

**“Ocean Eyes”**  
Sept 18-22, 2023  
Lofuotta/Láfot/Lofoten Islands  
[Coast Contemporary](#)

Curated by Valentinas Klimasauskas

**Artists:**

Yaa Addae (GH/UK), Kjetil Berge (NO), Pia Eikaas (NO), Elisabeth Færøy (NO), Kåre Aleksander Grundvåg (NO), Morten Norbye Halvorsen (NO), Signe Johannessen (NO), Kaare Espolin Johnson (1907-1994, NO), Sarah Kazmi (PK), Lars Laumann (NO), Bjørn Mortensen (NO), Sandra Vaka (NO), Sille Storihle (NO), Istvan Virag (HU), Lin Wang (CH), Elin Már Øyen Vister (NO/Sábme).

**Program description by Valentinas Klimašauskas, curator of “Ocean Eyes”**

The forthcoming instalment of the Coast Contemporary festival, titled “Ocean Eyes,” is poised to deliver an open thought-provoking program that celebrates various aspects of (im)possible collaborations and encounters with the unknown, be it the future, unthinkable, untold stories or the ocean, for example. Through a range of presentations, performances, readings, lectures, hiking, screenings, and other activities or events, the festival will provide a platform for invited artists, critics, curators, cultural producers and the public to encounter potential new friendships and numerous presents.

“Ocean Eyes” edition of the Coast Contemporary festival will mostly take place on the shores of Kabelvåg and Svolvær on Lofuotta/Láfot/Lofoten Islands and is meant to function as a meeting point for cultural producers to share their work and practices about (im)possible imaginary, poetical, sociopolitical, technological, feminist, queer, indigenous and other realities.

The title “Ocean Eyes” refers to the sentient ocean on the planet Solaris described in the novel by Stanisław Lem of the same title and a popular song by Billie Eilish, among other things. The ocean, which is one of the examples of the unknown, is a dominant force in the Lofuotta/Láfot/Lofoten Islands. At the current time of multiple ecological and sociopolitical crises, it inspires thinking about (im)possible (in)human collaborations with it. To this day, more than 80 per cent of the ocean has never been mapped, explored, or even seen by humans. Our projections and relationships with it, on the one hand, were and still are based on extractive economy, intensive aquaculture (think of domestication of the salmon, for example), or on fictional and speculative imagery, on the other hand.



“Sea Troll” (1967) by Kaare Espolin Johnson. Photo credit: Galleri Espolin - Museum Nord.

Another inspiration is an image of “Sea Troll” (1967) by Kabelvåg based artist Kaare Espolin Johnson (1907-1994). Somewhat rough and open-to-various interpretations, the image depicts the possibility of the relationship between what may be called (more than) human (fisherman), imaginary (a chthonic sea troll) and nature (fish/ocean/wildness/unknown). At a certain point in his life, the artist had a vision of minus 22 which deeply affected his vision but also his technique and style. In the biographical documentary about the artist’s life in the Espolin gallery, Johnson talks about the necessity of having a chthonic soul companion and the picture of the sea troll suggests a possible realization of this need.

The concept of the chthonic, or the underworld, is closely linked to the ocean in this part of the world. In many mythological traditions, the sea is seen as a gateway to other worlds, both above and below. As such, the festival will feature discussions and presentations that explore the connections between the ocean, the imaginary and the supernatural. Accordingly, the festival organizers have set their sights on embracing the physical, sociopolitical, fictional, and other expressions associated with the vast expanse of the ocean. The endeavor acknowledges the vital role the ocean plays, not only in the historical and everyday experiences of the enchanting Lofuotta/Láfot/Lofoten Islands but also on a global scale, impacting our entire planet.

There is a strong chance that “Sea Troll” by Kaare Espolin Johnson refers to non-extractive and non-reductionist relationships and collaboration between (more than) humans and the so-called nature. Thus, there is a possibility that contemporary art and culture, in general, may provide us with examples and ideas that more equal collaborations are imaginable and thus possible.

## Coast Contemporary is kindly supported by:

The Arts Council / Kulturrådet

The Norwegian embassies in France, Lithuania, Germany, United Kingdom, Italy, Finland and Denmark and the Consulate General in New York.

Nordland County Council

Bergen Municipality

OCA - The Office for Contemporary Art Norway

BKH - The Artists Relief Fund

## Collaborative Institutions 2023

[Henie Onstad Art Center](#), co-presenting the artist Istvan Virag, Høvikodden, outside Oslo

[North Norwegian Art Centre](#), co-presenting Signe Johannessen, Svolvær, Lofoten

[Museum Nord](#) and the [Espolin Gallery](#) and Lofoten Aquarium, Lofoten

[Kabelvåg School of Moving Images](#), Kabelvåg, Lofoten

[RiddoDuottarMuseat \(Sápmi\)](#), co-presenting Elin Már Øyen Vister, Kárášjohka / Karasjok

