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# Exotic Utopias

**GONZALO FUENMAYOR**

Curated by Claire Breukel

On view at Galerie Ernst Hilger  
Dorotheergasse 5, 1010, Vienna, Austria

Opening April 11, 2024

## Gonzalo Fuenmayor: Exotic Utopias

For two decades, artist Gonzalo Fuenmayor has explored the identity and cultural dichotomies of living in South and North America. Within this geographic exchange cultural stereotypes are pervasive. In response, Fuenmayor deftly constructs luxurious scenes juxtaposed with plants, animals, and people from another reality. While his subjects appear ominous and chaotic, the seductive hyperreal charcoal renderings are so tantalizing he seduces us into visual delight—pausing in an idyllic moment preceding impending disaster.



*How Would You Like Me to Exoticize Myself For You?*, 2017  
Arches Hot Pressed Watercolor Paper Mounted on Oval Board  
60.96 x 45.72 cm (24 x 18 inches)

For his first solo exhibition in Austria, Fuenmayor turns his eye to spaces exuding old world luxury. Titled *Exotic Utopias* the exhibition's three themes The Exotic; The Spectacle; and The Collision, unfold like the acts of a theater play. In "The Privilege of Shadows" a new work created for the exhibition; Fuenmayor depicts *Schönbrunn Palace* as a symbol of regality with an audience of banana trees encroaching on its theater stage. This recalls his performative photo series *Papare, 2013* where Fuenmayor depicts a physical installation of glitzy chandeliers hanging in a banana plantation in Cienaga, Colombia. Gesturing to inequalities inherent to the export-import trade, Fuenmayor conflates time, space, and realities to create a third space for contemplation.

Taking in the cinematic and escapist landscape of his now hometown Miami, symbols of recreation and entertainment are suspended behind the movie credit *The End*.

Here, Fuenmayor playfully jibes at the frivolity of American consumerism, a luxury that, in the unequal equilibrium of trade is enjoyed at the invisible expense of others. In the end, the possibility of world collisions looms large.

- Claire Breukel

Our thanks goes to Ernst Hilger, Karoline Hilger and team, Thomas Guss and Galeria Fernando Pradilla.



THEME

# The Exotic

*Genesis III, 2017*

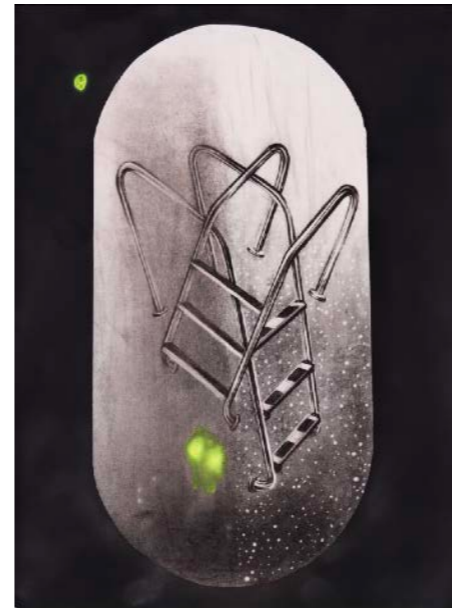
Inkjet print on metallic paper  
111 x 169 cm (66 x 44 inches)

A symbol of opulence, Fuenmayor hangs a chandelier, connected to a bunch of bananas, in a banana field. In this work, Fuenmayor activates the image of the banana as a signifier of trade and labor inequality within the global food economy, as well as a stereotype of a “Latinized” exotic. The contrast of the banana, a mass produced and inexpensive fruit, with the preciousness and value of a chandelier, points to a contrast of lifestyle that result from discrepancies in labor remuneration, geographical access, standard of living, need versus luxury, and more.



