

NICELLE BEAUCHENE GALLERY

Jonathan Baldock

Friends

September 4– October 11, 2025

Opening Thursday, September 4, 6–8 PM

Nicelle Beauchene Gallery is pleased to present *Friends*, the gallery's fourth solo exhibition by British artist Jonathan Baldock.

Inspired by Bette Midler's iconic 1973 performance at the NYC gay liberation parade, where she sang "Friends" to calm and empower the crowd during a time of great turmoil for the queer community, the exhibition explores how relationships shape and define us. In this time of universal political and environmental uncertainty, *Friends* highlights the significance of friendship as a source of strength and resilience, as exemplified within the queer community, which has long relied on chosen family as a means of support and solidarity.

In the exhibition, Baldock presents a new installation of textile and ceramic works staged within a theatricalized domestic setting, where hand-crafted pieces interact as characters or "friends" in dialogue. These relationships, which often begin in childhood and can be meaningfully influenced by imagined friendships and role models found in media and literature, play a significant role in shaping our identities. For Baldock, friends are complex relationships built on strong affection and trust, providing mutual support and influencing our sense of self.

The exhibition features a range of works, including ceramic vessels with shifting body parts and a group of soft toy-like animals gathered in an act of interspecies love, inspired by scientific studies of same-sex behaviour in animals. Three large, hand-embroidered, and dyed wall textile panels further explore themes of friendship and identity, drawing on a range of cultural references. One panel depicts Ursula from Disney's *The Little Mermaid*, a character based on the drag queen Divine, while another illustrates the Bremen Town Musicians, a German fairy tale collected by the Brothers Grimm. The third panel draws on European folklore and symbolism, depicting unity and interconnectedness between humans and the natural world.

Throughout the exhibition, small hand-embroidered textile panels feature quotes that for Baldock highlight and disrupt the complex dynamics between friends. These texts, jotted down by Baldock after observing throwaway comments, words of advice, and eavesdropped conversations between friends, offer a glimpse into the intricate relationships between humans and the ways in which we shape and define each other.

By utilizing traditional crafts and materials, Baldock pays homage to overlooked narratives of working-class people and the queer community, challenging traditional notions of identity, representation, and our place within the natural world. The exhibition invites viewers to consider how we connect and the intricate relationships that exist between humans.

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Jonathan Baldock (b. 1980, Pembury, UK) lives and works in London. Recent, selected solo exhibitions include Jupiter Artland, Edinburgh, UK (2025); London Mithraeum Bloomberg Space, London, UK (2025); Yorkshire Sculpture Park, Wakefield, UK (2023); Charleston, Lewes, UK (2023); Stephen Friedman Gallery, London, UK (2023); Kunstverein Göttingen, Germany (2023); Nicelle Beauchene Gallery, New York, NY (2022); Accelerator, Stockholm, Sweden (2021); and La Casa Encendida, Madrid, Spain (2021).

Recent, selected group exhibitions include The Design Museum, London (2025); Hayward Gallery Touring, Coventry, Nottingham, Cheltenham & Leicester (20024-26) MOCAC Museum of Contemporary Art in Krakow (2024-5); Whitaker Museum, Rossendale, UK (2023); The Fruitmarket, Edinburgh (2023); La Trobe Art Institute, Victoria, Australia (2023). Baldock's work also featured in group exhibitions at the Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, Ridgefield, CT (2018); Fondazione Memmo, Rome, Italy (2016); and Rockbund Art Museum, Shanghai, China (2013), among others.

His works are included in collections including Aïshti Foundation, Beirut; Arts Council Collection, London; The Grundy Art Gallery, Blackpool; The Roberts Institute of Art, London and Saatchi Gallery, London.