

Stiftung
Kunst
und Natur

Museum
Sinclair-Haus

Nightlife

21.9.2025
— 15.2.2026

With
Joshua Bonnetta
Andreas Bunte
Thierry Cohen
Dominik Eulberg and Matthias Garff
Loïe Fuller
Sarah Gillespie
Sven Johné
Melanie Manchot
Sandra Mann
Robin Meier Wiratunga
Yann Mingard
Hans Op de Beeck
Philippe Parreno
Alona Rodeh
Dana Sherwood
Anaïs Tondeur
Susanne M. Winterling
Tobias Zielony

Nightlife

The night is full of life. It is also part of our human existence. But we have found many ways to turn it into day with the help of artificial light to shut out or block out the darkness. Our senses are ill-suited to life in the dark, but many other animals buzz, creep, or flutter through the night as a matter of course. Darkness unsettles us, for it deprives us of colors and details and makes us clumsily grope along our way. Culturally, light stands for knowledge, safety, and progress; darkness is charged with the uncanny, even the horrific. This exhibition invites you to rediscover night and darkness – as a habitat that we share with countless other beings. How do we experience darkness, and how do nocturnal animals experience it? How do we encounter them, and how do they encounter us? What does darkness give us? What do we forfeit when we light up the night excessively?

Darkness has become a threatened sensory landscape. A child born today in a place where around 250 stars can still be seen at night may be able to discern only around 100 by the age of 18¹ – if we do not change the way we deal with artificial light. The first world atlas of light pollution was published in 2001.² Since then, numerous researchers have been addressing the question of how we can use light at night in ways that do not harm us or other living creatures.

The works of art in this exhibition explore the vitality of the night. They track nocturnal animals and roam the diverse nightlife of humans. The exhibition *Nightlife* sensitizes us to the magic of darkness, to the human longing for light – and to the consequences thereof. It is an invitation to discover darkness as a mysterious space in which stories, dreams, and life unfold.

¹ Robin McKie, "Stars could be invisible within 20 years as light pollution brightens night skies." in: *The Guardian* (27 May 2023), theguardian.com/science/2023/may/27/light-pollution-threatens-to-make-stars-invisible-within-20-years (accessed August 11, 2025). Physicist Christopher Kyba of the Helmholtz Center for Geosciences has conducted numerous studies on light pollution and countermeasures. He "has revealed that light pollution is now causing the night sky to brighten by around 10% a year, an increase that threatens to obliterate the sight of all but the most brilliant stars in a generation. A child born where 250 stars are visible at night today would only be able to see about 100 by the time they reach 18."

² The current atlas of light pollution is from 2016: Fabio Falchi, Pierantonio Cinzano, Dan Duriscoe, Christopher C. M. Kyba, Christopher D. Elvidge, Kimberly Baugh, Boris A. Portnov, Nataliya A. Rybnikova, & Riccardo Furgoni, "The new world atlas of artificial night sky brightness." in: *Science Advances* (June 2016), Vol. 2, No. 6, science.org/doi/10.1126/sciadv.1600377, accessed August 11, 2025.

Stumbling in the Dark

“All cats are gray at night”—or is that just because of the human eye? In order to see colors, we need light. Our visual acuity also decreases in the dark, so we take longer to see objects. Night, the dark sister of day, transforms the world. It can bring out the best and the worst in people. It allows for rest and relaxation, yet in fairy tales and other stories it becomes a setting of danger, fear, and unease. By contrast, many other animals move through the darkness with ease.

In this first section we follow artists as they explore the darkness as a habitat for nocturnal animals. The eyes and ears of these animals enable them to see and hear differently than we do, making their darkness completely different from that which we know. Sometimes their paths and ours cross. In cities animals seek out our gardens or trot through deserted streets. In forests we are guests who wish to explore animal nightlife with technical devices. Life under the cover of darkness continues to be a source of stories, speculation, and projections. What do they tell us about our own anxieties and formative associations?



MIRIAM

Hans Op de Beeck (* 1969)

2024, polyester, polyamide, 181 × 64 × 87 cm

Courtesy of the artist

© VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2025; Photo: Studio Hans Op de Beeck

What color is the night? As soon as the light fades, our perception plunges the world into countless shades of gray. This change is due to the sensory cells—rods and cones – in the retina of the human eye. The latter are responsible for recognizing colors, but only when light waves hit them.

Hans Op de Beeck cloaks a part of his sculptures in monochrome gray. It is his way of enacting silence, conveying a sense of calm and, above all, manifesting the essential form. Colors distract him from this aim. His figures, which combine features from different eras and styles, seem out of sync. Miriam, too, brings contrasting elements together: The young woman's punk hairstyle and piercings are at odds with her elegant dress. With eyes closed, she bears an owl on her bent arm. This pose evokes a nocturnal mood, a lightless environment in which the owl becomes a guide led by its keen sense of direction and acute night vision. As Hans Op de Beeck notes, "It almost seems as though the young woman perceives the world through the owl's nocturnal eyes."



WANDERUNG DURCH DIE LAUSITZ [A WALK IN LUSATIA]

Sven Johne (* 1976)

2006, 5 diptychs with 2 color photographs, 45 × 60 cm each; 5 texts, 14 × 21 cm each;
1 photocopy, 29.7 × 42 cm; 2 texts, 29.7 × 21 cm each

Image: *Forest Village*; without image: *Reck, Trunke, Vierechen, Zosel*

Courtesy of the Collection SVPL, the artist, and Gallery Klemm's Berlin

© VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2025

Have you ever been out in the woods at night? Snapping, crackling, rustling, padding, and perhaps howling stir the imagination – even bringing to mind wolves. These animals returned to Germany in 1998 after having been eradicated there in the nineteenth century. Reports of sheep being killed convinced Sven Johne to spend five nights hiking along an old wolves' path on the German-Polish border.

After dark, whenever Johne suspected a wolf was nearby, he would take a photograph with an infrared camera. Combined with his texts, these images form a narrative about the unknown and the uncertain, about abandoned villages and modern ruins – and, by extension, about the profound changes and economic hardships of the post-1989 period in Lusatia. Moreover, Johne's adventure story also addresses fears, as well as social and ecological conflicts, that have lost none of their relevance.

