

PRESS RELEASE

NOCTURNE

Koo Jeong A & Tomás Saraceno

15 October 2020 – 20 January 2021

CUSTOT
GALLERY
DUBAI



Nocturne seems an appropriate title for a moderate and expressive exhibition by the artists Koo Jeong A and Tomás Saraceno at Waddington Custot Dubai, organized in collaboration with Pinksummer Gallery, Genoa, Italy. A nocturne is a musical composition in vogue during the Romanticism, not necessarily evocative of the night, but realized for the execution in the dreamlike and magical atmosphere of the night. The artworks presented by Koo Jeong A and Tomás Saraceno, who are both dreamers, or rather visionaries par excellence, even though they travel the circadian rhythm (*circa dies*) of life, they seem to refer, in this exhibition, to the nocturnal chronotype, since the beating heart of the show is preserved in the coffer of the dark.

Humans, like any other animal or plant species, have always orientated themselves in the planet Earth, not just by looking at the predictable path of the Sun but also at the starry sky that is now disappearing, since we are stealing the darkness of the night. This is not a paradox like the one Heinrich Wilhelm Olbers (1758-1840) proposed in 1826, moving from a cosmological model that believed in an infinite, homogeneous and isotropic universe, where the stars were equally distributed in space and therefore the German doctor and amateur astronomer wondered how the darkness of the night sky could exist, as the number of stars are infinite and the majority are much brighter than the Sun.

Today the Olbers' paradox is peculiar, because in the current cosmological structure we know that the universe is finite and expanding, and that the speed of light is finite and the brightness of some stars has not yet reached the Earth and perhaps will never reach it, as those remote diamonds whose splendor we still perceive, in a distant time have already ceased to shine. The night is slowly disappearing, and it was estimated that 80% of the world's population lives under a sky polluted by artificial light making the stars invisible. This is one of the most important and underestimated forms of environmental change.

Beyond the endogenous phenomenon, biorhythm implies the alternation of light and darkness; if the sequence stops being well synchronized, the environmental balance is shattered. Although relatively recent studies have proved that the modification of photoperiodism affects migratory flows, mating rituals, changes the relationship between predator and prey and also disturbs photosynthesis of plants. Light pollution also affects significantly unspoiled places in daylight and many key areas of the biodiversity. The disappearance of the starry sky also has a significant impact on humanistic culture, considering that it has always been a source of inspiration for artists, poets, architects, philosophers and musicians.

The Italian poet Dante Alighieri (1265-1321) in his *Divina Commedia* expresses his relief of having left behind his back the hell as he exclaims: 'And thence we came forth to see again the stars'; the Egyptians architects of the pyramids of Giza worked hard to align to the

celestial north pole, looking at the northern star, which in that platonic year, in the sequence of equinoxes, was Thuban, in the constellation of the Dragon. We ceased drawing imaginary lines with the sky, our window on the universe and on a different time, where past, present and future are much more contiguous than sublunar empiricism gives us a glimpse.

The exhibition *Nocturne*, with its lyricism, traces imaginary lines with the starry night to awaken our inner compass, our endogenous GPS, as light is a strong synchronizer compared to the attention of environment, to remind us that our perception of the world is at stake - we are not born disoriented, we become disoriented. In this sense we could interpret, this time, the dodecahedrons clusters, the *Clouds* of Tomás Saraceno, as the hexagonal web formed by place and grid cells, that together in our hippocampus, answered the questions: where am I? And then where I am going?

Interpreting the magnet sculptures by Koo Jeong A, focusing on the process – even before the finished work, assuming they invite us to be flexible and leave all rigidity behind to interact with the magical life energy of the world - which could make us better and less lonely. As vitalistic ethology teaches us, studying the behavior in its beauty and philosopher who knows how to place problems in a universal perspective: changes, however numerous and sudden they may be do not necessarily imply evolution; to change is one thing, to evolve is another.

In the exhibition there is a *Foam* by Tomás Saraceno that shows us how geography - even before the fractal geometry of the universe, follows a precise plan - replicable in the unlimited, the impermanent and magnificent smallness of a soap bubble. Impermanence, on the other hand, helps us to look at things as they are, refraining from judgment. And yet the elegant laser-made drawings of Koo Jeong A in the glass tells us that in life you have to discover the energy of the surface in order to reach the level of deepness.

The preparatory drawings of Koo Jeong A's *OooOoO* skate park (<https://www.triennale.org/eventi/oooooo/>), recently presented at La Triennale di Milano (<https://www.triennale.org/>) are also exhibited in the show. These artworks seem to indicate that in life you have to be a little skater to be able to fly without wings, finding the beauty and sense of orientation even in the most peripheral urban areas.

Tomás Saraceno's *Ring Bell Helios* is a kite realized to fly and amaze us in the air with its changing iridescence. The Greek physician Hippocrates believed that pure air is the first food and medicine for mankind.

The fully solar-powered hot air balloon *Aerocene Pacha* of Saraceno successfully took flight over the Salinas Grandes Salt Lake in Argentina at the end of January. Using only sun and air we all breathe, the balloon lifted a person into the sky to a height of 272,1 meters for 1 hour and 21 minutes (<https://aerocene.org>). This shows that Art even outside museums knows how to indicate the celestial poles, such as Polaris and Octantis of the current Platonic year.

The circadian rhythm and the air are the elements that inspires Saraceno's *Calendrier Lun (Air)*, which reminds of the representation of the lunar cycle. Realized in collaboration with Air Paris agency, which monitors air pollution of the French capital throughout day. The small circles of the thin paper stripes materialize the density of the polluting dust.

Furthermore, the night, that in order to appear in its magnificence needs the lightened stimulus as much as the dark ones, mimetic in this sense are the photoperiodic large paintings of Koo Jeong A *Seven Stars*, that in order to be seen, need both light and darkness, as our pineal gland produces serotonin during the day and melatonin during the night, keeping our equilibrium intact.

Dealing with sky and stars but also with time *163.000 Light Years* by Saraceno, that shows the age of the universe in two specific frames (2019 and 2020) as if they were two sequences of a film because each one in the flow of the universe always contains a little of the previous and the next ones. Cosmic becoming seems to have the still consubstantiality of eternity.

Finally, in the dark and in the light the silky and collaborative filamentous of the reactive and vibrant hybrid spiderwebs of Saraceno, a little alienlike as the spiders that weave them, wonderful like the excellent chorus of the universe.

As a concluding and positive note, the city of Tucson in Arizona, USA, with its 600.000 inhabitants has returned its starry sky saving energy and money, simply by reducing waste and improving the aesthetics of urban lighting, looking forward to new energy perspective.