

ISABELLE ALBUQUERQUE, MADELEINE BIALKE, MARTYN CROSS, MELANIE DELACH, DEAN FOX, DALTON GATA GARCIA, KONSTANTINA KRIKZONI, JUSTIN LIAM O'BRIEN, THE VELVET OTHER WORLD and SIIGII

After Dark

June 21 — August 22, 2024

There is something haunting in the light of the moon; it has all the dispassionateness of a disembodied soul, and something of its inconceivable mystery. - from Lord Jim by Joseph Conrad

Across history, beneath the veil of darkness, revolutionary movements have often emerged, boldly questioning established customs and sparking significant changes. In *After Dark*, eleven artists working on a vast range of media explore the creative musings that emerge after sunset. They delve into the contemplative moments and visionary insights encountered during the quiet hours of night, re-examining our relationships with ourselves, others, and our surroundings. Their works highlight the fluidity of our identities while reshaping our connections with technology, nature, and self-image.

The atmosphere of the night often invites new personifications, with strange creatures formed from vegetation or flowers, as seen in the works of Madeleine Bialke and Dalton Gata. In Bialke's *White of the Weird Dawn*, the elemental stillness of dawn is captured in her characteristic palette of vibrant hues. The painting features a centuries-old oak tree whose branches extend across the canvas, cradling a glowing moon. This murmur of darkness invites exploration of an undiscovered scene. Borrowing its title from Thomas Wolfe's *Look Homeward, Angel*, the work evokes a poetic connection to the "whites of the eyes" and dawn as the eye of the world seeing anew each morning. Bialke explores the disquieting transformation of dawn in the context of capitalism and ecological devastation, where new days bring increased dread and disconnection. Simultaneously, the oak embodies stability and continuity, suggesting that time might restore more harmonious relationships with nature and each other.

In Gata's *We Only Come Out at Night*, the Cuban artist curiously captures a botanical personification enveloped in feelings of otherness and strangeness through a familiar image: a cluster of flowers arranged in the center of an arid landscape. Rendered in Gata's characteristic style of lush, evocative strokes, the piece merges stylized realism with surrealist influences, nodding to his Caribbean heritage. Gata describes this painting as "a hug to the whores, the drag queens, and the bugarrones, to everyone who goes out at night to screw for pleasure or for money." The term "bugarrón" refers to men who, while presenting a heterosexual identity in public, seek clandestine sexual encounters with other men. The flowers in the painting, open and inviting, subtly form shapes reminiscent of vaginas, penises and anuses, paying homage to sexuality and celebrating nocturnal desires while embracing the complex identities and hidden lives that flourish in the darkness.

Artists Justin Liam O'Brien, Melanie Delach, and Siigii engage in self-reflection, a practice often associated with the quiet moments of nocturnal hours. O'Brien's *Day For Night*, features a pair of hands delicately cradling a large moth against a background of stark, red, block-like buildings punctured by small windows, all enveloped in softly abstracted foliage. Inspired by a recent journey to the Amalfi coast, O'Brien combines his fascination with Southern Italian Renaissance art and 3D animation to create a metaphysical image. Its title draws from the filmmaking term "day for night," a technique used to simulate nighttime scenes in daylight through filters and lens exposure. The work encapsulates O'Brien's ongoing exploration of composition and the formal elements of painting, subtly suggesting the deceptive allure of shiny surfaces, akin to a moth drawn to light in the darkness.

In Delach's *When I Close My Eyes, I See*, a mixed-media panel blending painting and sculptural elements, a luminous silhouette of a human figure emerges against a richly textured, dark backdrop. Abstract, leaf-like shapes cascade from above, frozen in a moment of introspection, gently cradling the figure as a symbol of nature's protection. Delach's work delves into the depths of self-discovery and transformation, reflecting on the complexities of navigating the world as a queer woman, while exploring themes of identity and personal evolution.

Similarly, *Might As Well Be A Myth* by Spanish sculptor SiiGii features a cast of their own body in silicone, headless, resting on a transparent bed partially covered by a sheet. An arm holds a dumbbell piercing through the mattress, possibly symbolizing a struggle with strength or surrender to a futile action. The sculpture poignantly captures common experiences within the transgender and non-binary community, highlighting their unique individuality amidst challenges imposed by societal norms and personal barriers, lending their work a fantastical, almost mythical quality.

In the nocturnal depths, visions assume an ambiguous and ethereal quality, much like in the works of Konstantina Krikzoni, Martyn Cross, and Dean Fox. In *Aurora Unbound*, artist Krikzoni intersects figuration and abstraction, challenging conventional depictions of the female body while exploring themes of gender and identity. Voluptuous figures kneel, crouch, and recline, captured in intimate moments of metamorphosis, claiming a place beyond shame. The materiality of paint itself becomes part of the narrative, with gestures embodying fluidity, creation, and decay. Likewise, painter Cross utilizes painting as a medium to explore the inner eccentricities of the ordinary. In his oil-on-flax-linen piece, *Monument*, a biomorphic landscape exudes an aura of mysticism and ambiguity, blending familiarity with mystery in scenes reminiscent of a newly imagined world.

Meanwhile, Fox's painting, *The Impressionist With Wall*, presents a hallucinatory reflection on art history, where classical themes are deconstructed and subjects are minimalized, emphasizing abstraction in desaturated palettes that radiate an eerie, phosphorescent glow. Fox's work reinterprets art history while exploring the delicate balance between abstraction and objectivity.

Symbols take on new dimensions under the cloak of night in *After Dark*, revealing layers of meaning as profound as they are mysterious, as seen in the works of Isabelle Albuquerque and Velvet Other World. In Albuquerque's *Call Me*, a sculpture of a foot rendered in silver 'moonlit' bronze through the application of silver nitrate emerges as a poignant testament to both corporeal and non-corporeal loss. Adorned with intricate engravings and a leather belt bearing a pendant inscribed with a phone number and the phrase "call me," this piece evokes the transient nature of human connections and desires. As part of a broader series of reliquaries, Albuquerque's work captures the ephemerality of existence, preserving memory and absence within tangible form. Employing her own body as a loom, she skilfully weaves each sculpture into a distinct character, imbuing them with a narrative depth that invites contemplation.

In *The Only Feeling is Good Feeling Part I* and *Part II*, a set of charcoal drawings by the compelling artist-duo Velvet Other World command attention with their lavished compositions depicting voluptuous humanoid figures. Adorned with extravagant eyelashes, chains, and lavish embellishments, these works explore the transformative power of costume and digital enhancement. Here, ornamentation transcends mere decoration, symbolizing aspirations towards opulence and dominance, while simultaneously critiquing contemporary filtered interactions. Their work serve as a stark reminder of today's digital facades, where modified faces present idealized versions of themselves, where achieving the "best of bests" paradoxically becomes paramount, and the prevailing sentiment is one of perpetual positivity.

Under the enigmatic glow of moonlight, *After Dark* awakens the realm of dreams, evoking mystery, inciting self-reflection, and inspiring transformation. This nocturnal space liberates actions from the constraints of logic and assessment, offering limitless avenues for exploration and expression. The night serves as a wellspring for vivid fantasies. The artists in *After Dark* invite us to delve into the depths of their souls, venturing into the wilderness of their imaginations and transforming our perceptions. Through this journey, we are encouraged to embrace the haunting beauty and profound mystery of the night, fostering a deeper understanding of the human experience.

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After Dark is on view from June 21 to August 22, 2024. Opening hours are Wednesday through Saturday from 13:00 to 18:00 hrs.