We advance awkwardly along a small trail of snow piled up at the side by the passage of snowshoes, heading north. A fat moon creates sharp outlines, clouds and horizons as clear as a print, as if a Japanese painter were refining the line of trees behind us with a calligraphy brush as soon as we turn our backs. We're talking about sociology, or something of the kind, bundled up in down jackets and hats, two slightly tottering tipsy friends, grey on white, really quite merry. And this is when it pierces the night. A perfect wolf howl, right next to us. We stand still as if struck by lightning, each pulls off his companion's cap, we grab each other by the shoulders. Then, a wide-open silence, like when you wait for the response at Mass. So I answer. I howl the way I've learned to, to match the attitude, the shape, the particular curl of their native tongue. I mime it as best I can, like a mediaeval traveller on his way to the Levant who has learned to pronounce by heart a phrase of diplomatic greeting in the language of the mythical people of the Cynocephali, those wild humans with dogs' heads reputed to inhabit the great steppes north of Lake Baikal, as told in Marco Polo's *Book of The Marvels of the World*. But without understanding a single word of it.

Silence again, an almost loving silence, waiting for an answer to our attention. And he sings.



KNOWWOLF

Research project by the Leibniz institutions Senckenberg Society for Nature Research and Institut für Wissensmedien
© iStock1061439062

In the monitoring year 2023/2024 up to 209 wolf packs were counted in Germany. On the one hand, the reintroduction of the animals to Germany is seen as a great success for nature conservation. On the other hand, many farmers fear for their herds. The research project KnowWolf uses online surveys of adults to investigate what people know about the topic, how they react to new findings, and what role feelings such as fear, threat, or joy play in their responses. The perception of pros and cons relating to wolves is also considered.

According to two completed surveys, respondents with less factual knowledge about wolves regarded the risks associated with wolves as higher and the benefits as lower than did respondents with more knowledge about this wildlife. We invite you to find out more about wolves, take part in a survey, or test your knowledge in a quiz.

KnowWolf
Senckenberg



KnowWolf App



**Wolfterritorien in Deutschland
im Monitoringjahr 2023/2024**

(01.05.2023 - 30.04.2024)

- Wolfsrudel
 - Wolfspaar
 - territoriales Einzeltier
- Stand November 2024



DBW

© Open StreetMap-contributors

© European Union, Copernicus Land Monitoring Service 2023

European Environment Agency (EEA)



FERAL CAKES

Dana Sherwood (* 1977)

2017, video, 11:22 min.

Courtesy of the artist

© Dana Sherwood

Snacking on cake at night? What sounds like a child's dream became reality for animals. Dana Sherwood created animal-friendly cakes, which she arranged in her suburban Florida garden for dinner and left outside overnight. A heat-sensitive wildlife camera that she had installed began secretly filming as soon as an animal appeared within its range. These guests included raccoons, which have adapted superbly to urban life in North America and have populated Germany as well since the 1930s.

Sherwood is interested in spaces shared by humans and wild animals. She explores the question of “how nature has evolved in the Anthropocene – which means looking at disturbed territory and uncovering how nature flourishes in these places.”¹

¹ Interview by Danielle Kalamara with Dana Sherwood, “Straight Talk with Dana Sherwood.” in: *SciArt in America* (February 2016), dennygalleries.com/news/dana-sherwood-interviewed-by-sciart-in-america/ (par. 6), accessed September 3, 2025.



TAWNY OWL

Matthias Garff (* 1986)

2022, aluminum bowl, pot, bicycle helmet, dish brushes, 38 × 20 × 25 cm

Courtesy of and © Matthias Garff

An aluminum bowl, a pot, a bicycle helmet, dish brushes – what looks like a shopping list is in fact the raw materials for a very unusual bird. The crepuscular and nocturnal tawny owl (*Strix aluco*) usually remains hidden during the day – yet here it appears as a sculpture by Matthias Garff, who has fashioned a humorous but lifelike image from everyday objects. Garff often takes inspiration from the birds he happens to encounter. His fascination with them began early on – while drawing with his grandfather. He is particularly interested in their individual characters and whether they can be clearly recognized despite the use of “incorrect” materials. In 2023 he published the book *Tönende Tiere* [Sounding Animals] with ecologist and musician Dominik Eulberg. It features numerous animals created by Garff, each paired with a piece of music. Eulberg translates their calls into notes and synthesizer data, producing a vibrant blend of natural sounds and electronic tones. Here you can listen to the tawny owl:



Swarming at Night

While countless animals roam, buzz, crawl, or flutter through landscapes and cities at night, humans use the night to dance, dream, or work. We are all part of the night and move through this shared space in our own way – alone, in pairs, often in fleeting coexistence like night owls with different goals. People need light for everything except sleep. At the same time, electric light is probably the most drastic change we impose on our immediate environment: it expands our living spaces, helps us find our way around, and gives us a feeling of security.

In this chapter, we focus on the beauty of darkness and the human longing for light. Since the spread of electric light in the 1880s, people in many places have been displacing natural darkness. It recedes to leave the space for street lamps, neon signs, and decorative facade lighting: light around the clock, 24/7. How much light do we really need, and where can we allow more darkness? According to recent studies, over 80 percent of people live under a night sky that is measurably brighter than natural darkness. This is also known as light pollution. It not only impairs our view of the starry sky but also alters our rhythms of life and puts some species in mortal danger. But light can disappear: we just have to switch it off.



NIGHTLIFE

Sandra Mann (* 1970)

1997–2003, series of photographs

Image: 081200-0045 T & Ricardo Villalobos (Frankfurt am Main, Germany), 2000;

Part of the photo installation *22 Panels (Nightlife)*, 2025 (shown in the exhibition)

Courtesy of the artist

© VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2025

Longing gazes, dancing and sweaty bodies, characters that awaken only after darkness falls. The night is a stage, a hideout, and a revelation at the same time. In her series *Nightlife*, Frankfurt-based artist Sandra Mann exhibits diary-like photographs unveiling the feverish pulse of the night: heat, closeness, voices, and basses that linger long after daybreak.