*Music for Cannibals*  
*Tsunami of Oblivion*  
*The Scene of the Fakers*  
*Simulations of the truth*  
*The first betrayal*  
*The night of time*  
*The privileges of loneliness*

All mediums:  
Charcoal and spray paint on paper  
Each 76 x 57 cm (30 x 22½ in)  
Each 89 x 70 x 4 cm (35.04 x 27.56 x 1.6 in) with frame



THEME

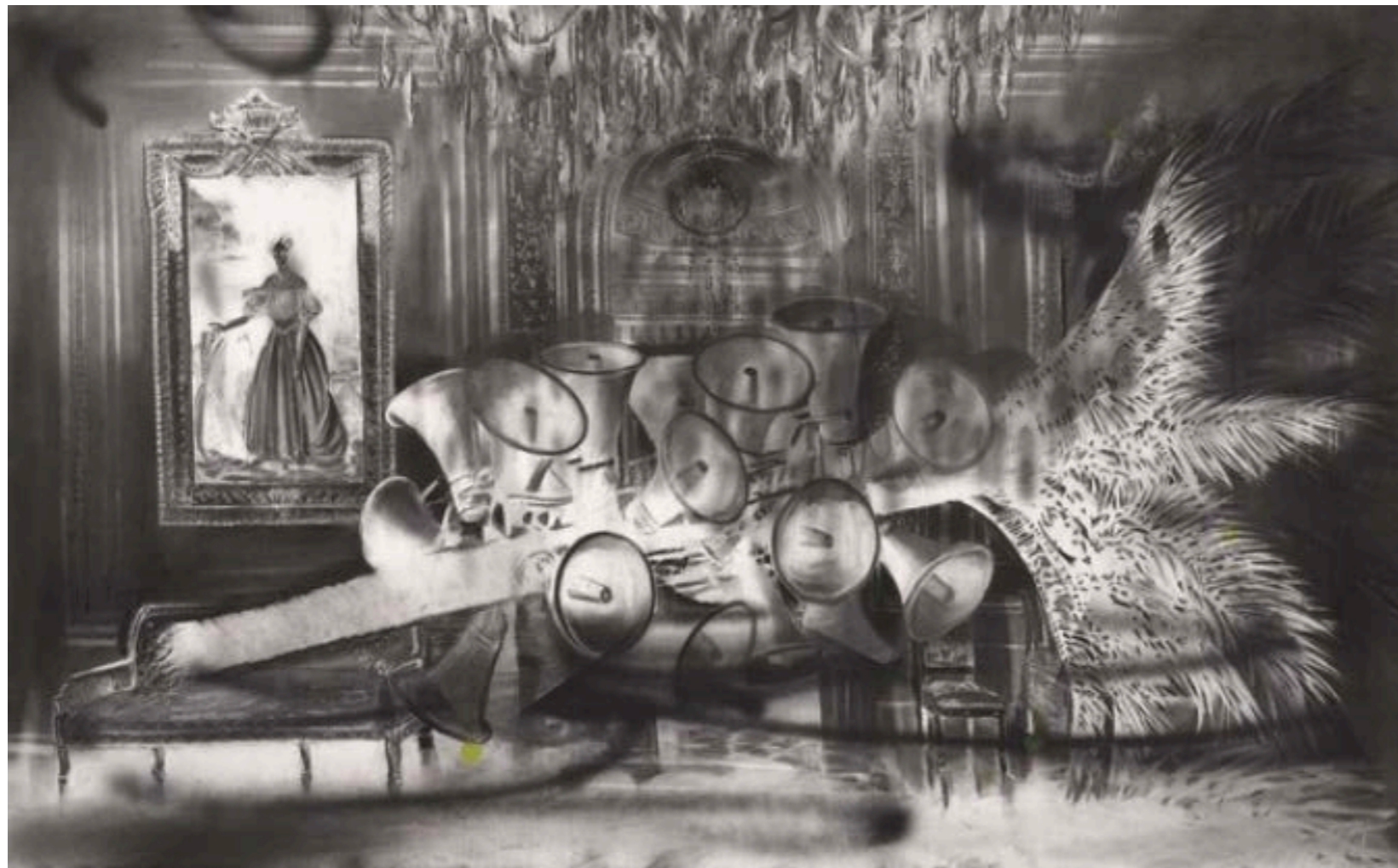
**The Exotic**

*The Temptation of Impatience, 2021*

Charcoal on paper

113 x 185.5 cm (44.5 x 73.03 in)

