

### Christiane Baumgartner: Sunken Treasure

30 January – 8 March 2025



*Elysium, 2023 // Woodcut // Paper and Image: 198.0 x 152.5 cm - 78 x 60 in // Edition of 6*

Cristea Roberts is delighted to present **Christiane Baumgartner: Sunken Treasure** (30 January – 8 March 2025), the artist's fifth solo exhibition with the gallery, which presents a new body of work developed by the artist over the last two years. Large-scale woodcuts of landscapes and seascapes are paired with ethereal views of sunsets and horizons as well as previously unseen oil drawings.

Although these works may first appear as peaceful meditations on the natural world, they mark the tensions between nature and human conflict.

The artist began this body of work in 2022 when she first heard news of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. At the outset of her career Baumgartner's woodcuts were informed by her experience of growing up in East Germany before the fall of the Berlin Wall; over thirty years later, the artist has described the same feeling of paralysis experienced in her youth in Cold War Germany.

The exhibition opens with three large-scale woodcuts that encapsulate a world that is becoming "black and white...vague and fragile." *Melancholia, 2022, Kiss, 2024, and Elysium, 2023*, are part of a series termed 'the outer world' and represent Baumgartner's attempt to control or preserve moments in time when the contemporary political climate is increasingly volatile.

For this series Baumgartner also considered the role of the sky and celestial phenomena in medieval times, to forewarn of events yet to come. These imposing works are based on Baumgartner's own photography of the Baltic Sea, of sunsets that pierce through heavy and ominous clouds. Whilst her pictures revere nature, Baumgartner's natural world is dystopian and uncanny.

The artist's meticulously incised lines, when viewed from a distance, clearly depict the interplay of light over water, however when moving closer to the picture, we find that the image is abstracted by the intensity of her mark-making. In *In Der Region von Eis, 2022*, Baumgartner portrays what seems to be a fading sun from a vague and obscure vantage point, a potential "underworld" or supernatural realm. Carved line by line into woodblock with a sharp knife in her studio, Baumgartner creates a unique pictorial space, where the viewer becomes conscious of both the emerging light as well as the sheer physical effort undertaken by the artist to inscribe the wood.

Baumgartner also presents a new series of coloured woodcuts that share their title with the exhibition. The *Sunken Treasure* prints form part of Baumgartner's 'inner world' and are also intended to present a view from below. The artist, who has often critiqued material culture and human consumption in her practice, names the variants in this series after precious stones.

*Sunken Treasure – Diamonds II, 2024, and Sunken Treasure – Pearls IV, 2024*, are depicted in vivid colour, as the artist grapples with human ideals of beauty and value, compared with the limits and constraints of global growth.

In her research, the artist looked particularly to the German legend of Faust, reimagined by Christopher Marlowe and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. In the legend, the scholar Faust makes a pact with the devil, exchanging his soul for unlimited knowledge and worldly pleasures. Through Faust, Baumgartner finds a metaphor for the human condition, torn between temperance and greed.

The exhibition closes with *Baltic Royal I-III, 2023 – 24*, from a series of reverse oil drawings. In these drawings colour plays a reconciliatory and hopeful role. To make these works, Baumgartner begins with a small-scale woodblock which is inked and impressed on Japanese paper - she then draws on the verso of the paper.

In contrast to the stark imagery of her woodcuts, the artist has described this process as "emotional." Baumgartner's use of colour acts as a release and her free mark-marking ventures towards the abstract, evoking imagined landscapes, visions of potential futures and unseen worlds.

Through this major survey of work developed in the last few years, Christiane Baumgartner draws into question the notion of stillness in a world increasingly driven by political extremes and earthly fragility.

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## Cristea Roberts Gallery

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### Artist Talk

**6–6:30pm, Wednesday 29 January 2025**

Join artist Christiane Baumgartner for an informal tour of the exhibition. RSVP essential.  
Contact [rspv@cristearoberts.com](mailto:rspv@cristearoberts.com) to confirm your place.

### Opening Reception

**6:30–8pm, Wednesday 29 January 2025**

RSVP essential.  
Contact [rspv@cristearoberts.com](mailto:rspv@cristearoberts.com) to confirm your place.

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### About the artist

Christiane Baumgartner was born in 1967 in Leipzig, Germany, and studied there at the Hochschule für Grafik und Buchkunst before completing her Masters in Printmaking at the Royal College of Art in London in 1999.

Baumgartner is best known for the monumental woodcuts based on her own films and video stills. She first came to public attention in the UK in EAST international in 2004 and a year later with a major solo exhibition at the Ikon Gallery, Birmingham. She was included in the groundbreaking exhibition, *Eye on Europe*, at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, in 2006.

Baumgartner has had several solo exhibitions at the Cristea Roberts Gallery and further presentations at Strawberry Hill House, London (2023); LWL Museum für Kunst und Kultur, Münster (2023); Manif d'Art - The Quebec City Biennial, Canada (2019); Davis Museum, Wellesley College, Massachusetts (2018); Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (2017); Goethe Institute, Hanoi (2012); Museum Franz Gertsch, Burgdorf (2011) and Spinnerei archiv massiv, Leipzig (2010).

She was awarded the prestigious Mario Avati Printmaking Prize in 2015 by the Académie des beaux-arts, Paris, where she staged her first solo exhibition in France in the same year. In 2021 Baumgartner was the juror for the International Print Center New York's biannual open call exhibition and in 2022 she was elected a full member of the Saxon Academy of Arts, Dresden.

Baumgartner's work is held in over fifty public collections around the world including the Albertina, Vienna; Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris; Staatliche Museen zu Berlin; British Museum, London; Victoria and Albert Museum, London; Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester; Museum of Modern Art, New York; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles and National Gallery Victoria, Australia.

Christiane Baumgartner lives and works in Leipzig, Germany.

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## Press Release November 2024

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### About Cristea Roberts Gallery

Cristea Roberts Gallery is a leading international contemporary art gallery with a particular focus on original prints and works on paper. Since its inception, the gallery has commissioned a significant number editions by a wide range of artists, whilst also representing others for their unique works. The underlying ethos of the gallery has always been artist-led. It was originally founded in 1995 as the Alan Cristea Gallery and changed its name in September 2019 to Cristea Roberts Gallery.

Acknowledged as one of the leading galleries in its field of specialty, the gallery's programme is dedicated to publishing, cataloguing, exhibiting and dealing in original prints and drawings by its roster of over 30 important international artists and Estates. It participates in all the major international art fairs and has a dynamic programme of exhibitions hosted in its bespoke space in Pall Mall, London.

The gallery works closely with international museums on acquisitions and loans, and examples of its editions are held in major public collections around the world including Tate, London, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; and Museum of Modern Art, New York.

### Visitor information

Tues - Fri 11 am - 5.30pm  
Sat 11 am - 2pm

Closed on Mondays, Sundays and public holidays  
Free admission

Travel: Piccadilly or Green Park underground station  
+44 (0)20 7439 1866

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