In the 1990s and early 2000s it was second nature for Sandra Mann to move through the global club and electronic music scene with her compact camera, as a part of the scene – right in the middle of it. In these social studies, she captured numerous moments in around 56,000 slides. Date and image number are part of the title of the photographs, only a small portion of which she has published. They examine encounters, self-presentation, perception, social phenomena, and the night as a space for shared experiences.



DARKENED CITIES

Thierry Cohen (* 1963)

2010–ongoing, series of photographs, 100 × 150 cm each

Image: Tokyo 35° 41' 36" N 2011-11-16 LST 23:16, 2011; without image: Warsaw 52° 14' 01" N

2020-03-17 LST 14:09, 2020; Rio de Janeiro 22° 56' 42" S 2011-06-04 LST 12:34, 2011

Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Danziger, New York City

© Thierry Cohen

The sight of a star-studded firmament has become rare for most of us. In his series *Darkened Cities*, photographer Thierry Cohen shows metropolises such as Tokyo and Rio de Janeiro in complete darkness – under an overwhelmingly starry sky.

Cohen photographs the cities during the day to avoid nocturnal illumination. He digitally merges these images with the night sky over places located at the same latitude but far from light. Cohen came to this idea after reading a report on Fukushima in 2011. The nuclear disaster there led to power shortages in many major cities. In Tokyo, light from neon signs, buildings, and street lamps was switched off or reduced, leaving the starry sky to shine in all its beauty over the city. What Cohen saw moved him so much that he visited cities around the world to give them back their stars, at least as pictures.



NIGHT EARTH

2012, interactive world map

Created and designed by Jose Manuel Gómez Poveda

nightearth.com

© NASA Earth Observatory images by Joshua Stevens,
using Suomi NPP VIIRS data from Miguel Román, NASA GSFC



It may look like a starry sky at first. The interactive world map *Night Earth*, however, shows lights that brighten the night as seen from space. Aided by satellite images, you can see where people use light to live, work, and move around. Metropolitan areas and transportation networks are particularly luminous. The brightest regions in the world include conurbations such as Greater Tokyo with its more than 37 million inhabitants. However, brightness does not always correspond to population density. North Korea remains dark because of energy shortages, and sparsely populated oil-producing regions in the Gulf shine intensely.

Satellite images of Earth at night provide valuable data for determining the level of light pollution. From 2012 to 2016, for example, Earth became 2.2% brighter each year through artificial night lighting.¹ Some 99% of the population in Europe and North America live under a night sky that is measurably brighter than the natural one.²

¹ Christopher C. M. Kyba et al., "Artificially lit surface of Earth at night increasing in radiance and extent." in: *Science Advances* (November 2017), Vol. 3, No. 11, pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC5699900/, accessed August 11, 2025.

² Fabio Falchi et al., "The new world atlas of artificial night sky brightness." in: *Science Advances* (June 2016), Vol. 2, No. 6, science.org/doi/10.1126/sciadv.1600377, accessed on August 11, 2025.

HOW MANY LIGHTS ARE THERE ACTUALLY IN GERMANY?

The nighttime image of the earth from space, with its constellations of cities, has become iconic. However, our understanding of the source and scale of artificial light emissions is still in the dark, hampering urban environmental protection efforts.

In 2021 citizen scientists used the interactive website *Night Lights*¹ to record and categorize 234,044 light sources across a designated area of 22 square kilometers, mainly in Germany. The study shows that such a data set can be used to translate space-based radiance observations into the more understandable unit of installed lights per square kilometer on the ground. Analysis shows that in German city centers, more total light sources are used for advertising and aesthetic purposes than for street lighting. Furthermore, it is estimated that approximately 80 million light sources remain illuminated around midnight across Germany. This is slightly less than one light per inhabitant and a clear indication of significant potential for reduction. These findings not only provide direct knowledge for research into artificial light but also represent a practical basis for policymakers to systematically reduce light pollution in cities.

This text is adapted from the following article:

"Team Nachtlichter. Citizen science illuminates the nature of city lights," in: *Nature Cities*, No. 2, June 2025, doi.org/10.1038/s44284-025-00239-5, accessed August 11, 2025.

¹ lichter.nachtlicht-buehne.de/

HOW DO I FIND PARTICULARLY DARK LOCATIONS?

These websites are useful:

Light Pollution Map: lightpollution.info

Google Earth: shorturl.at/flvUO

Night Earth: nightearth.com

WHICH CITIES ARE MAKING THE SWITCH?

In the late nineteenth century, it was possible to practice astronomy in Berlin. Today, there are very few cities where it is possible to see a significant number of stars. Fulda, however, was recognized in 2019 as Germany's first Dark Sky Community by the International Dark Sky Association (IDA), the leading international authority in the field of intelligent, responsible exterior nighttime lighting. The city has described its plans as follows: "The aim is to optimize lighting. Everyone using nighttime lighting should design it to be as glare-free and considerate as possible. This also protects the city from degradation and excessive displays, as well as helping to avoid neighborhood conflicts. The goal, too, is to reduce light pollution as much as possible, which benefits not only the well-being of people through healthy sleep and biorhythms, but of the environment as well, especially through the protection of species in urban green spaces and parks. Many of the animals living alongside us are nocturnal and have adapted to the naturally low light levels at night, for instance hedgehogs, bats, fireflies, and so on. For diurnal animals such as songbirds and squirrels, the nighttime park or green space is an important place of rest that should be as dark as possible, to allow them to relax and raise their young."

Fulda is located on the edge of the Rhön Dark Sky Reserve: "The UNESCO Rhön Biosphere Reserve in the tri-border area of Bavaria, Hesse, and Thuringia was recognized in August 2014 as an International Dark Sky Reserve by the International Dark Sky Association (IDA) at the request of the ARGE Rhön."

The quoted material was retrieved (in German) on August 11, 2025, from: sternenstadt-fulda.de/#dark-sky-community-biosphaerenreservat-rhoen.de/natur/sternenpark-rhoen

In 2025, the city of Darmstadt adopted lighting guidelines for environmentally friendly lighting.

The guidelines for lighting under municipal jurisdiction and a lighting guide with recommendations for private lighting (including practical tips for implementation) are available in German here: darmstadt.de/leben/umwelt/luft-laerm-licht/licht, accessed August 24, 2025.



