

EIKE EPLIK (b. 1982, Rapla, Estonia) is a sculptor and installation artist living in Tartu. Her formal education includes a master's from the Sculpture Department (2010) at the Estonian Academy of Arts and a Bachelor's from the Sculpture Department (2007) at Tartu Art College. Eplik has received the Annual Prize of the Cultural Endowment of Estonia (2021), the Addo Vabbe Stipend (2018), the young artist production stipend KUKU NUNNU by the contemporary art festival ART IST KUKU NU UT (2012), the Eduard Wiiralt Stipend (2006) and in 2015, she was nominated for the Sadolin Art Prize. Eplik was one of the recipients of the national artist's salary from 2021 to 2023.

KRISTI KONGI (b. 1985, Tallinn, Estonia) is a painter and installation artist living in Tallinn. She is an associate professor and head of the Painting Department at the Estonian Academy of Arts. Her formal education includes a Master's from the Painting Department at the Faculty of Visual Arts (2011) at the Estonian Academy of Arts and a Bachelor's from the Painting Department (2008) at Tartu Art College. Kongi has been awarded the Estonian Cultural Endowment's annual award (2021), the Konrad Mägi Prize (2017), the Sadolin Art Prize (2013), the Young Artist Prize (2011) and she was nominated for the Köler Prize in 2016. Kongi is one of the recipients of the national artist's salary from 2022 to 2024.

ANNA MARI LIIVRAND (b. 1993, Keila, Estonia) is a sculptor and installation artist living in Tallinn. Her formal education includes a Master's from the Contemporary Art Department (2022) and a Bachelor's from the Sculpture and Installation (2016) Department at the Estonian Academy of Arts. She has also studied fine arts at the Iceland University of Arts. She was awarded the Estonian Cultural Endowment's annual award (2021), the Eduard Wiiralt Prize (2020) and in 2014, Liivrand received the Young Sculptor Prize.

All three artists are represented by Kogo Gallery.

TEAM

Artists: Eike Eplik, Kristi Kongi, Anna Mari Liivrand

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WHITE DWARFS AND ALL THOSE BEAUTIFUL NEBULAS

EIKE EPLIK, KRISTI KONGI
AND ANNA MARI LIIVRAND

CURATED BY ŠELDA PUĶĪTE
29. 11. 2024 - 26. 01. 2025

Our understanding of life comes from a sample of one, from looking at our living planet and understanding amid all of the complexity, what is the essence of life and therefore the likelihood of it occurring elsewhere in the Universe. Andrew Cohen – The Universe (2023)

Once upon a time, the Universe was a dark ocean, with no stars to provide light, warmth or matter for planets and moons to be born and potentially nurture life. The Big Bang changed all this by giving birth to galaxies full of stars and planets with giant black holes holding these illuminated worlds in their grip. This now billion-year-old cosmic world seems eternal, yet astronomical research begs to differ. In the 18th century, British astronomer William Herschel became the first to detect a white dwarf star in the vast sky of the universe, although it would take more than a century for scientists to understand what it was he had observed. A white dwarf turned out to be a former star that has collapsed into an energy-dense, Earth-size stellar object, which eventually turns into a stellar remnant – a black dwarf. Even though no fully-formed black dwarf has yet been detected, we can, to put it in Julijonas Urbonas's words, "cosmically imagine" how, after billions of years, a universe will slowly switch off all its light bulbs.

Then again, where there is death there is also life. From their outer layers, white dwarfs create a planetary nebula that erupts into colourful gas clouds, becoming a new star-forming incubator. In other words, it uses the leftovers of the old world to create a new one. The triangle dance of white dwarfs, nebulas and newly formed substances, from which life emerges, can be viewed as cosmopoetry

for the cycle of life. When certain entities are coming close to the end of their life cycle, it could be said that they leave behind a beautiful nebula-like glow, which could be seen as the ruins of the past, memories, or even ghosts. As bleak as that may seem, it's just a process of change, preparing the ground for new life and ideas to sprout and grow. Knowing the elementary rules of physics about the conservation of energy or just following the life cycle in nature right here on Earth, one notices that there is no such thing as a total end. Death is only the start of something new, as particles and energy spread and reform. The exhibition explores this process of rebirth, where entropy and change are part of a new beginning, where nothing is truly lost, and nothing is truly still or in control.

