

# **MONIKA PLIOPLYTE**

## **YOU ARE A CIRCLE EXPANDED**

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**STUDENT SPACES FOR ART AND  
COLLABORATION ARTIST PROFILE SERIES**

November 8-February 14, 2025

# YOU ARE A CIRCLE EXPANDED

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Monika Plioplyte's multidisciplinary practice intertwines elements of Baltic folklore, gender identity, and the immigrant experience, using printed and cut paper, photographs, and mixed media to create narrative structures that transcend the personal and cultural. In her latest exhibition, *You Are a Circle Expanded*, Monika delves deeper into her ongoing exploration of weaving patterns, not just as decorative symbols but as carriers of both emotional resonance and cultural memory.

Her work reflects a study of the weaver's knot as both a physical and emotional metaphor, creating collages that echo Baltic Pagan symbols, myths, and female archetypes. Monika's paper-based textile compositions evoke open-ended narratives that explore the intersections of personal ritual and collective myth. This exhibition navigates the intricacies of weaving itself, peeling back layers to reveal the abstract textures within its structure, while simultaneously placing the viewer within a broader narrative—such as the intimate setting of a table—where the threads of daily life intersect with the symbolic, transforming the ordinary into something poetic.

# MONIKA PLIOPLYTE

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**Monika Plioplyte** weaves printed and cut paper, photographs, and other materials into narrative structures that connect Baltic folklore, gender identity, and her Lithuanian immigrant experience. In work that combines printmaking, sculpture, performance, and photography, Plioplyte often uses her body as subject or object. Her storytelling is animated by Baltic Pagan symbolism, female archetypes, personal rituals, and the uncanny.

Born in Lithuania, **Monika Plioplyte** immigrated to the US in her early teens. She holds an MFA from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago and a BFA from Massachusetts College of Art and Design. Plioplyte has exhibited nationally at venues including the Hyde Park Art Center, Northern Illinois Art Museum, Boundary Space, Monique Meloche, Columbia College Chicago and Mana Contemporary in Illinois; Rare Visions in Colorado; Harvard Davis Center, AREA Gallery and Gallery Kayafas in Boston. Residencies include MASS MoCa, The Center Program at Hyde Park Art Center, the Harris Barron Fellowship for Haystack Mountain School of Crafts, and a Vermont Studio Center Fellowship. She has received grants from the Illinois Arts Council, the DCASE Individual Artists Program, the John W. Kurtich Foundation, and the Blanche E. Colman Foundation. Plioplyte lives and works in Chicago.

**Website:** [www.monikaplioplyte.com](http://www.monikaplioplyte.com)

**Instagram:** [@monikaplioplyte](https://www.instagram.com/monikaplioplyte)



*I For Nested Pattern (No.4), 2022, photo-based performance, archival Inkjet print, 30" x 44"*



*I For Nested Pattern (No.6)*, 2022, photo-based performance, archival Inkjet print, 30" x 44"



*You Are a Circle Expanded* installation view



*I for Nested Pattern* series (No.3, No.1 & No.6), printed on photo tex adhesive paper, 108" x 58" inches each image (installation view/size varies)



*Trawling for Requirements*, 2020, blind net embossing on Rives BFK, silkscreen, charcoal, pen and ink.  
Wall pattern made out of multi color hand cut risograph prints of an image of body, 88" x 104"