Podcast Art'n'Vielfalt



About the Vivid Night

With wildlife biologist Sophia Kimmig
and physicist Manuel Philipp from the
association "Paten der Nacht"



UNTITLED, FROM THE SERIES *REPAIRES*

Yann Mingard (* 1973)

2010, Photography, C-print, 129 × 160 cm

Courtesy of the artist

© Yann Mingard

How much light is enough? Yann Mingard's images of twilight skirt the boundary of the visible. His series *Repaire* (2006–2011) takes us into the forest, off the beaten track, where he uses long exposures to capture places that no one else may ever have set foot in. The French word *repaire* (hideaway, cover) refers to secret sites, places not out in the open.

Mingard's series has been published as a photo album that darkens page by page. The work on display is one of the last in it. Take your time exploring it. Just as the eye takes time to adjust to darkness, the details in this image need a few moments to emerge. Working at the very frontiers of photography, Mingard is "drawing with light" (from Greek *photós* = light, *gráphein* = to draw). By pooling the final glows of the waning day, the lens conjures before our eyes an image we could not otherwise perceive in this way, one that calls for a different way of seeing – slow, tentative, like footsteps in the dark.

The Owl

Bryan Waller Procter

(Barry Cornwall) (1787–1874)

In the hollow tree, in the old gray tower,
The spectral owl doth dwell;
Dull, hated, despised, in the sunshine hour,
But at dusk he's abroad and well!
Not a bird of the forest e'er mates with him;
All mock him outright by day;
But at night, when the woods grow still and dim,
The boldest will shrink away!
O, when the night falls, and roosts the fowl,
Then, then, is the reign of the hornèd owl!

[...]

O, when the moon shines, and dogs do howl,
Then, then, is the joy of the hornèd owl!
Mourn not for the owl, nor his gloomy plight!
The owl hath his share of good:
If a prisoner he be in the broad daylight,
He is lord in the dark greenwood!

[...]

So, when the night falls, and dogs do howl,
Sing, ho! for the reign of the hornèd owl!
We know not always
Who are kings by day,
But the king of the night is the bold brown owl!

Bliss Carman (ed.), *The World's Best Poetry*, Vol. V, VI,
Philadelphia 1904.

To the stars

Friedrich Rückert (1788–1866), text;

Robert Schumann (1810–1856), composition; 1849

Translated by Irmela Florig-Rowland

Stars
in the distant heavens!
Who with your rays of a better world
Brighten the earthly twilight.
Don't your spirit eyes
Look down upon the earth
In order to instill peace
In the clouded heart?

Stars
in the distant heavens!
In your realm does one also dream
A life's fleeting dream?
Do delight, bliss,
Sadness, melancholy, pain
Beyond our sun
Also elevate a feeling heart?

Stars
in the distant heavens!
Waving from your distant places,
Do you not already bestow on me heaven's rest?
Will not one day
On the golden meadows
Unalloyed peace
Fall like dew into the tired soul?

Stars
in the distant heavens!
Until my soul takes wings
And ascends to your peace,
My yearnings cling to you
Hopefully, trustingly!
Oh, you fair, beautiful ones,
Could you possibly deceive?

Friedrich Rückert (text),
Robert Schumann (composition):
"An die Sterne",
in: *Vier doppelchörige Gesänge*
op. 141, 1, 1849.



TANKSTELLE [GAS STATION]

Tobias Zielony (* 1973)

2004, series of photographs, C-prints, 43.5 × 64 cm each

Image: *Aral 1*; without image: *Aral 2*; *Aral 3*

Courtesy of KOW, Berlin

© VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2025

Like an island of light, the gas station floats in the darkness – attracting not only people who need to fill their tanks. The photographs were taken near Leipzig, where photographer Tobias Zielony lived around 2004. At that time, many people were leaving eastern Germany, and numerous businesses and shops were closing. Yet the gas stations remained, and new ones were even opening.

Many of Zielony's works arise from encounters with teenagers and young adults in places that take on an entirely different meaning at night than during the day. Gas stations, for instance, can serve as social meeting places – sites of nightlife where young people (and others) gather, laying claim to their space and shaping it through both togetherness and posturing. Zielony describes the darkened setting as a stage, where individuals appear and present themselves. His camera functions like a spotlight, intensifying attention on a single moment – one it both observes and helps to create.



LA FÉE ELECTRICITÉ

Andreas Bunte (* 1970)

2007, 16 mm film (digitalized), 11:42 min., silent

Courtesy of and © Andreas Bunte

Streets, smartphones, even the open refrigerator: Artificial light is everywhere. What is ubiquitous today was once a global sensation. What must it have felt like in 1900 at the World's Fair in Paris, to stand in front of the brightly lit Palais de l'Électricité – confronted with a new astonishing technology?

This cultural upheaval forms the backdrop to *La Fée Electricité*. Shot on 16 mm film, the work appears to come from the era it depicts. Yet Andreas Bunte has re-staged all the material – using the aesthetic of the period – and combined it with scenes reminiscent of documentary footage. Balancing poetry and documentation, the film reveals both euphoria and unease about progress. The ambivalence of electricity is also evident in a passage about dancer Loïe Fuller, whose spectacular experiments with light left her with permanent eye damage. Andreas Bunte's colorful compilation of topics and images points back to a historical moment that continues to shape our lives.



SERPENTINE DANCE

Loïe Fuller (1862–1928), dancer: **Paola Werther**

Production: Société L. Gaumont et Cie

1902, 16 mm film (digitized), 1:06 min., silent

Courtesy of and © Filmoteca de Catalunya

“Is it a dance, a projection of light, a summoning of some spirit? [...] A mystery.”¹ This is how Loïe Fuller’s choreographies were described in 1892. She was one of the first dancers to explore electric light as an artistic medium for her productions. Her *Serpentine Dance*, premiered in Paris in 1893 at the Folies Bergère music theater and performed by Paola Werther in this film, combined light, colors, shapes, and textiles to create a new kind of interaction with the human body. A wide dress with a generous cape offered the light a moving canvas to capture painterly qualities and flowing forms.

Fuller’s light scores specify the timing, color changes, intensity, and direction of the lighting. Up to 35 electric arc lamps were used, and just one of them could have served as the beacon of a lighthouse. However, Fuller also had to cope with the downside of luminosity: The powerful lamps damaged her eyes. To recover, she had to spend several hours a day in darkened rooms.