The practices of Eike Eplik, Kristi Kongi and Anna Mari Liivrand do not focus on studies of cosmology, yet their observations of the world and contemplations about it mirror the processes taking place in the universe. They study and question the world they inhabit – whether that's the natural world, culture, emotions, dreams or memories. The worlds they create constantly expand and transform, not letting themselves be identified as a single form or message. Each using their own set of skills, media and forms of artistic expression, they present visions of the world as a liquid entity

in constant metamorphosis. In the exhibition, they take up a certain role play by mimicking the processes happening with white dwarfs, and by closely collaborating, they build narratives that echo each other.

In this imaginary cosmic time-space, Anna Mari Liivrand takes on the symbolic role of the white dwarf. Trained as a sculptor, she works in a wide spectrum of media, exploring fragility, evanescence and melancholy in today's society. Many of her sculptures take inspiration from sacril architecture, including graveyard fences and reliquaries, which are recurring motifs in her works, together with ornaments, decorations and readymades that she uses as anchor points in an ever-changing world. Using the line as the main visual tool, she brings all this together in elegant spatial installations.

In the exhibition, Liivrand builds her world out of shattered stained glass passages and threatening black iron forests. The hanging wrought iron sculptures are reminiscent of plants or thorny vines that carry leftover pieces from people's belongings, for example, a glove or a piece of jewellery. These lost or left-behind things become peculiar charms that, like the landscape itself, have transformed into ruins, reminders of uncertainty, loss and change. This decadent scenery is embraced by stained-glass pieces in the form of windows inspired by early industrial and sacril architecture. Soldered together from different patches of defective, faded coloured glass, they represent something broken down in time.

This surreal frozen landscape evaporates in the colourful shadow worlds created by painter Kristi Kongi, who is the nebula in this metaphor. Kongi's artistic approach can be described as fluid and in constant motion. The motifs and compositions float and develop instead of rapidly changing. Her sight is fixed on certain horizons, which she studies with the help of light, colour and shadow-like forms. Some landscapes emerge as patterns and grids born from the observation of urban sites, others as subtle colour gradients found in the sky.

Using the "painting inside painting" effect, she fills the exhibition walls with vibrant colours that pour and leak like a liquid or gas breaking out into the other rooms. The canvases displayed on the walls are full of shadows soaked in saturated yellows, greens, blues and pinks. The forms inside them are reminiscent of mountains, plants and even human hands, floating in the night sky or in a dawn full of mist. These works are metaphysical spaces inhabiting the artist's various emotions – self-portraits, if you will.

The promise of the chemical laboratory of the cosmos is the emergence of life. Sculptor Eike Eplik is deeply fascinated by biodiversity and its complicated relationship with humankind. She creates

sensitive and imaginative works full of personal mythology, using different visual expressions and materials such as clay and metal. Similar to the ideas of philosopher Astrida Neimanis about water-connected worlds, the artist takes a humble approach to all living things; in her art, strictly defined categories, hierarchies, genders and bodies do not exist. Her work can be described as micro-worlds, like bestiaries, inhabited by fantastic creatures in combination with plant forms including fungi, roots, and cones.

