PALAS

The Critical Period: Eva Rothschild, Shaun Gladwell, Tamara Henderson, 2nd September – 17th October 2026

In neuroscience, the critical period describes a developmental window during which the brain is especially plastic – when perception, behaviour, and identity remain highly responsive to change. Long understood as a phase confined to early life, recent research suggests that such states of heightened plasticity may, under certain conditions, be partially reopened in adulthood. The Critical Period takes this scientific concept as a metaphor for the present moment. Across political, technological, and ecological systems, structures that once appeared stable are increasingly in flux, producing a world that feels both uncertain and newly malleable. Artists have long worked within such conditions, using shifts in perception, orientation, consciousness and material form to probe how reality might be reorganised.

Within this framework, each artist approaches the idea of the critical period through distinct but intersecting strategies. Shaun Gladwell destabilises physical orientation, suspending the image of a suspended figure within an elastic framing structure. The body, image and frame are each held in tension between gravity and release, equilibrium and dislocation (Body). Tamara Henderson's sleeping sheep in neon draws its title from Philip K. Dick's Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? The work extends her longstanding engagement with dreams and altered states to questions of artificial consciousness, imagination, and the limits of the human psyche (Consciousness). Eva Rothschild transforms steel rebar – a material associated with rigidity, reinforcement and structural order – into a suspended tangle that appears light, mutable and almost soft. Hovering on the edge of organised chaos, the work's material behaves against its prescribed nature (Form). Together, the works locate plasticity across the body, consciousness and the material world.

If the critical period describes a moment when established patterns loosen and new possibilities become available, the present may be understood as such a threshold. Across technological systems, political structures and ecological conditions, the frameworks through which the world has long been understood appear increasingly unstable. Rather than offering resolution, The Critical Period dwells within this instability, recognising it as a condition that can produce both uncertainty and possibility. Bodies are reoriented, consciousness extends beyond familiar boundaries, and seemingly fixed materials become mutable. Through these acts of suspension, dreaming and transformation, the exhibition considers adaptation not as a return to equilibrium, but as the capacity to reorganise in response to a changing world.

1. Eva Rothschild
Introvert, 2024
Steel, resin plaster, paint
63 x 132 x 70 cm

2. Shaun Gladwell
Piazza San Marco Invert, Venezia 2025, 2026
Digital print on canvas mounted on aluminium composite, suspended in mini trampoline
122 x 122 cm

3. Tamara Henderson
Android Dreaming, 2026
neon
63 x 31 cm