¹ Jean Lorrain, La Loïe Fuller, *L’Écho de Paris Littéraire Illustré*, 1892 (own translation).



ARC OF NIGHT

Joshua Bonnetta (* 1979)

2025, HD video, 32:15 min.

Courtesy of and © Joshua Bonnetta

What moves with us through the darkness of night? Sounds from afar, a rustling nearby in the undergrowth – the invisible accompanies Joshua Bonnetta on his nocturnal wanderings. The filmmaker and sound artist is spending more than a year in the forests and meadows around the Nantesbuch estate in Upper Bavaria, recording signs of life that otherwise would remain hidden. With a camera and microphone – partly on sight, partly through strategically placed devices – he captures the presence of animals such as foxes, bats, and owls. His own silhouette also appears in the darkness. Bonnetta condenses his recordings into a poetic search for traces of a living world we otherwise hardly notice. Diary-like texts supplement the images with the artist's thoughts, nocturnal experiences, and impressions. "I look into the trees with a camera that records the heat reflected from objects, rather than images formed by light. The beech trees still glow with the warmth of the day, while the spruce and pine trees grow ever darker in the cold."

Nantesbuch, home to Stiftung Kunst und Natur's second location, includes an event venue and 320 hectares of land with moors, meadows, and forests.

On behalf of Stiftung Kunst und Natur, Joshua Bonnetta is working on a film to be completed in 2026.

Prior to that, he has produced this short version for the *Nightlife* exhibition, with footage shot from May to September 2024.



SYNCHRONICITY: CHIMERA STATES

Robin Meier Wiratunga (* 1980)

2015–2024, 4K video, 29 min.

Courtesy of the artist

© VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2025

The music of fireflies consists of light. Some species form groups to create an impressive, synchronized wave of light. The individual fireflies adapt to the frequency of their neighbors until they finally all blink in unison. Inspired by a scientific experiment, artist and composer Robin Meier Wiratunga traveled to Thailand to work with the species *Pteroptyx malaccae*, which is known to synchronize itself. He installed computerized LEDs with which the animals coordinated their flashing. Interacting in concord without central control in this rhythmic light composition, the computer and the insects constitute a silent orchestra having no conductor.

Light is one of the main factors for circadian rhythms and chronobiology. Fireflies flash to communicate and attract mates. Exactly how fireflies synchronize these signals is still largely unknown.

Produced by Audemars Piguet Art Commission, Le Brassus und EPFL Pavilions, Lausanne

Cinematography: Nikolai Zheludovich

Editing: Mariko Montpetit

Special thanks to Anchana Thancharoen and her team at Kasetsart University, Bangkok.



FIREFLIES

Philippe Parreno (* 1964)

Image: 2014, black ink on paper, 29.7 × 21 cm, Inv. No. F*14.37;

No image: *Fireflies*, 2014, black ink on paper, Inv. No. F*14.38;

Fireflies, 2014, black ink on paper, Inv. No. F*14.39; 29.3 × 20.8 cm each

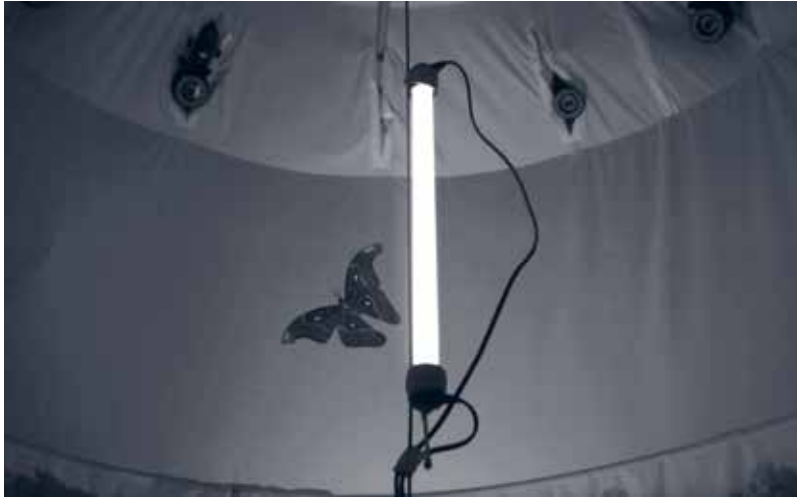
Courtesy of Fondation Beyeler, Riehen/Basel, Donation Philippe Parreno

© Philippe Parreno / Photo: Robert Bayer

From 2011 to 2016, Philippe Parreno created hundreds of drawings of fireflies. They are among his most intimate and personal works. He began drawing during a prolonged illness, initially doing so out of boredom. However, he eventually came to devote himself completely to this activity and to the fireflies themselves. These creatures emerge from a dark background as fragile and simultaneously complex apparitions: like flickering signs of life, like resistance to disappearance. Parreno did not keep the drawings for himself; he gave them away, transmitting signs of life – beacons – into the world.

The artist was inspired partly by “The Article of Fireflies” (L’Articolo delle Lucciole)¹ by Pier Paolo Pasolini (1922–1975), whose text links the disappearance of animals with that of human ways of life connected with nature. The fireflies appear as combative signs of life that defy darkness through bioluminescence: They stand for presence, vulnerability, and survival.

¹ Originally published in 1975 as “Il Vuoto del Potere in Italia” [The Void of Power in Italy].



WHY FLYING INSECTS GATHER AROUND ARTIFICIAL LIGHT

Samuel T. Fabian, Yash Sondhi und Pablo E. Allen

2023, video, 2:40 min.

© Samuel T. Fabian and Yash Sondhi

“Like a moth to a flame,” as a German saying goes. But how exactly do flying insects interact with light? A recent study¹ provides new answers – and impressive footage. Contrary to the prevalent assumption that insects are attracted to light, they do not steer directly toward the light. Many instinctively turn their back (dorsum) to the brightest light source in order to maintain a proper flight attitude and fly in the right direction. This behavior is called the dorsal-light response (DLR). In the long evolutionary history of insect flight, the brightest point in the visual field has been the sky, so it has been a reliable indicator of where up is.

