

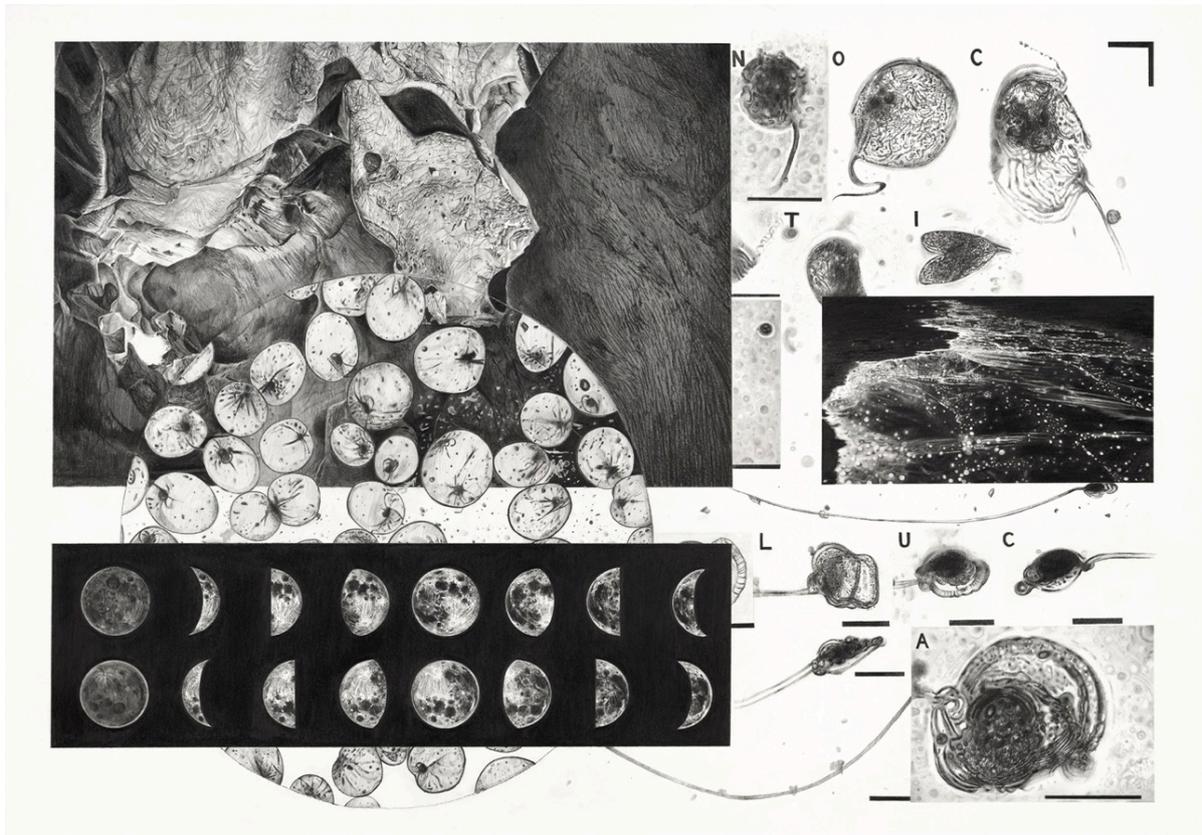


PRESS RELEASE

DUO SHOW JUANAN SORIA & KEVIN VANWONTERGHEM

LUX – OUT OF THE DARK

5 MAY – 6 JULY 2024



'Noctiluca 01' by Juanan Soria, 2024, pencil on Canson paper, 76x106,5 cm

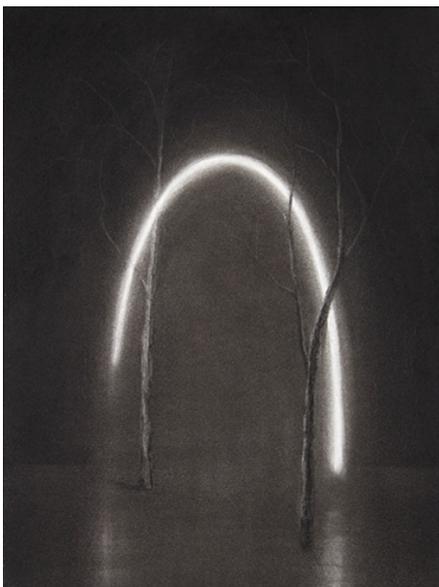
Husk Gallery is delighted to present LUX - OUT OF THE DARK, a duo show featuring work on paper by Juanan Soria and Kevin Vanwongerghem, contemporaries who have engaged in open dialogue about their drawings in each other's studios in the course of their creative process. Both artists create images with a critical mindset in which the aesthetic experience of the viewer plays an important role. In both Juanan Soria's pencil drawings and Kevin Vanwongerghem's charcoal drawings, light takes centre stage through a contrast between the white and the deep black on paper. During their conversations, fascinating ideas and reflections emerged on myths and rationality, on Romanticism and Enlightenment, on magic and disenchantment, on mysticism and science. This dialectic through opposites brought interesting perspectives on their visual work and on the layers of meaning of the phenomenon of light, which cannot exist without the dark and the perception of the beholder.

Myths and Rationality

Juanan Soria once again finds inspiration for his latest series of drawings in Iberian protohistory, particularly at the time of the Phoenician colonisation on the coast of the Iberian Peninsula. Their society was imbued with myths, creating cult sites for the ritual worship of nature gods such as '**Noctiluca**' - the goddess of the moon, fertility, life, death and hunting. In religious tradition, she was regarded as an explanation for the alternation of the sun and the moon, as well as being associated with sea sparks or '**Noctiluca scintillans**', the marvelous natural phenomenon of bioluminescent plankton in seawater. These unicellular creatures that look like translucent balloons with a tail cause bluish light effects in the waves. In