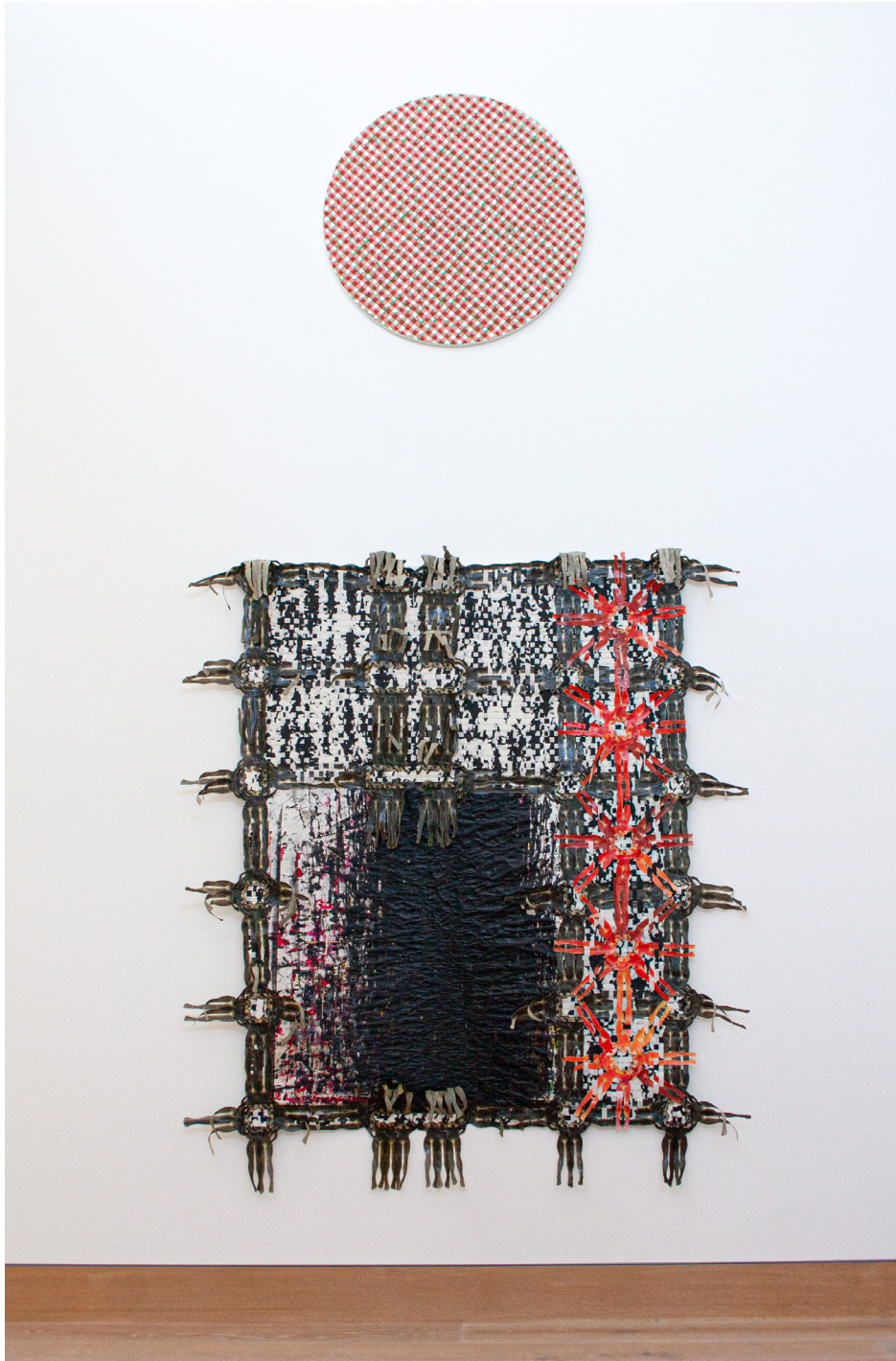




*You Are a Circle Expanded* installation view



Untitled (Paper Textile No.5), 2021, risograph prints and collage, 53" x 86"



Untitled (Paper Textile No.6), 2021, multicolor risograph prints, and collage, 60" x 73"



*You Are a Circle Expanded* installation view

g to lift it up. See these lines, they look hairy to me. See, they have big hats on like witches wear and big noses but they're not really witches. See this all comes out, like his cheeks and he's got these funny eyes too lo



*Sigils*, 2022, photo and paper collages, 97" x 108"