But artificial lights throw the insects off course. The film recordings in this exhibit show remarkable flight patterns. The creatures orbit the lamp, they rise and fall, they invert their flight attitude. They behave as though trapped by the light and usually die of exhaustion. But that need not be. Local authorities and private individuals can use insect-friendly lighting and switch off unnecessary lamps.

¹ Samuel T. Fabian, Yash Sondhi, & Pablo E. Allen et al., “Why flying insects gather at artificial light.” in: *Nature Communications*, Vol. 15, No. 689, January 2024.



A LITANY OF MOTHS

Sarah Gillespie (* 1963)

2019–ongoing, series of mezzotints

Image: *Peppered Moth*, 2021, 69 × 99 cm; without image: *Common Quaker*, 2019, 36.5 × 36.5 cm; *Sallow Kitten*, 2019, 47 × 46.5 cm; *Eyed Hawk-Moth*, 2020, 57.5 × 57.5 cm; *Small Phoenix*, 2020, 19 × 24 cm; *Swallow-tail Moth*, 2020, 56.5 × 56.5 cm; *White Plume*, 2020, 36.5 × 36.5 cm; *Clouded Magpie*, 2024, 61 × 72 cm; *Peach Blossom*, 2024, 41 × 40 cm
 Courtesy of and © Sarah Gillespie

An open window, wings fluttering in the light of the bedside lamp – that is what Sarah Gillespie remembers. Today, however, the night often remains still. Since 2019 the artist has been preserving the beauty of nocturnal moths by using mezzotint prints. This centuries-old technique of engraving, also known as black art, allows for subtle gradations of light and dark. Gillespie articulates the filigree bodies of the moths against the night black of the copper plate. She bases this work on models from a neighboring museum or on animals carefully captured in the garden and later released.

Of the approximately 3,700 species of moths in Germany, only 190 are day (diurnal) moths. Around 95%, including the peppered moth (*Biston betularia*) pictured here, live in the dark. Light pollution, pesticides, and the loss of species-rich habitats are putting them under pressure. However, the decline in night (nocturnal) moths tends to go unnoticed. Yet they are irreplaceable as pollinators for plants and food for many creatures. Gillespie's works bring them to light – and pay tribute to the living, often overlooked beauty of the night.

Blessed Yearning

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe
(1749–1832), 1814/17

Tell it the wise alone, for when
Will the crowd cease from mockery!
Him would I laud of living men
Who longs a fiery death to die.

In coolness of those nights of love
Which thee begat, bade thee beget,
Strange promptings wake in thee and move,
While the calm taper glimmers yet.

No more in darkness canst thou rest,
Waited upon by shadows blind,
A new desire has thee possessed
For procreant joys of loftier kind.

Distance can hinder not thy flight;
Exiled, thou seekest a point illumed;
And, last, enamoured of the light,
A moth art in the flame consumed.

And while thou spurnest at the best,
Whose word is “Die and be new-born!”
Thou bidest but a cloudy guest
Upon an earth that knows not morn.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, “West-Eastern Divan”,
in: *Twelve Books*, translated by Edward Dowden (1843–1913),
London/Toronto 1914.



ET LES PAPILLONS SE METTENT À CHANTER

Max Ernst (1891–1976)

1929, collage (reproduction), 16.3 × 14.8 cm

Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main, Inv. No. 16835

Photo: bpk © VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2025

Light marks the threshold between life and death for many nocturnal moths. When this collage was created, gas lanterns and the early electric street lamps characterized the cityscape of Paris at night. The warm, flickering light of the gas lamps seemed to be a magic attraction to moths: They circled incessantly around the flame until they burned up in the fire. This spectacle of attraction and destruction is reflected in Max Ernst's work. It stands here as a metaphor for seduction, transience, and the proximity of life and death.

The collage belongs to Ernst's first collage novel: *La femme 100 têtes*. Depending on the pronunciation, the title can mean either "The hundred-headed woman" or "The woman without a head." The book contains nine chapters, including 147 printed images that are among the milestones of surrealism. The title *et les papillons se mettent à chanter* [and the moths begin to sing] also exemplifies the associative, dreamlike images that distinguish this art movement.



NIGHTCAPS

Alona Rodeh (* 1979)

2021–2024, series of interventions on street lamps,
exhibited here with models and photographs

Courtesy of the artist

© VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2025; Photo: Nico Fritzenschaft

How much light do we need to feel safe outside? Spherical lamps, which were installed in some cities from the 1970s onward, also distribute their light upward, where it is useless to people. Alona Rodeh's *Nightcaps* provide a tongue-in-cheek remedy and simultaneously draw attention to light pollution – creative solutions emerge instead of merely decrying problems.

Baseball cap, witch's hat, or fisherman's hat – Rodeh's "lamp headgear" directs light onto the ground and thus reduces light pollution both whimsically and efficiently. The artist says its aim is to "promote darkness as a place of curiosity and discovery." Versions of the 3D models on display are already in use. So far, they clad street lamps in Stuttgart's Wartberg Park as well as in Gesundbrunnen, Berlin.



LIQUID SKIN

Melanie Manchot (* 1966)

2023, 4K infrared video, 23:19 min.

Commissioned by Urbane Künste Ruhr

Courtesy of the artist and galerie m, Duisburg

© VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2025

Podcast Art'n'Vielfalt



On the Value of Darkness



With Melanie Manchot
and Lisa-Viktoria
Niederberger

Working at night when the city sleeps? In *Liquid Skin*, artist Melanie Manchot follows ten women through the Ruhr region, which was long characterized by shift work, a domain mostly dominated by men. Filmed in low-contrast infrared light, their bodies glow ghostly out of the darkness. A streetcar driver, a dancer, a nurse – each of them takes us to a place where they work at night or work at night once took place. Around 3.1 percent¹ of women in Germany work at night, mainly in the service sector.

Inspired by the extended tracking shots of American film director Gus van Sant and the surreal film logic of David Lynch, a portrait of the region emerges through its nocturnal architecture – abandoned industrial plants, tunnels, factory halls. The work was created in close collaboration with the protagonists – their movements, paths and stories shape the film. The sound-scape also comes from the locations themselves: underground, industrial, sometimes almost physically palpable.

