirty years of activity. In addition to his artistic production, Baboussis has held prominent academic roles: in 1999 he founded the Department of Photography at the Athens School of Fine Arts (ASFA) and, as Vice-Rector, conceived the transformation of the academy's urban spaces into green areas.

A leading figure on the international scene, he was a close friend and collaborator of Jannis Kounellis for over twenty years. His exhibition history boasts prestigious venues such as Documenta 14 in Kassel, the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna in Rome, and the MOMus in Thessaloniki, where the exhibition *From Now On* was presented in 2024.

Baboussis' works have been shown in numerous solo and group exhibitions, including: *From Now On*, MOMus, Thessaloniki (2024); *Metapolitefsi*, Athens Epidaurus Festival (2024); *The Butterfly Effect*, Mouzakis – Butterfly Textile Factory, Athens (2023); *The Garden*, Nikos Kessanlis Hall, Athens School of Fine Arts (2022); *Link*, Ileana Tounta Contemporary Art Center, Athens (1999–2019); Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Rome (2018); *Documenta14*, EMST Collection, Fridericianum, Kassel (2017); *Skeletons*, Benaki Museum (2011); *Manolis Baboussis*, CAMEC, La Spezia (2006); *Manolis Baboussis*, Macedonian Museum of Contemporary Art, Thessaloniki (2003).

His work is included in many important public and private collections. Numerous monographs, notebooks, and poetry collections have been published by various editors, including Exantas, Bastas, Plessas, Futura, Smilis, the National Museum of Contemporary Art, the Benaki Museum, CAMEC, and the Ileana Tounta Contemporary Art Center. He lives and works in Athens and on the island of Kea, Greece.

Lydia Dambassina was born in Thessaloniki (Greece). At the age of fifteen, she moved to Lyon (France) where she completed secondary school. She studied at the School of Fine Arts in Grenoble and Psychopathology and Pedagogy at the Universities Paris V and Grenoble. She worked as a researcher in psychiatric epidemiology and as an artistic director in film production.

Since 1976, Lydia Dambassina has been working with various media such as painting, photography, installations, and video projections. Lydia Dambassina exhibits more frequently in Greece, but has also held exhibitions in France, Italy, Russia, Switzerland, Turkey, Georgia, and elsewhere.

Lydia Dambassina has exhibited at the Museum of Contemporary Art (Thessaloniki), the Macedonian Museum of Contemporary Art (Thessaloniki), the Benaki Museum (Athens), the Hôpitaux Universitaires (Geneva), the Eglise de Saint-Eustache-Nuit Blanche (Paris), the Kunsthalle Athena (Athens), the Contemporary Art Center (Thessaloniki), the Alex Mylona Museum (Athens), the Athens Festival, the Manege Museum, St. Petersburg, the Collegium Artisticum, Sarajevo, and the Jewish Museum of Greece (Athens).

Other notable exhibitions have been at the Art Center of the City of Athens, the Athens Biennale in Athens, and the National Museum of Contemporary Art - EMST in Athens.

Lydia Dambassina's art is present in museum collections, at the Macedonian Museum of Contemporary Art (MOMus) in Thessaloniki, the National Museum of Contemporary Art - EMST in Athens, and the art collection of the Hôpitaux Universitaires de Genève. In 2025, she presented the solo exhibition "Olympus Offshore" at the Muratcentoventidue Artecontemporanea gallery in Bari.

She recently inaugurated a major solo exhibition in Chania on the island of Crete, entitled "Red Line," which opened its doors on December 13, 2025, at the Municipal Art Gallery of Chania.

Lello Gelao was born in Bari, where he currently lives and works. His artistic training was established at the Academy of Fine Arts in Bari, where he earned a degree in Painting, later furthering his studies with a specialization in graphics in 2006. He teaches Drawing and History of Art at the "Arcangelo Scacchi" Scientific High School in Bari.

After debuting in historic Bari galleries such as Centrosei-Arte Contemporanea, Galleria Campanile, and Galleria Ester Milano Cimmarrusti, he has exhibited in a series of exhibitions in Italy and abroad (Verona, Bolzano, Malo, Milan, Paris, Nice, New Delhi, Düsseldorf). In 2010, he held a solo exhibition in Düsseldorf at the Peter Tedden Gallery as part of the Düsseldorf Quadrennial. In Italy, in addition to various galleries, he has participated in projects at major industry fairs such as the Verona Art Fair and Arte Fiera in Bologna.

