



LUX. DIBUIXOS 2018-2023 ISIDRE MANILS

From February 17 to April 20, 2024

Opening: February 17 at 12 a.m.

Nulla Dies Sine Lux. Drawings by Isidre Manils.

The appropriate phrase “Nulla dies sine línea” by Appelles, the renowned painter of ancient Greece, means “*no day without a line*”, no a day without drawing or writing at least one line. That is the purpose of Isidre Manils with his drawings. Paraphrasing the classic quote, I am giving it a different meaning. I understand Manils’ drawings with the clear purpose of not letting a single day pass without studying the light: “Nulla Dies Sine Lux”.

Over a high quality paper giving off an intense white light, the artist begins his ritual and transforms the luminous surface into a completely dark one using Siberian charcoal. He reaches the deepest of black tone and then, once he faces such darkness, he finds the white light again as he removes the dust using a rubber and thus getting rid of the substance. The technique implies a significant symbolism, since from the absolute blackness, from the dark stain, some indications of rediscovered purity and light are achieved based on modifications. I understand this process of persistent research of light as the most troubling and profound meaning of his drawings.

“Everything rests on the surface” is the most enigmatic phrase I have written about the work of Isidre Manils. Emphasising the micro-particles of charcoal set over these drawings means that the substance rests and needs to be observed carefully. His drawings and paintings entail an artistic manifesto of evanescence and of extreme lightness. As it removes the dark matter, the artist allows the images of the world to vitally settle, to fall like veils, like steam or smoke, like breaths of life on the delicate surface of the paper.

The sketches that painters prepare are usually linked to the category of thoughts before the execution of the work of art. In the case of Isidre Manils, his drawings are finished works in themselves. We can see his study of light through faces that often observe us or disappear, through pavements and doors, some jewellery, scattered eyes, magnifying glasses or mirrors, indeterminate and hidden shapes, hands and nails, hair or flames of fire and, occasionally even some drawn words.

The sheer lightness of the drawings seems *infra-mild*, term coined by Marcel Duchamp to describe this phenomenon. Instead of the warmth of a seat that one has just left: the shine and coldness of a pearl. Instead of the taste of smoke in the mouth after a cigarette: red lips. Instead of a glass bead with the air of Paris: polished nails. Instead of the sound of trousers rubbing when walking: the fragrant skin of a bare shoulder. These *infra-milds* small figurative events after the contemplation of daily life are the true nature of his art.

The skin of things, the surface of the world, keeps the same dense magnitude of what we usually consider as the deepest. Isidre Manils phenomenologises reality in a Husserlian principle, making it profound when he places events on the surface, reminding us of that classic paradox that the skin can be the deepest part of our body. Reality is subtly left over the paper. This is the mysterious nature of his drawings. The enigma is not only found in the themes but in the way they have been drawn.

Jesús Martínez Clarà