the pre-modern era - long before natural science had an explanation for this - humans still believed in supernatural forces and creatures. They were part of a wondrous worldview, a symbolically structured cosmos that, with the rise of rationalisation peculiar to modernity, is being stripped of its profound meanings. Juanan Soria analyses '**Noctiluca**' - she who gives light in darkness - in her multitude of manifestations in a quasi-scientific way. He depicts the demystification of natural phenomena attributed to this goddess. He also offers a reconstruction of pre-modern man's cosmological worldview in the light of astrology – in which celestial bodies were named after gods in the distant past.

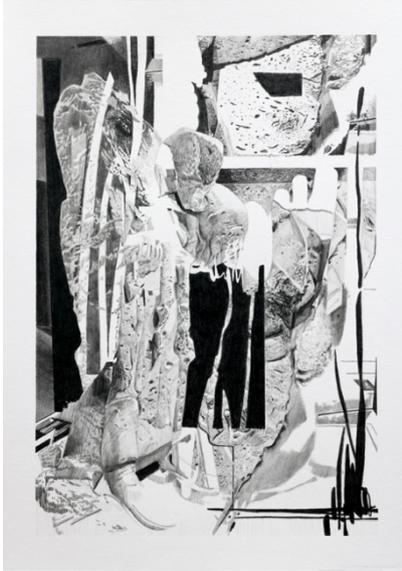
Romanticism and Enlightenment

Rational thinking has its origins in the Enlightenment. Scientific progress, based on the conviction that there are no more mysterious powers and that we can control everything by calculation, was described by Max Weber as 'disenchantment'. Against the modern world where there is no more room for the mystical and deep feelings, the 19th century saw the manifestation of the romantic counter-movement in search of poetry, the spiritual and beauty, in short that which cannot be parsed. **Kevin Vanwonterghem** explores the landscape genre in the wake of Romanticism. Whatever is in the twilight zone between the mystical and the explicable is his inspiration. Like the romantics, he assigns a crucial role to art. His landscapes are not topographical, rather dystopian in nature - a kind of surreal setting where there is room for 'enchantment'. In his **Phenomena** series, he draws diverse light phenomena, in which human presence is invariably absent. The bare treetops of trees are bathed in atmospheric light; in other charcoal drawings, the velvety nature of the deep black tones is literally lit up. As a viewer, you participate in these scenes, the enigmatic light effects invite you to step into Vanwonterghem's landscapes.