118 x 188.5 x 6cm (46.5 x 74.21 in) with frame



*The Comfort of Order, 2021*

Charcoal and spray paint on paper

102 x 66 cm (40.16 x 25.98 in)

116.5 x 80.5 x 4 cm (45.87 x 31.69 in) with frame

THEME

**The Exotic**

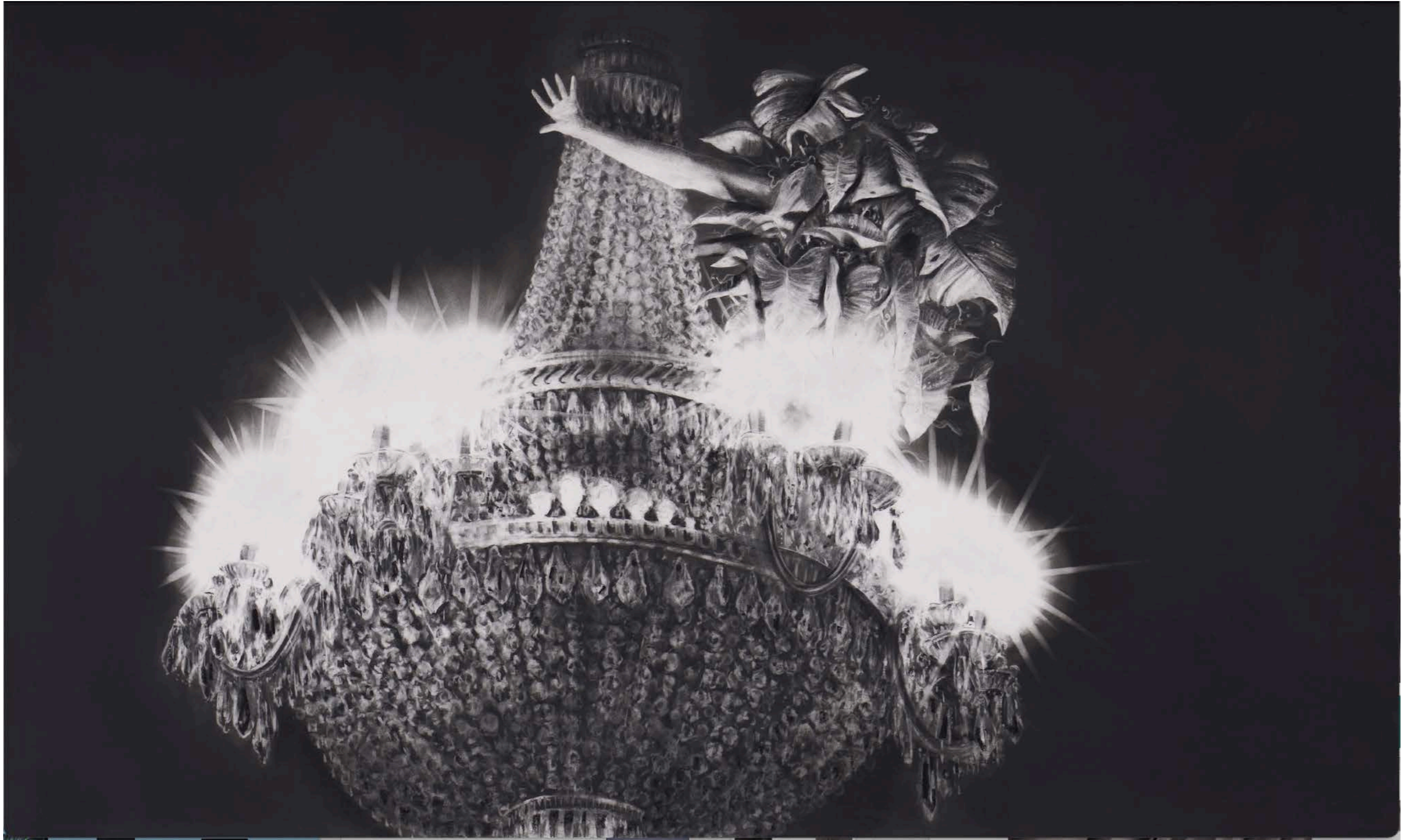




THEME

# The Spectacle

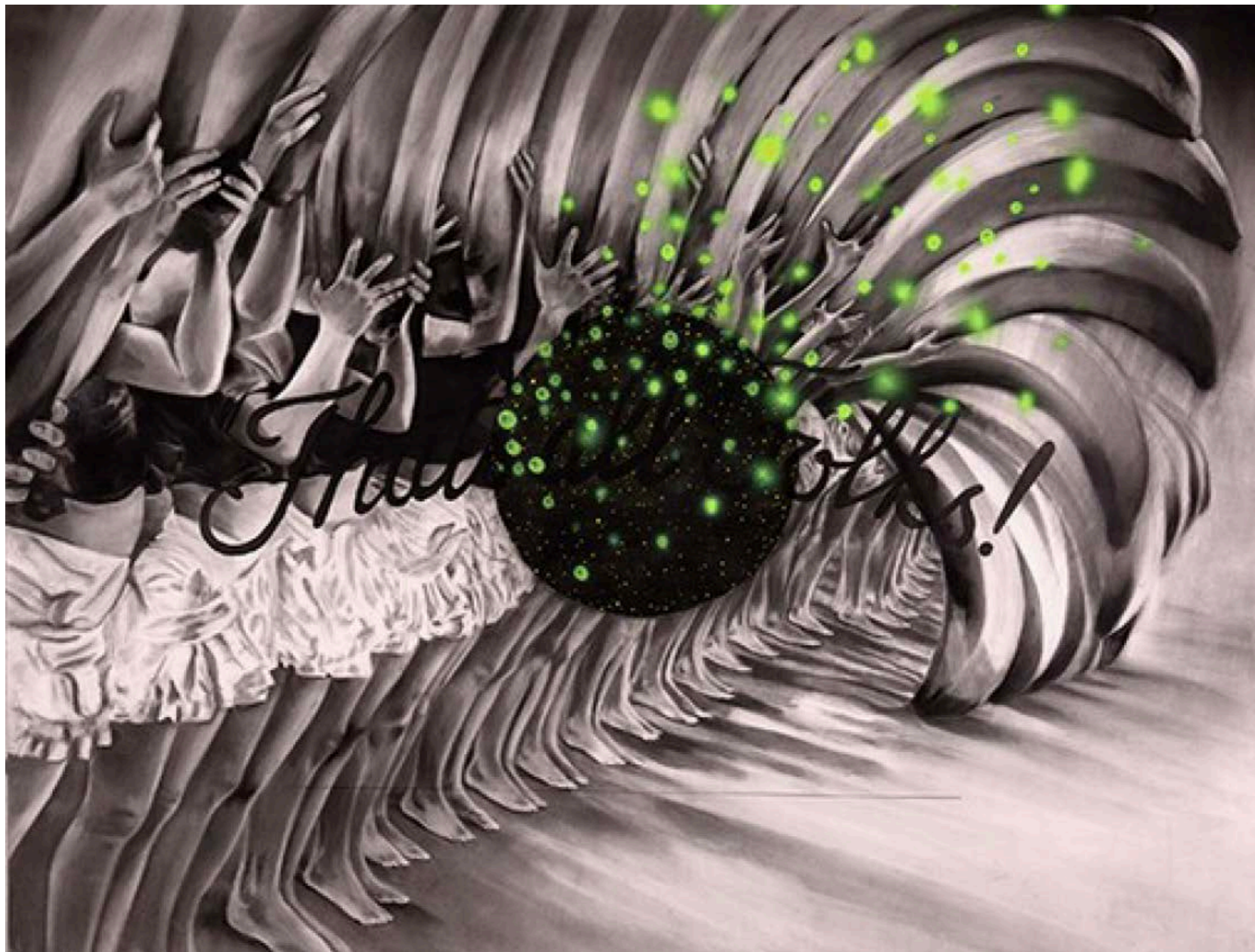
*The Privilege of Shadows*, 2024  
Charcoal on paper  
208 x 228.6 cm (82 x 90 in.)