Animating the life forms and vessels that incubate them, Eike Eplik's sculptures inhabit the rooms, similar to a bird constructing a nest, or mycelia creating a complicated network of roots. Trying to capture the moment when life starts to morph into more complex entities, she is trying to mimic something that can be compared to the Cambrian explosion. That occurred on Earth 538.8 million years ago, when a sudden radiation of complex life occurred, with stunning diversity. Her created world is still frozen, but there is an awakening there. Spread across several rooms, it takes the form of porcelain sculptures covered with soft, transparent glaze. The forms seem alien, yet also familiar, resembling butterfly cocoons or water-lily buds. Sheltered in a room of their own, they emerge as different types of bodies made of relief-shaped stainless steel. The amorphous forms create associations with aerial roots of some tropical forest trees, neuron network systems in our brain, or blood vessels branching through a body. Some of these porcelain and steel sculptures seem to develop an arm, growing hair, or other organic details associated with the mammal world, suggesting the emergence of more complex life forms.

This exhibition is not the story of the cosmos or the existential state of a society living in the so-called Second Space Age on a potentially dying planet. It's the story of the discovery of ourselves as curious beings caught in a state of melancholy and transition.

White Dwarfs and All Those Beautiful Nebulas is an exchange project between Kogo Gallery and Kim? Contemporary Art Centre, which involves creating exhibitions at both art institutions.

Kim?

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kogo

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- 1 Anna Mari Liivrand
Passing Through, Leaving Traces
2023-2024
Installation, steel
Dimensions variable
- 2 Anna Mari Liivrand
Echo of Shards VI
2024
Stainglass
61x30,5 cm
- 3 Anna Mari Liivrand
Echo of Shards IV
2024
Stainglass
44,5x40 cm
- 4 Anna Mari Liivrand
Echo of Shards III
2024
Stainglass
50,5x31 cm
- 5 Anna Mari Liivrand
Echo of Shards V
2024
Stainglass
55x35,5 cm
- 6 Anna Mari Liivrand
Echo of Shards I
2024
Stainglass
42x42 cm
- 7 Anna Mari Liivrand
Echo of Shards II
2024
Stainglass
50x30,5 cm
- 8 Kristi Kongi
Shifting the Light
2024
Oil on canvas
55x45 cm
- 9 Kristi Kongi
A Day – I'll Tell You How the Sun Rose. A Ribbon at a Time. The Steeples Swam Amethyst. The News Like Squirrels Ran. Emily Dickinson
2024
Oil on canvas
35x30 cm

- 10 Eike Eplik
Budding Creatures
2024
Porcelain, hair
12x6 cm; 10x6 cm
- 11 Kristi Kongi
Regularly only the fog can save the world (Etel Adnan)
2024
Oil on canvas
140x140 cm
- 12 Kristi Kongi
I Let That Thought Go Away. The Light Shone from the Cliff. And Everything Felt Clear. And Warm
2024
Oil on canvas
140x130 cm
- 13 Kristi Kongi
Light From the Sky. From the Night
2024
Oil on canvas
55x55 cm
- 14 Kristi Kongi
Clear early morning with hissing light
2024
Oil on canvas
120x120 cm
- 15 Kristi Kongi
Eyes in the Garden
2024
Oil on canvas
30x30 cm
- 16 Eike Eplik
Budding Creature
2024
Porcelain, hair
12x6 cm

- 17 Kristi Kongi
Life Before Life. Only Shadows Are There
2024
Oil on canvas
55x55 cm
- 18 Kristi Kongi
A Floating Light of Magenta. Moving Among the Shadows of the Plants Takes the Thought Far
2024
Oil on canvas
55x55 cm
- 19 Eike Eplik
They take root and ring as if there were tomorrow
2024
Stainless steel, hair, porcelain, clay, silicone, sound, pigment
Dimensions variable
- 20 Eike Eplik
Dweller of the Unknown
2024
Porcelain, hair
30x16 cm
- 21 Eike Eplik
Dwellers of the Unknown
2024
Stainless steel, hair
Dimensions variable
- 22 Eike Eplik
Emerging Creature
2024
Stainless steel, hair, porcelain
56x30 cm
- 23 Eike Eplik
Is what is one in our world the same in another?
2024
Stainless steel, porcelain, hair, thread
120x65 cm