'Phenomenon 01' by Kevin Vanwonterghem, 2024, charcoal on Hahnemühle paper, 34,5 x 24,5 c

Magic and Disenchantment



Modern rationalism, science and the 'disenchantment' of the worldview are inextricably linked. In line with his earlier series *Cerrillo blanco* and *Damas Ibéricas*, **Juanan Soria** in his new drawings once again enters into a dialogue with artefacts from a distant past using the archaeological method as a guide. Archaeologists reconstruct a culture through modern scientific methods based on quantification, calculability and predictability. The research finds its validity in a 'disenchanted' worldview, where rational thinking prevails and there is no more room for magic. The discipline fights the chaos of material discoveries with its own plan, just as art tackles chaos in its creative way. For material artefacts are themselves born of chaos. After all, they were carved from a block of stone in the distant past. The original image was destroyed over time. In his series of **Artifact** drawings, Soria reduces the chaos to a composition, in which the chaos itself and the unknown are part of it. He also takes the fragments out of the darkness, but always leaves room for magic and free interpretation.

'Artifact 02' by Juanan Soria, 2024, pencil on Canson paper, 30x21 cm

Mysticism and Science



Artists create artefacts that offer ideas and concepts, that lead a life of their own long afterwards. The artist creates from chaos but retreats. The images are preserved independently of the creator, but the artwork nevertheless betrays traces of the creative process. **Kevin Vanwongerghem** creates his images while drawing using his gut feeling and intuition as a compass, but always with the viewer's perception in mind. In the series **Light Occurrence**, he introduces rigid geometric shapes that light up dark space. The circle, triangle and straight line(s) reminiscent of industrial lighting - minimalism à la Dan Flavin, they are artificial light constructions at the forefront of his compositions, at odds with classic atmospheric light effects in a landscape. Kevin Vanwongerghem loves ambiguity in an image, visual associations that cannot be interpreted unequivocally. These mystical image compositions question the malleability of reality. In the wake of romantic thinking, there is a focus on chaos and alienation; the work of art as an end result does not need to be a harmonious whole. Vanwongerghem literally and figuratively makes light appear in and on his imaginary landscapes, with a clear appeal to the viewer.

'Light Occurrence 02' by Kevin Vanwongerghem, 2024, charcoal on Hahnemühle paper, 54,5 x 76 c

Short CV



Juanan Soria (°1985, Ubeda, Spain) grew up in Andalusia. Currently, he lives and works in Ghent, Belgium. Beside painting and drawing, he creates installations and video work. He obtained a BA of Fine Arts at the University of Sevilla and a MA of Art Production at the Polytechnic University of Valencia. The Spanish artist completed several residencies, among others in Cordoba, Madrid and Ubeda, that led to exhibitions. Furthermore, he was declared laureate in several Spanish art prizes, in the field of painting and video art. Since 2013, he has been busy on the Belgian art scene among which solo shows in Ghent and several group shows. He was awarded with the Third Prize of the 'Art Contest 2021'. His artworks are included in diverse public collections in Spain.



Kevin Vanwonderghem (b1984, Ghent, Belgium) currently lives and works in Destelbergen, Belgium. He graduated from Luca – School of Arts, Ghent in 2007 with a Master's degree in Visual Arts - option Illustration. Afterwards, he studied Printmaking at the Academy of Visual Arts, Ghent. His works on paper have been presented in several solo shows and in group shows in Belgium. Among others, his work was included in exhibitions at the Tabaksmuseum in Wervik (2022), the Cultural Centre De Warande, Turnhout (2019) and Museum Dhondt-Dhaenens (2016). The artist is also working as a teacher in Graphic Arts at the Academy of Fine Arts in Zottegem, Belgium.

Opening

Sunday 5 May 2024 from 2 to 7 pm in the presence of the artists

Rivoli Open Sunday

2 June 2024 from 2 to 6 pm

Opening hours during exhibition

Thursday, Friday and Saturday from 2 to 6 pm
or by appointment

For further inquiries:

Contact Ingrid Van Hecke – Gallery Director

Mail info@huskgallery.com

Tel. +32 478 52 16 46

Website www.huskgallery.com

Address Husk Gallery

Rivoli Building ground floor, Chaussée de Waterloo 690 #12, 1180 Brussels

Facebook: @huskartgallery - **Instagram:** @huskgallery - #juanansoria #kevinvanwonderghem