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Press Release

**DANJA AKULIN: LIGHTSCAPES**  
**07.09 – 28.10.2023**

For his second exhibition with the gallery, entitled *Lightscapes*, Danja Akulin selected large and small format works from recent series (2023) along with works from earlier series (2004 – 2022) in the artist's signature technique – with graphite and pencil on paper mounted on canvas, or with charcoal on canvas. Hypnotic landscapes and seascapes are shown in interconnection with abstract compositions as a parallel with two sides of the reality and two ways of its perception.

Drawing as the main instrument, means of expression, and the technical basis of Danja Akulin's works is simultaneously a way of creating images and their visual content. The images are revealed in a laconic language, but still implemented in a complex and multi-layered graphic composition. The artist experiments with rich variety and facets of visual expressions of drawing. He moves freely from vibrant spaces constructed with one single line as an imprint of endless intuitive trace of pencil, to a very dense and concentrated multi-layered compositions created on the painted with large brush background. Graphite and charcoal are changing their character, plasticity, and energy component, depending on the vision of the artist. Akulin explores the border between a line and a brushstroke and between drawing and painting in a whole.

Akulin's personal choice of a restricted monochrome palette in fact gives the artist a lot of freedom – without the complexing of working with color, the artist can be focused on the essence of the composition, the balance of light and shadow, and experiment with texture, mark making, and symbolic meanings. *"A drawing may not contain bright colours, light and shade are sufficient. Optical oversaturation of the world can be avoided by focusing on a plot, generalising and reducing it to a precise statement," - the artist says.*

The reduced colour of his works emphasizes other means of expression - the rich variety of black and grey tones which with elusive shifts between sharply defined and blurred contours create the distinctive "ever-changing moods" of Akulin's images. They bring black-and-white impressionist works to mind, while the blurred photographic feel of some compositions is also reminiscent of Gerhard Richter. In the meditative atmosphere they evoke grisaille painting with metaphysical components.

Images of Danja Akulin's works take us away from obvious descriptiveness and depiction, the external is being transferred into codes and symbols, leading to more meditative than superficial perception. Walkways, lakes under nocturnal skies, forests or fields are among artist's favorite themes which by means of subtle lighting he infuses with an aura of the sublime. This light gently enshrouds scenes and individual motifs. His settings are composed from artist's imagination and from memory, perhaps the reason why the images largely show non naturalistic sources of light. On closer inspection the viewer will notice several light sources, on occasions also located outside the composition.

From earliest creations of Western Art made in grisaille, black and white artworks were often created for devotional purposes, to eliminate distractions and focus the mind. As color pervades only daily life, black and white signal a shift to otherworldly or spiritual context.

Akulin's works follow the same philosophical approach and engage a viewer into discovery of the space between visible and invisible, between figurative representation of nature and its mystical meanings.

The artist creates a universe which can be perceived as very realistic and familiar. Hypnotic images of his works show landscapes with different extension – from a very distant point of view to a closeup, transforming macro images into almost abstract compositions. Landscapes, seascapes, trees, grass, pathways, being very real at the first glance, and performed with artistic excellence, remain at the same time in the field of something hidden, untold, belonging to the space of dreams and memories rather than to the space of reality.

Danja Akulin's works invite the viewer to share the artist's adoration of the nature and its complexity, representing the reality as a shell of mystery and enigma of the nature, and aimed more to interrogate than to give answers.

Born in 1977 in Saint-Petersburg (RU), Danja Akulin lives and works in Berlin (DE) since 2000. He studied at the University of Arts of Berlin (UdK) at the Department of Fine Arts (2000 -2005, Prof. Georg Baselitz), where he has completed his Advanced MFA (2005 -2006, Prof. Daniel Richter).

The artist was exhibited extensively since 2002, in 2017 he was granted *Elizabeth Greenshields Foundation Award*.

Selected solo exhibitions include among others:

*In Darkness Let Me Dwell*, Bark Berlin Gallery, Berlin (DE), 2023, *Between the Lines*, Artbrige Gallery, Berlin, (DE), *Between the Lines*, In-Gate Gallery, Brussels (BE), 2022, *Penumbra, new works*, J.J.Heckenhauer Gallery, Munich (DE), 2021, *Art on Paper New York*, with Elipsis Art, New York (USA), 2020, *Rock Hard Sea*, Bark Gallery, Berlin (DE), 2020, *Penumbra*, Erarta Museum, St. Petersburg (RU), 2019, *Art on Paper Brussels* (2018), *Charcoal on Canvas*, Mimi Ferzt Gallery, New York (USA), 2013, *Art Karlsruhe*, 2013, *Penumbra*, Erarta Gallery, London (UK), 2012.

Selected group exhibitions include among others:

*Das Ende der Malerei. Karl Hagemeister und die Malerei heute*, Bröhan-Museum, Berlin (DE), 2023, *50/50: The Matter of Duality*, Paul- Fleischmann- Haus, Berlin (DE), 2020, *Preparing for Darkness vol. 4: True Romance*, Kühlhaus, Berlin (DE), 2019, *Erinnern-treümen-zeichnen*, Poll Gallery (Berlin, Germany), 2019, *A Sign of Nature*, W Gallery, Osnabrück (DE), 2019, Kunst und Filmbiennale Worpswede 2018, Worpswede (DE), 2018, *Shadow*, Thielbeer.Art & Holger Kuhn Fine Arts, Berlin (DE), 2018, *Preparing for Darkness*, Kühlhaus (Berlin, Germany) *Salon Nr. 2*, Christine Knauber Gallery, Berlin (DE), 2018, *Salon der Gegenwart*, Catalog, Hamburg (DE), 2017, *This is The Sea*, Fano Kunstmuseum, Catalog, Fano (DK), 2017.