

**Exhibition Title:** Lights Through the Cave

**Artist:** Ádám Ulbert & Róza El-Hassan

**Curator:** Péter Bencze

**Venue:** Longtermhandstand, Budapest

**Duration:** 11 Dec 2024 – 20 Jan 2025

**Photo:** Áron Weber

**Tags:** @adamulbert @roza.elhassan @longtermhandstand @everybodyneedsart

**Photo:** Áron Weber / All images copyright and courtesy of the artist and Longtermhandstand

**Text:** Péter Bencze

### **Lights Through the Cave**

In Lights Through the Cave, Ádám Ulbert and Róza El-Hassan invite viewers into a contemplative exploration of nature and the spiritual connections that underpin our existence. The duo exhibition combines the artists' distinct yet complementary practices, revealing pathways through hidden networks of meaning, from the ecological to the metaphysical.

Róza El-Hassan's works draw on her ongoing series, Hommage á Anonymus, which meditates on the quiet, often overlooked, traces of being. Her intimate sculptures—small wooden cave relics attached to glass—serve as ethereal portraits of anonymity, blending personal and collective memory. At the heart of the exhibition is her sculptural wallpiece, Crossing, a mixed-media composition that visualizes the invisible energies and bonds that weave through our daily lives. This poetic depiction of human connection asks how we might perceive and navigate the unseen forces that shape our shared experience.

Ádám Ulbert's paintings expand on his research into ecological sensibility through the lens of science fiction and speculative narratives. In his Before Going Under Earth series, Ulbert interweaves his fascination with ancient organisms, such as lichens and cave-dwelling crabs, with references to literature and art history. These recent works channel his investigations into systems of ecomorphological relations—an imaginative framework that bridges biology, geology, and human perception. His neon piece, part of the earlier Unnamed series, complements the paintings, exploring the geological and ecological roles of algae as an anchor for ecological thought.

Both artists find inspiration in the elemental forces of the Earth. El-Hassan's wooden relics evoke the sheltering intimacy of caves, while Ulbert's imagery calls upon the primal landscapes of Iceland.

During his recent fellowship, Ulbert revisited the volcano Snæfellsjökull, a pivotal site in Jules Verne's Journey to the Centre of the Earth, and the ecological significance of Icelandic lichens, as imagined in Max Ernst's surrealist collages. His paintings bring these layered histories to life, presenting surreal botanical creatures that embody the intertwining of the organic and the mythical.

Together, El-Hassan and Ulbert craft a vision that is both introspective and outward-reaching. Their works traverse the realms of the seen and unseen, illuminating the caves within ourselves and the ecosystems that surround us. Lights Through the Cave is an invitation to journey inward, rekindling a sense of wonder and reconnection with the natural world. In a time marked by environmental precarity and fractured human connections, this exhibition suggests that by embracing the spiritual and ecological ties that bind us, we may get a glimpse of a brighter and more harmonious future.

Péter Bencze