

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

RODNEY ZELENKA
NIGHT TRAVELERS

A Solo Exhibition

Curated by Priska Juschka

Exhibition Dates: March 4 - March 28, 2026

Exhibition Walk Thru, Conversation and Reception with the Artist: TUESDAY, MARCH 24 | 6-8 PM

Press Release:

Lichtundfire is pleased to welcome all to an Exhibition Walk Through, Conversation, and Reception with Panamanian artist **Rodney Zelenka** on the occasion of his third solo exhibition at the gallery.

The exhibition, in various media, painting, drawings, video, and works on paper, is at the same time a continuation and a new direction for his work, both conceptually and visually.

Zelenka draws from his own personal sources (memory, dreams, family history) as well as from the collective human unconscious and the human condition with the shared experience of ubiquitous alienation, displacement, migration, and mass disenfranchisement, regardless of our individual origins.

The reoccurring symbol of bare, leafless trees, their roots often exposed over a pile of human detritus consisting of personal items of human belongings (hats, shoes, bags, sleeping mats, household items, tools), but also signifiers of the military industrial complex (machinery parts, weapons, rockets, tanks) as well as body parts (eyes, mouths, heads, arms, legs, feet), suggest a strong narrative— yet beyond a mere visual manifestation of deprivation and violence.

His works alludes to hope, visible on some of the trees' branches the Hebrew word for life (*Chai* = 'n), and resonates the possibilities of something better- especially when lifeless trees and garbage piles are seemingly contradicted by brightly colored clouds in two of his major works (*Three Sunsets* and *I Had a Dream*), carefully applied aluminum or gold leaf depicting the sky, or colorful pulsating light/air bubbles raising to the top while interacting with imagery of mortality and decay.

Throughout art history, *Trees without Leaves*, a symbol of death and restoration, from the Renaissance (14th-16th Century) to the later period of Romanticism (19th Century), to 20th-Century Surrealism, are impactful reminders of the life cycle and our human place in it.

Surrealism as an expression of the human condition has experienced a strong comeback recently in the United States, while it is consistently prevalent throughout the regions of Central and South America, mainly perhaps because the perils of life and the colossal human suffering have been more in the open and less veiled than in the Northern Hemisphere.

Be it as it may, Rodney Zelenka's repertoire does not hold back with symbols, references, and mediums- some of his work incorporates metal mesh, nails, or disposable syringes (*Revive What is Already Gone*), found glass and ceramic from the ocean (*I Had A Dream*)- painting and drawing a rich and bountiful universe that brings together the Good, the Bad and the Ugly with an abundance of details, renderings and metaphors while some reach beyond the Earth's hemisphere and into the realm of space such as in his recent works *Night-* and *Space Travelers*. The same work cycle includes drawings of creatures comprised of a collection of human garbage that defy nature and gravity, and remind us of the fantastical work of Giuseppe Arcimboldo, the early Italian Renaissance Surrealist.

Zelenka's work in this exhibition expands on his previous message visually and conceptually, and despite his continuous strong visual language of a fraught world, this time, it seems to favor the positive elements and the promise of the human condition— that a pile of garbage is another metaphor for a fertile ground that bears the seeds and growth for a better and less hostile future.

Rodney Zelenka was born, raised, and is based in Panama. His parents emigrated from Central and Eastern Europe in the 1930's. He has exhibited extensively since the 1980's in Central and South America, especially in Mexico, and predominantly in public spaces and local and national museums. His works have been widely publicized in Spanish-language publications as well as, more recently, in American/English-language media. This is Zelenka's third solo exhibition at Lichtundfire. His previous two exhibitions, titled *Semiotics of a Spider* (2024) and *Rivers of Babylon* (2023), were both realized in conjunction with independent curator Elga Wimmer.

For additional information, images, appointments, please contact Priska Juschka at info@lichtundfire.com

About Lichtundfire:

LICHTUNDFIRE was established in 2015, with a visual program emphasizing nonrepresentational, conceptual, and abstract art; especially minimal, color field, geometrical, straight edge, abstract expressionist painting, lyrical abstraction, and process work in all media, as well as abstracted, conceptual representation.

Through its exhibitions, Lichtundfire's program is dedicated to developing and nurturing an active, engaged, progressive, and emancipated art community that addresses cultural and social realities as expressed through visual arts.

Beyond its carefully curated visual program, Lichtundfire, with its accompanying events, seeks to actively connect with other parts of the creative community, especially in the field of poetry, literature, philosophy, and Critical Theory.

Instagram: [@lichtundfire](https://www.instagram.com/lichtundfire) and hashtag: [#lichtundfire](https://www.instagram.com/lichtundfire) Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/lichtundfire>

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Gallery Hours: Wednesday – Saturday, 12 – 6 pm, or by appointment
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