*Mater's Matrix*, 2023, mixed media installation, installation view/ size varies



*You Are a Circle Expanded* installation view



Close up of *Mater's Matrix*, 2023, mixed media installation, installation view/size varies





*You Are a Circle Expanding*, 2024, multi color risograph prints, monoprints seen behind, installation view/  
close up



*You Are a Circle Expanding*, 2024, multi color risograph prints, monoprints seen behind, installation view/  
close up

# INTERVIEW WITH MONIKA PLIOPLYTE

Conducted by Rachel Manlubatan

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**Rachel Manlubatan:** How did you first begin to combine the varying mediums you currently practice with - paper, photography, performance? Why do these techniques draw you in, and why have you landed on a conjunction of these specific mediums rather than other ones?

**Monika Plioplyte:** I first began to combine these mediums such as printmaking, photography, and performance during grad school at SAIC, where so much of my work then dealt with exploring the abusive history I had with my own body. I felt that there was no one medium that could best capture my feelings and thoughts that I was trying to work through, so I began to combine them all together to help me draw a bigger picture than just relying on one specific medium that I felt just didn't do enough for me. Printmaking and paper is my ultimate love, I have been using these two mediums for so long that not only do they give me a sense of comfort but also they always keep me interested as there are never ending possibilities in how I can continue to explore my work through them. I heavily rely on different types of prints (monoprints, woodcuts, silkscreen, risograph prints) as these are tactile and mutable expressions that I use as collage and drawing material to create my work. Photography has always had a special place in my heart as well. I have been using it to either document something that otherwise might go unnoticed, or reframe and manipulate reality. My performances are not meant to be performed live in front of people, I like to explore that side of myself in the privacy of my studio or use it as a way to interact with natural environments. I like to capture those performances using either photography or video because then I can manipulate what I'm doing in those photos or edit the video in a way that allows me to create some sort of mystique, uncanniness, and personal mythology. This conjunction of mediums feels

organic because each material or medium contributes something essential to the themes I'm working with. It's as if they're different lenses, each revealing a unique aspect of the systems I explore - intertwining and building on one another in a similar way that my subject matter itself operates. However, I am always open to exploring other materials and mediums if I feel that my work is asking for it. For example, if I think that a sculpted ceramic object or sound piece may allow for a more seamless integration or might add the ability to embody my ideas more cohesively - I will make it.

**RM:** How do you use your art to reflect on your past and current experiences, such as your time immigrating from Lithuania? What have you learned about yourself through your creative journey, and why do you choose to share that with others?

**MP:** Being an immigrant at such a formative age in my life (I came when I was 13 years old) was a very traumatic experience to say the least. Leaving behind my friends, grandparents, and everything familiar was very difficult, especially since we couldn't afford regular trips back. I often had to rely on my memories while adapting to a new life here in the US. This duality has left me feeling suspended between two worlds, not fully belonging to either. Through my practice I am trying to weave my experiences between the two worlds that I exist in and engage in continual acts of place making. Through my creative journey I have learned that you have to give yourself permission to make what you want to make, say what you want to say, and as long as it comes from your own authentic experiences it usually will connect universally. What is most private and personal in you is also what is most universal.

**RM:** How do the patterns within each of your

## INTERVIEW CONTINUED

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pieces connect to Baltic folklore? How does the way you photograph your art and the way you install them in new spaces impact and serve their individual meanings?

**MP:** The best example of Baltic folklore is passed through weaving patterns and designs. These symbols are amongst the oldest form of writing, a pictorial language that could record actual words and sentences. I use traditional Lithuanian textiles and decorative symbols as inspiration for the work but also make sure to keep them open ended and not an exact copy, in order to leave some room to experiment within these works and insert or weave some of my drawings within them. The skeletons of the paper textiles are always created by using cut out risograph prints of my body and glue, and after that takes its final form, I start to manipulate it by weaving my drawings throughout. The reason I use my own body as a jumping off point is because it is readily available and I have exclusive rights to it. It also seemed honest to just use my own body. The end result of the patterns becomes so abstracted that I don't feel fully identified with it any longer. It's not just about my identity but it's about our identity within our bodies, our relationship to the external world and the feminine aspects within each of us to remind us that the feminine has always played a central role in shaping our systems, offering protection, and fostering community.

