

SWEETWATER,

Hanna Stiegeler
Brutes des nuits
May 1, 2026 to June 6, 2026

Where do these nocturnal demons reside, the ones we learn to fear before we can name them? Under the bed, or in the folds of a room that, in daylight, I call my home. At night it expands and becomes vast and strange. Or else it is in me: something that stirs in the quiet hours, released precisely when I should be asleep. I think of those who dream easily, how they manage to contain whatever presses against them to drift into a soft suspension.

In films and novels, night is cast as a site of adventure. But there is another night, one that resists narration altogether, paced instead by repetition, spiral, boundaries of myself that begin to dissolve. Night belongs also to those who forgo it. To those who have little choice but to remain awake for another. A small, dependent body, monitored through the green glow of a domestic surveillance device. The survival of this infant lump rests solely on a love that at times feels more like a diaphragm spasm of rage as I watch my sense of control slip away. The lump stirs. I lie still, as if my own immobility might coax it back into sleep. What if, this time, I don't get up? I always do.

There is a point at which instinct overtakes logic. Action precedes comprehension. I cannot fully account for what passes between closeness and repulsion, cannot stabilize it in thought or words. In these melatonin-heavy hours, time runs thick. If it is 23:45 or 03:45 is indistinguishable, irrelevant. The four walls of this room expand into a timeless plane upon which doubt and anxieties find fertile soil. The night has no spectator, the performance ends.

To speak of the day does not require the night. But to speak of the night always invokes a looming dawn, be it dreaded or yearned for. As the literary historian Gérard Genette suggests, night appears as the day's other. And Elisabeth Bronfen points out that in movies, men enter the night like a battlefield, while women are already in it. Whether as the seductive femme fatales or innocent, dream girl, at ease, they navigate the erratic convulsions this quotidian unknown yields.

The romantics revealed in the night as a counter to the clarity and order of the day. As its antidote, it opened a realm for ambiguity and mystery beyond dualistic moral. A liminal space of *gnosis*, the kind of intuitive knowing we struggle to put words to, as opposed to *episteme*. Some things can only be seen in the dark. In my darkness, maternal instincts take over what I think I know of myself, hyper-alert, I watch control slip as I find myself teeth-deep in innocent skin, mimicking the carnivore compulsions of a four-year-old testing surface breakage. I do not possess this knowledge; it overtakes me.

Madness and love. Madness and love. The serpent feeds off its tail.

Exhibition text by Dara Jochum and Hanna Stiegeler.

*Hanna Stiegeler (*1985, Germany) lives and works in Berlin. Brutes des nuits is her second solo exhibition at Sweetwater. Her first institutional solo exhibition, Ext. I at Galerie für Gegenwartskunst, Freiburg, opened in February 2026. Stiegeler received an MFA from the Hochschule für Grafik und Buchkunst Leipzig in 2019.*

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1. *Brutes des nuits I*, 2026
Acrylic on canvas
2. *Brutes des nuits II*, 2026
Acrylic on canvas
3. *Contracted Expansion /
Self Portrait*, 2026
Acrylic and pigment on canvas
4. *Brutes des nuits III*, 2026
Acrylic on canvas

