

Damaris Athene

Undercurrents

9 October - 15 November 2025

Detail: Damaris Athene, ---infiltrate--- (2025)

'Blood, bile, intracellular fluid; a small ocean swallowed, a wild wetland in our gut; rivulets forsaken making their way from our insides to out, from watery womb to watery world: we are bodies of water.'

– Astrida Neimanis, *Bodies of Water: Posthuman Feminist Phenomenology* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019)

Presented at SLQS Gallery, **Damaris Athene's** solo exhibition *Undercurrents* explores what happens beneath the surface. - - - infiltrate - - - , __deepcopy and diffract// are three new bodies of work that seep through the surface of the earth, water, our skins and our minds.

How can we rethink our bodies, our interactions with the more-than-humans around us and the impacts of digital technology, often mistaken as intangible? At a time of global turmoil and climate crisis, *Undercurrents* invites us to reflect on our embodied existence and its deep entanglement with the world around us.

Informed by research spanning volcanoes, science fiction, feminist posthuman phenomenology, mycology and water, *Undercurrents* considers the unknowability of the insides of our bodies, our minds, the depths of the oceans and of the earth. Work is familiar yet unnerving, uncanny in its ambiguity, slipping through boundaries. Metamorphosis is activated through the audience's interaction with the work, creating a porous border between audience and artwork.

- - - infiltrate - - - is a site-specific parasitic installation that invades the gallery space. An otherworldly organism that reminds us of roots, tentacles, blood vessels, intestines, neurones, bronchioles, mycelial networks, body horror and science fiction. Stuffed scuba fabric climbs all over the walls and ceiling, airbrushed with colourful gradients

ranging from sickly sweet pinks to turquoises, greens, oranges, yellows, deep reds and browns. Glass tubes spawn from yellow holes, stretching between 'tentacles' like a sticky string of mucus or a passage for transporting vital nutrients.

__deepcopy is a series of expanded photographic 'paintings' made with layers of digitally printed sheer fabrics. The photographs printed capture the surface of water interacting with Athene's previous work - her 2022 installation of digitally printed shower curtains containing digital collages of Athene performing with her 2020-21 series of padded paintings. These close-up images blur the real and the fake, while mirroring the meta-regurgitation of imagery we experience online through their dense layering in both the digital and physical realms. These 'paintings' appear almost holographic, with the same image doubled and offset; sometimes, one of the pairs is pixelated. Fabric ranges in opacity, with some nearly impenetrable and some that are practically transparent, making you feel like your eyes are out of focus. Aluminium tray frames offer these images up as specimens or microscopic slides.

diffract// is a series of glass 'paintings' that echo the surface of water. Ambient light and the viewer's movement constantly alter the work, making a 'true' reading impossible. A complex web of reflections confuses perception of depth. The glass acts as an impenetrable boundary, like our digital screens, that slips just out of reach. The kiln-formed glass shifts from one colour to another in a gradient and takes its shape from the texture of wax interacting with water. Aluminium frames containing the glass are reminiscent of a phone case.

Damaris Athene (b. UK) lives and works in London. Athene's transdisciplinary practice explores the posthuman and how lived experience mediated through technology offers new ways of viewing the materiality and potential of the body. Work transmutes from painting to sculpture, photography, digital collage, and installations. Athene is drawn to where language fails us but embodied experience does not. Her work inhabits liminal space, slipping between the real and unreal, and swimming through permeable boundaries between bodies, the organic and synthetic, the digital and physical, and 2D/3D space.

Athene graduated from MA in Ceramics and Glass (2024) at the Royal College of Arts (Marit Rausing Scholarship) and MA in Fine Art (2023) from City & Guilds Of London Art School (Leverhulme Scholarship). She won the CGLAS Prize for Outstanding MA Fine Art Exhibition (2023) and received a CuratorSpace Bursary (2021). In 2025, Athene was selected for the RCA/Konstfack Exchange supported by the Anglo Swedish Society in Stockholm (Sweden), the Werkstattwocke Residency in Lüben (Germany) and the GIRLPOWER Residency co-founded and supported by Marcelle Joseph and Kimberly Morris in Salles (France).

Solo exhibitions include: Women in Art Fair, SLQS Gallery, London (2024); All Trussed Up and Nowhere to Go,] G A Z E [Art Space, Shrewsbury (2022); Cheer Up Love, Peterhouse, Cambridge (2019); I Shall Walk Softly There, Wigan S.T.E.A.M., Wigan (2018). Recent group exhibitions include: Who Runs the World, The Bomb Factory Art Foundation, London (2025); MEGA Art Fair, SLQS Gallery, Milan, Italy (2025); In/Visible: The Changing Shape of Womanhood, Galerie de l'Est, Compiègne, France (2025); In Loving Memory, Guts Gallery Project Space, London (2024); Unveiling Abstractions, Hypha HQ, London (2024); Robert Walters UK New Artist of the Year Award, Saatchi Gallery, London (2023); Adjacent Colours, D Contemporary, London, UK (2023); current/s, MeetFrida at PHOTOPIA, Hamburg, Germany (2023); BEYOND IMAGE, MeetFrida at Triennial Der Photographie, Hamburg, Germany (2022); A BODY: FIGURE AND FLESH, FLOOR_, Seoul, South Korea (2022); Warmth, Stay Home Gallery, Paris, Tennessee, USA (2022). Athene founded the blog Private View where she interviews artists who are women or non-binary.



Artist Portrait by Patrizia Moschetti

SLQS Gallery is a contemporary art gallery committed to platforming women and queer artists across generations. Founded by Sarah Le Quang Sang, SLQS Gallery emerges at a pivotal cultural moment when the need for unapologetic spaces for women and queer voices has never been more urgent. Through a considered and targeted programme, SLQS Gallery aims to foster an inclusive and intentional ethos. The gallery looks to disrupt outdated frameworks, such as neatly defined industry classifications “emerging” and “mid-career”, which often exclude artists balancing caregiving responsibilities or working outside conventional timelines.

ENQUIRIES

Sarah Le Quang Sang
sarah@slqsgallery.com