I really enjoy working within the predetermined space to create a visual environment that will communicate my ideas. Considering how and where the elements of the work are installed within or around that site can feel very empowering, allowing for bold decisions, and to try new forms of making or different compositions that may never have arisen otherwise. For example, in the exhibition "You Are a Circle Expanded" here at Glass Curtain Gallery at Columbia

College Chicago, as much as I was trying to plan the layout of the installation in my studio, I could not plan how its final shape was going to take place until I was able to activate the material within the confines of the gallery itself. Reacting to the proximity of the walls, the gallery's pillars and my other art works, the combination of the layers became in itself a weaving of the various elements and themes at play in this show. For me this sculptural installation was also about highlighting the invisibility of systems, where I am creating a physical manifestation of something abstract, like information or memory, making it visible and tangible.

**RM:** How does your exhibition connect to audiences who don't share your same background? How does the color, forms, and arrangement of the pieces interact with both physical and emotional messages you set forth? What exactly is the message you are portraying?

**MP:** I hope that in my exhibitions or my work over all, I create a sense of resonance and wonder, engaging audiences beyond specific cultural or personal backgrounds. The themes of my work - invisible systems, transmission of information, states of "in-betweenness", gender, and reflections on the past - are all universal concepts that impact many people and influence who we are. These themes tap into a shared human heritage, even if some don't recognize specific cultural references. My work also reflects on what it means to inhabit a body—especially as a woman today. I grapple with the idea of bodily autonomy, and the frequent sense that one's body, particularly as a woman, can feel alien or not fully one's own. This discomfort parallels a broader disregard for the body of the earth, mirroring a lack of care for natural resources and in doing so ignoring the consequences. With each body of work I create, I choose to highlight the many

## INTERVIEW CONTINUED

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themes I am thinking about.

The colors, forms, and arrangement play important roles in this connection. I choose colors that carry emotional weight and resonance, sometimes grounding viewers in earthy, muted tones that suggest organic or natural elements. The forms, which I often borrow from ancient patterns and folk symbols, are abstract enough to feel familiar to different audiences while also encouraging curiosity. By placing these forms together thoughtfully in the exhibition space, I try to encourage viewers to see them as parts of a whole, almost like pieces in a visual puzzle of interconnected meanings.



## THE STUDENT SPACES FOR ART AND COLLABORATION ARTIST PROFILE SERIES

The Student Spaces for Art and Collaboration (formerly known as DEPS) Artist Profile Series presented by Columbia College Chicago's Department of Student Spaces for Art and Collaboration, is a virtual publication on select artists involved with the Student Spaces for Art and Collaboration Galleries and the Columbia College Chicago community. Our goal with this series is to connect artist and viewer on a deeper level, and to highlight the amazing works and thoughts of our featured artists through interviews, artist biographies, and catalogs of work. Art has always been a way to connect with others, no matter where one may physically be. We hope by presenting the creativity and insights of the people involved in the Student Spaces for Art and Collaboration Artist Profile Series that viewers may have one more way to stay in touch with and support the arts community. The Student Spaces for Art and Collaboration Artist Profile Series and graphic design is managed by Student Spaces for Art and Collaboration Exhibitions Assistant Rachel Manlubatan. This program is partially supported by a grant from the Illinois Arts Council Agency.

Learn more at: [colum.edu/deps](http://colum.edu/deps)

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**Glass Curtain Gallery:** 1104 S Wabash Ave, First Floor, Chicago, IL 60605  
**Gallery Hours:** Monday–Friday 9 a.m.–5 p.m.