¹ destatis.de/DE/Themen/Arbeit/Arbeitsmarkt/Qualitaet-Arbeit/Dimension-3/abend-nachtarbeit.html, accessed August 13, 2025.

Sensory Landscapes

Darkness is so much more than the absence of light. It gives us gradations of light, dark, sounds, and smells that we perceive only in the dark, for it appeals to our senses differently than light does. The two artistic works in this section are dedicated to sensory events we can perceive only in the dark. Whereas Susanne M. Winterling calls attention to luminous sea creatures, Anaïs Tondeur transports us into her dream.

How does darkness enrich us?



GLISTENING TROUBLES

Susanne M. Winterling (* 1970)

2017–2025, installation with 4 CGI-3D-animation of dinoflagellates

(reactive behavior; animations based on scientific models by Michael Latz, Scripps Institution of Oceanography) on monitors, 1:24 min., 2:50 min., 1:09 min., 00:43 min.; single-channel video (color) on monitor, 7:14 min.; 4 mirrored columns;

8 bio-resin casts of dinoflagellates ecosystems

Courtesy of the TBA21 Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary Collection

© VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2025; photograph: K. Vrancken, Countour Biennale

Stars in the water? That's what it can look like when lit up by millions of dinoflagellates. Since 2014, Susanne M. Winterling has been studying these tiny single-celled organisms (protists) that glow when touched or moved. At the heart of her oeuvre are the interactions between different actors in shared habitats. The starting point for her installation *Glistening Troubles* was a stay at Oyster Bay (Trelawny, Jamaica), which is known for the nocturnal glow of dinoflagellates. In this work, Winterling weaves together various forms of knowledge, experiences of profound beauty, traditional wisdom, and scientific research.

The computer-generated animations depict microorganisms of the species *Pyrodinium bahamense*. In the exhibition space, the voice of a local fisherman can be heard, recounting, among other things, the recognition of dinoflagellates as a medicinal remedy. Mirrored columns multiply the images along with the bodies of the viewers, metaphorically incorporating them into the installation as co-creators of ecosystems. An immaterial dimension of the work is Winterling's commitment to protecting Oyster Bay as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.

Co-commissioned by Contour Biennale 8, Mechelen; TBA21-Academy; Alligator Head Foundation TBA21-Residency, Jamaica; Henie Onstad Kunstsenter (HOK), Høvikodden; and the Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania. Additional support by the Oslo National Academy of the Arts. With the kind support of IFA (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen) and Goethe-Institut, Belgium. Realized during a TBA21 residency at the Alligator Head Foundation in Jamaica.



A BREATH, AT NIGHT

Anaïs Tondeur (* 1985)

2021, series of photographs, macerates, perfume (as scent in the space)

Image: *Hypothesis #8*, 22.08.2021, 23:12, 2020, 53 × 35 cm

without image: *Hypothesis #1*, 24.07.2020, 23:55, 2020;

Hypothesis #2, 25.07.2020, 00:15, 2020;

Hypothesis #24, 21.09.2021, 01:42, 2021; 100 × 150 cm each;

Hypothesis #9, 22.08.2021, 23:12, 2021;

Hypothesis #10, 22.08.2021, 23:12, 2021; 53 × 35 cm each

Courtesy of the artist

© Anaïs Tondeur

What do you remember from your last dream: people, events – or even a scent? Speaking of scent, can you smell it too: this dreamlike scent in the room?

The artist Anaïs Tondeur dreamed of a wild garden at night. Flooded with moonlight, surrounded by hundred-year-old trees, with rustling leaves – what remained was the scent. It lingered long after she woke up. In her works, Tondeur combines science with poetry – always in search of exploring and expanding our sensory perception. She set out to find the lost scent and discovered a garden in Verrières-le-Buisson near Paris that reminded her of her dream landscape. She photographed the trees, ferns, grasses and flowers in the moonlight and with long exposures.

Working closely with perfumer Vanina Murraciale, she created a fragrance that brings the memory of her dream into the here and now. Tondeur's photos and the perfume take us to the threshold between dream and reality.

LET THERE BE LESS LIGHT!

Even simple measures can help reduce light pollution. The more the following recommendations are applied to each light source, the stronger the overall effect will be. These tips are relevant not only for lighting in your own home but also for buildings, yards, facades, streets, parking lots, shop windows, and illuminated advertising.

The following seven tips are taken from this website:

paten-der-nacht.de/reduzierung-lichtverschmutzung/

Illustrative graphics are shown at: paten-der-nacht.de/gute-beleuchtung/

Intensity

-  Use the lowest possible lumen values (lm). For larger ground areas, it is better to use several dimmer light sources than a single, very bright one. Light that is too bright causes glare, making it hard to see in darker surroundings. This reduces the feeling of safety.

Orientation

-  Always direct the light output downwards. Avoid light scattering to the side and, above all, upward (by using shielded housings or LED reflector lamps. A weaker light source is then sufficient to achieve the same ground brightness.

Mounting Height

-  Lower is better. This reduces glare and light scattering into the surroundings. A weaker light source thus becomes sufficient to achieve the same brightness at ground level.

Color

-  The warmer the light color, the better. Use lower color temperatures up to a maximum of 2,700 Kelvin. The light color should be adapted to the surroundings and purpose. Red light can confuse migratory birds, but is less disruptive for insects and bats. Insects and turtles have no problem with yellow light, yet it disturbs salamanders. No wavelength is ideal, but blue or white light is least favorable.

Duration

-  Only leave lights on as long as they are needed. Motion detectors can help here. Avoid continuous lighting and turn any off (timer switch) by 10:00 p.m. (summer and winter).

 **Necessity**
Only use light for pathway safety and orientation purposes. Avoid outdoor lighting for decorative purposes in general – especially in the yard. Do not illuminate trees, natural areas, or ponds.

 **Interior Lighting**
Close blinds and curtains. This keeps the light inside the room, reducing the amount of light brightening the night.

HOW CAN I HELP FIREFLIES?

Help the fireflies: By avoiding artificial lighting in your yard, planting native plants and perennials, and taking a break from mowing in June and July, you can create retreats and resting places for fireflies. In return, their larvae will deal with the snails!

AND WHAT HELPS MOTHS?