THEME

# The Spectacle

*The Ecstasy of Vanity, 2024*  
Charcoal on paper  
114.3 x 193 cm (45 x 76in)



THEME

## The Spectacle

*The Sleeping Times*, 2021  
Charcoal and spray paint on paper  
132 x 172 cm (52 x 67.7 in)  
147 x 187.5 x 6 cm (57.9 x 73.8 in) with frame

*Abyss*, 2022  
Charcoal on paper  
122 x 114 cm (48 x 44.9 in)  
136 x 128.5 x 4 cm (53.5 x 50.6 in) with frame





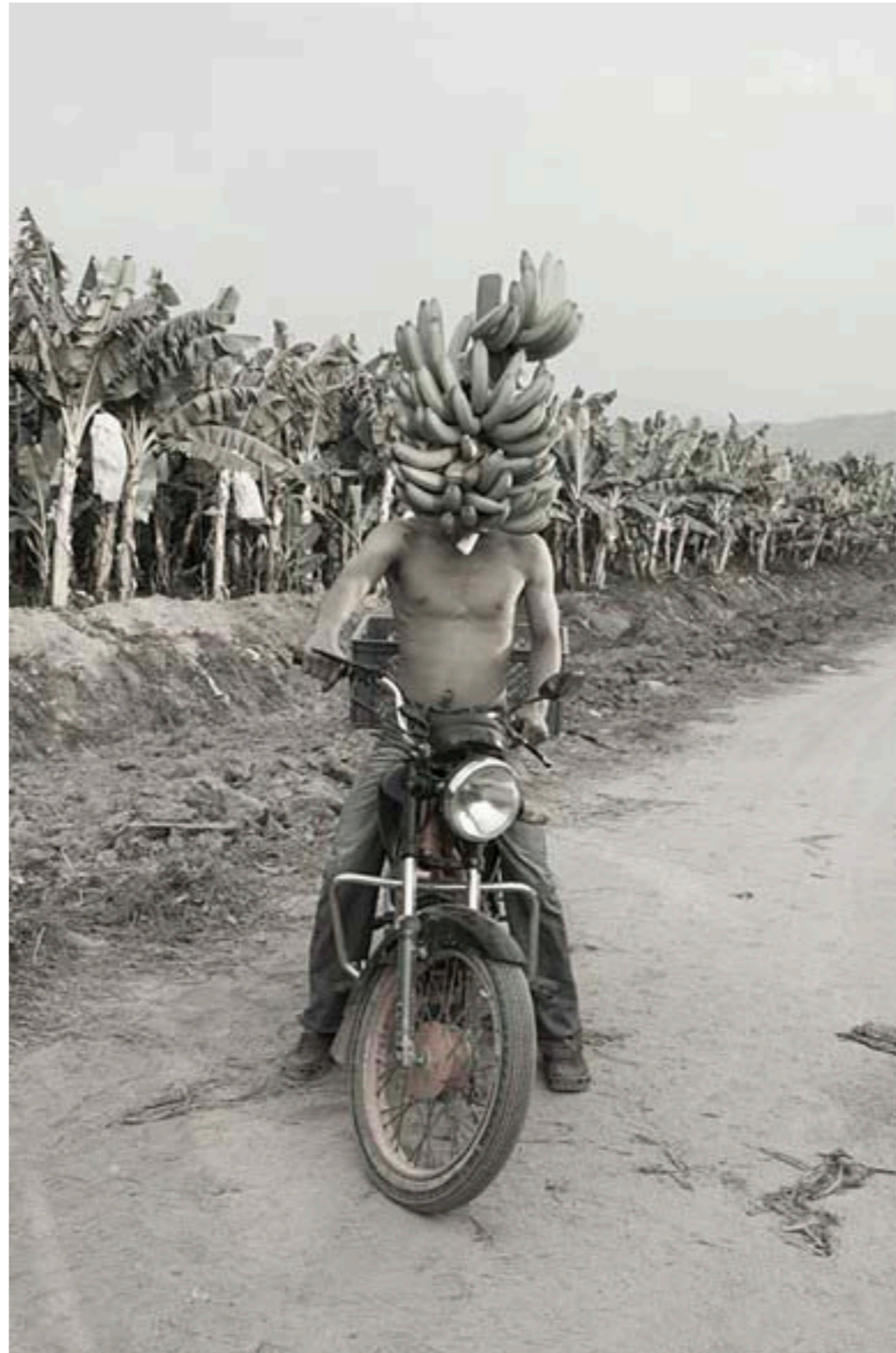
THEME

# The Spectacle

*Papare Project (2013) by Gonzalo Fuenmayor.  
Single Chanel HD Video, 5:19  
Edition of 3 + 2 AP*

*Mister Bananaman's spaceship*  
Inkjet print on metallic paper  
111 x 169 cm (66 x 44 inches)  
Edition of 5 (1 available)

A bare-chested man sits on a motorbike, his head replaced with a banana bunch. He poses as if for a portrait appearing as an anonymous masked superhero ready for action. In this photograph, Fuenmayor on the one hand points to the tradition of colonial portraiture exoticizing subject matter for consumption, and on the other depicts "Bananaman" as a science fiction character that is transcendent to the gaze—at once a part of, and unbound by, the



*Levitation*  
Inkjet print on metallic paper  
111 x 169 cm (66 x 44 inches)  
Edition of 5 + AP 1  
(AP available upon request)

A banana bunch appears floating above the earth referencing an alien spaceship or perhaps a hanging chandelier, an object used throughout Fuenmayor's work to connote colonial opulence. The bananas are in contrast a mass produced and affordable food. The dark moody hue of these assembled photographs adds to the image's otherworldly quality, heightening the feeling of alienation and highlighting the detachment between opulent and everyday objects.



THEME

# The Collision

*The Spectacle of Silence, 2023*  
Charcoal on paper  
182.9 x 132 cm (72 x 52 in)



THEME

# The Collision

*Collision, 2019*

Charcoal on paper

132 x 203 cm (51.97 x 79.9 in)

134 x 206 x 6 cm (52.8 x 81.1 x 2.3 in) with frame





From top left:  
*The Discipline of Blood*  
