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Press Release

DANJA AKULIN: BETWEEN THE LIGHT
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In- Gate Gallery is pleased to present the solo exhibition by Danja Akulin “Between the Light”, on view from November 7 until December 21, 2024.

For his third solo exhibition with the gallery the artist selected large and small format works from recent series (2024) along with works from earlier series (2003 – 2023) in his signature technique – with graphite and pencil on paper mounted on canvas, or with charcoal on canvas.

The nature and its mystery remain the main theme and the meaning of Danja Akulin’s works. The artist shares with the viewer his adoration for the nature and rethinking the formulas of its existence. The subject of the artist’s reflections and research is the logic and mystery of the interaction of built-up elements of the nature, the predestination of its internal processes and the sequence of its life cycles. That’s why he often reproduces and reimagines the same composition and elements.

The repetition in the artist’s vision has a philosophical aspect. Graphic images as a framework and a visual formula turn into a canon and are filled with new content and meaning in each replica, which is perceived as a unique mood, sound, and energy. Danja Akulin’s works are both analytical and personal, a strict external structure, a conventional form filled with emotions, a special state, experienced and "lived" in different ways.

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.

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.

Compositions by Danja Akulin are born from the artist's imagination or memories, maybe it explains why sometimes they are perceived as surreal, creating the feeling of a dreamed image captured just for an instant. Akulin's laconic spaces create the link with another level of perception and meanings, guiding the viewer through the sensory image. As soon as we try to hold on to the image itself, it becomes defragmented, almost abstract, balancing on the border of appearance and disappearance.

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.

White color as a visible objectification of the light takes the lead in his black-and-white images. It is being disclosed in each work to a different extent, still it gives the main image an opportunity to exist revealing its idea and forming the structure. Light is perceived as the main actor, as the root cause and the main mystical source of the existence.

Even in the compositions which can be perceived as dark and obscure, the light has a principal role, he creates the meanings and the essence of the image.

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, enigmatic.

Accepting the invitation to take a walk in the monochrome spaces of Danja Akulin's works, a viewer experiences their hypnotic effect, teetering on the verge of half dream and half reality, in the space of half-shades, finding a way between vague or sharp outlines of depicted objects, and discovers sublime moments in the most simple and unsophisticated.

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:

Between the Light, In-Gate Gallery, Brussels (BE), 2024; *In Contrast*, Mond Gallery (Berlin, (DE), 2023; *Kontrastreich*, Poll Gallery, Berlin (DE), 2023; *Lightscares*, In-Gate Gallery, Brussels (BE);

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:

Size Matters | Monumental Drawing Now, Museum MORE, Gorssel (NL) 20.10.24 - 02.02.25; *Art on Paper Brussels*, In-Gate Gallery (Brussels, BE), 2024; *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.