Natural food supplies for moths are becoming increasingly rare – namely plants that release their scent at dusk. With honeysuckle species, evening primroses, various champions, and sweet rockets, you can create a nectar bar for moths!

Further information: nektar-bar.de/nachtfalterschutz

HOW ARE DARKNESS AND SLEEP CONNECTED?

Darkness triggers the production of the sleep hormone melatonin, which helps keep our internal clock ticking. Complete darkness improves the quality of sleep and health of all living beings.

FEAR IN THE DARK?

Bright, cold white light can reduce the feeling of safety in public spaces, with the increased contrast and glare making it harder to see. Studies show that women in particular feel especially unsafe in such light or where illumination is absent or poorly coordinated.

See: Plan International Deutschland e. V., *Safe in the City? Zur gefühlten Sicherheit von Mädchen und Frauen in deutschen Städten*, Hamburg 2020, plan.de/fileadmin/website/04._Aktuelles/Kampagnen_und_Aktionen/Safer_Cities/Safe_in_the_City_Bericht/Plan-Safe_in_the_City-Jun2020-final2.pdf, accessed August 12, 2025.

See: Lisa-Viktoria Niederberger, *Dunkelheit. Ein Plädoyer*, Innsbruck / Vienna, 2025, p. 61.

WHERE CAN I FIND OUT MORE ABOUT DARKNESS?

The information webpage of the DarkSky section of Sternfreunde e.V.:

lichtverschmutzung.de/

sternfreunde.de/astronomie-als-hobby/die-vds-fachgruppen/dark-sky/

Patron der Nacht:

paten-der-nacht.de

Hessian Network To Mitigate Light Pollution:

lichtverschmutzung-hessen.de/

Astronomical Association Orion e. V.,

Hochtaunus Public Observatory, Bad Homburg v. d. H.:

agorion.de/

DarkSky International:

darksky.org/

Nektar-Bar:

nektar-bar.de/nachtfalterschutz

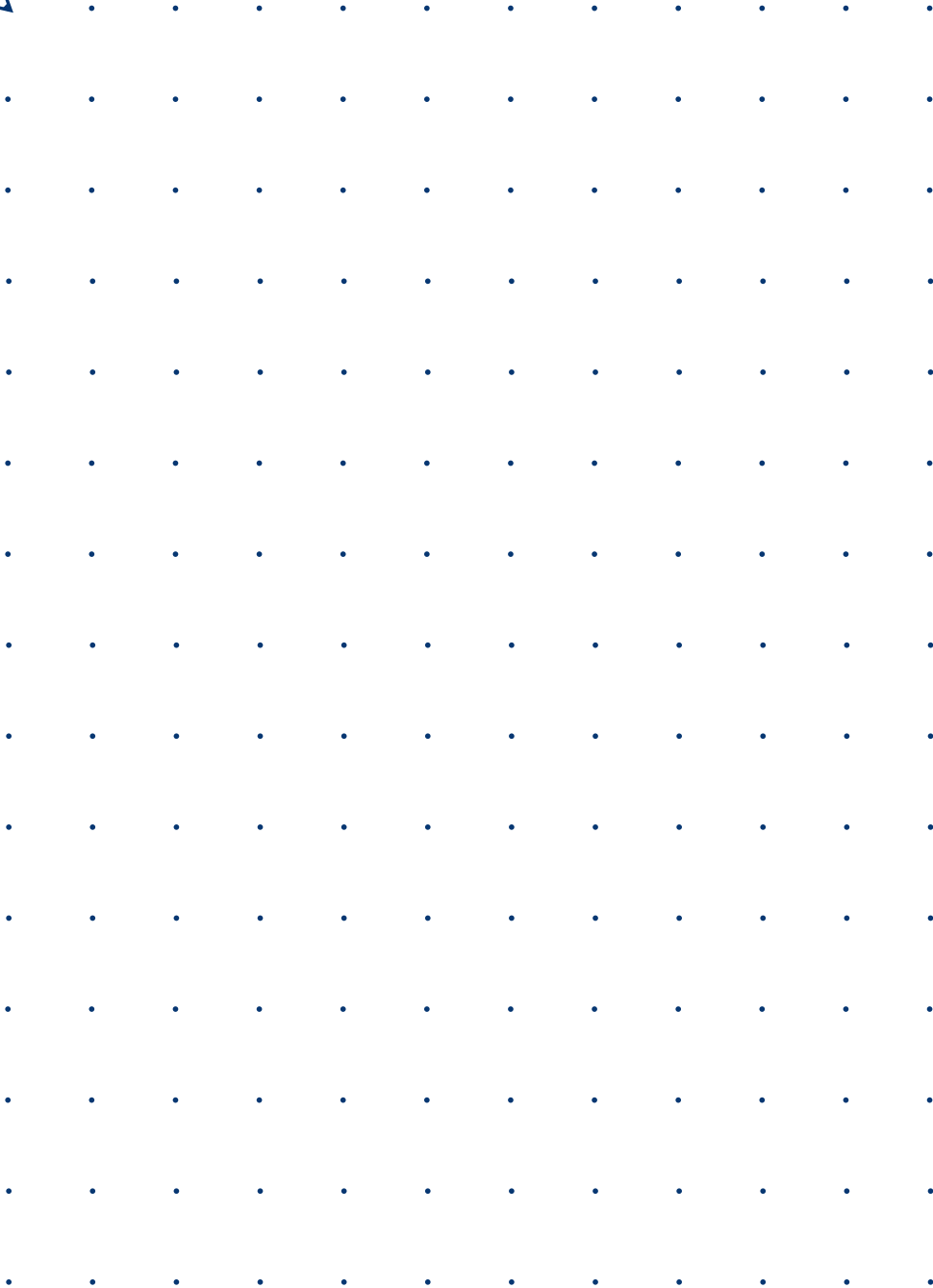
Dark Sky Community of Fulda

darksky.org/places/fulda-dark-sky-community/

Darmstadt's Lighting Guidelines:

darmstadt.de/leben/umwelt/luft-laerm-licht/licht





Nightlife

September 21, 2025 – February 15, 2026

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Museum Sinclair-Haus

Löwengasse 15, 61348 Bad Homburg v. d. H.

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