*Unseen Presence of Victorious*  
*Fear Imaginations*  
*The charms of resignation*  
*Triumphant Darkness*

All:  
2019  
Charcoal on paper  
57 x 76 cm (22½ x 30 in)

# Gonzalo Fuenmayor

Gonzalo Fuenmayor (b. 1977, Barranquilla, Colombia) is a Miami-based artist working primarily with drawing. Fuenmayor has been concerned about the effects of modernization and progress not only on natural environments, but mostly on Latin American culture and its ways of being displayed internationally through stereotypes and common places. His aim seems to be not exclusively, to denounce banalization but also to understand its aesthetic mechanisms and cultural power.

Fuenmayor received an MFA from School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, MA in 2004, and a BFA in Fine Arts and Art Education from School of Visual Arts in 2000. Fuenmayor has been awarded numerous awards including a Pollock Krasner Foundation Grant in 2022, the 2020 EFG Bank Latin American Award, a 2018 Ellies Creator Award, a 2015 South Florida Cultural Consortium Fellowship for Visual and Media Artists, a Traveling Fellowship by the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston in 2014, among others.

He has exhibited in numerous solo and group shows in USA, Latin America and Europe; his work was recently showcased in The Florida Prize 2020, at the Baker Museum in Naples, FL, a solo exhibition "Tropical Mythologies" at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston in 2015, "Caribbean Crossroads" Exhibition at the Queens Museum, NY. His work is part of numerous private and public collections including Perez Art Museum Miami, Miami, FL, USA, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA, USA, The Cornell Fine Arts Museum, Winter Park, USA among others. He is represented by Dot Fiftyone Gallery, Miami, Dolby Chadwick Gallery, San Francisco, Fernando Pradilla Gallery, Madrid and El Museo Gallery in Bogotá, Colombia.

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# Exotic Utopias