In 2006, he contributed to the founding of Muratcentoventidue Artecontemporanea, an association in Bari dedicated to the promotion of contemporary art. Among his most recent exhibitions are: *Uomini*, Peter Tedden Gallery, Düsseldorf, Germany (2010); *Invisible Present*, Muratcentoventidue Artecontemporanea, Bari (2013); *What we once were*, Muratcentoventidue Artecontemporanea, Bari (2018); *Gala*, Spazio Murat, Bari (2018); *Emschergold-Sammlung Tedden*, Galerie Münsterland, Emsdetten, Germany (2018); *Female Portraits*, Muratcentoventidue Artecontemporanea, Bari (2019); *Animals*, Muratcentoventidue Artecontemporanea, Bari (2021); *Flags*, Muratcentoventidue, Bari (2024); and *Flowers*, Muratcentoventidue Artecontemporanea, Bari (2025). His works are included in several public and private collections.

Gabriela Golder (Buenos Aires, 1971) is an Argentine visual artist, researcher, professor and curator whose artistic practice focuses primarily on experimental video art and audiovisual installations. Her works deeply explore themes related to collective memory, identity, institutional violence, and the world of labor.

Golder has a solid international background, having earned a degree from the Universidad del Cine in Buenos Aires and a Master's in Hypermedia from the Université Paris VIII. She currently holds prominent roles in the Argentine and international cultural landscape: she is a tenured professor at the Universidad Nacional de Tres de Febrero and the Universidad del Cine; she is the director of the Bienal de la Imagen en Movimiento (BIM) in Buenos Aires and the Continente research center.

Golder has received numerous prestigious awards, including the 2022 KONEX Award for Visual Arts, the First Prize at the National Salon of Visual Arts in 2021, and a special mention at the Sharjah Biennial 15th in 2023. Her works have been exhibited in global institutions such as the Singapore Biennial 2025, the Sharjah Biennial 2023, the Jakarta Biennial 2023, the Kunsthaus Graz in Vienna, Whitechapel Gallery in London, the Centre Pompidou in Paris, the Getty Center in Los Angeles, and the Ujazdowski Castle Centre for Contemporary Art in Warsaw.

Swedish artist **Carolina Jonsson**, born in 1975 in Lidköping and based in Lundsbrunn, explores the symbiosis between human beings and nature through video, photography, and sound installations. After graduating from the Trondheim Academy of Fine Arts, she developed a poetic approach based on memory and the fragility of existence, often transforming organic elements into dreamlike visions.

Her exhibition career includes prestigious venues in Sweden, such as participation in the historic Liljevalchs Vårsalong in Stockholm and the solo exhibition "Gränsland" (2023) at the Konstmuseet i Skövde. Internationally, her work has been showcased in major institutions like the Kunstnerernes Hus in Oslo and in avant-garde festivals such as the Impakt Festival in Utrecht and the /si:n/ festival in Palestine. In Italy, she held the solo exhibition "In Transit" at the Muratcentoventidue Artecontemporanea gallery in Bari.

A fundamental aspect of Carolina Jonsson's work is her dedication to public art within therapeutic contexts, where she uses her pieces to create environments of care and reflection. She has realized significant permanent installations, such as *Mare Tranquillitatis* (2016) at the Sahlgrenska University Hospital, where she projects relaxing videos onto the ceilings of waiting rooms, as well as artistic interventions at Danderyd Hospital (2019) and Växjö Central Hospital (2023), all aimed at improving patient well-being through visual beauty.

Margarida Paiva is a Portuguese visual artist based in Oslo, whose multidisciplinary practice spans film, photography, and installation. After training at the Faculty of Fine Arts in Porto, she earned a Master's degree from the National Academy of the Arts in Oslo in 2007.

Her current research is configured as a personal exploration of the mystical dimension of the natural world, drawing heavily from folklore, fairy tales, and ancient myths. Through a visual language steeped in symbolism, the artist investigates the territories of the subconscious, addressing themes such as ritual, transformation, and mystery.

Over the course of her career, Paiva has exhibited her work in numerous solo and group exhibitions internationally. Among the most recent and relevant projects are the 2025 exhibitions at Gallery Ask (Horten) and MIRA Contemporary Art Space (Porto), as well as the presentation of her work on the

Times Square billboards in New York for the Visual Art Journal. She has also presented her works in prestigious institutions such as the Gamle Munch Kunsthall in Oslo and the Centre Photographique d'Ile-de-France.

In parallel with her exhibition activity, her video production has been selected by important international festivals, including Kino der Kunst in Munich, EMAF in Osnabrück, and the Aesthetica Short Film Festival. Her directorial talent has been awarded on several occasions, receiving, among others, the Best Director award at the Dhaka International Film Festival and recognition for the Best Foreign Spiritual Documentary at the Heart International Italian Film Festival in 2021.

Author of the artist's book *Eight Dark Dreams of Green Leaves* (2024), Margarida Paiva is featured in various academic publications and art catalogs, including the volume *Experimental Film & Anthropology* (Bloomsbury, 2014).