

UBC Social Ecological Economic Development Studies (SEEDS) Student Report

Night Light

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Emily Cho
Night Light, 2017
Digital Illustration on vinyl
10.3' x 7'

Night Light, 2017.

The Industrial Revolution began in Europe in what would over the next two hundred years become the modern world. While it was a time of great technological innovation, it also drove the world into a downward spiral of negative environmental impacts. Great swaths of Europe's forests were cut down to fuel the machines and factories, as well as to make way for urban sprawl as populations soared and towns grew into thriving metropolises.

The will-o'-the-wisp is a being present in much of European folklore, whose inviting lights would lead travelers off the safe paths and into the forests. The trees in this painting rise to form into the tops of skyscrapers, where the glow of the wisps is echoed by the white windows that down out the stars. The only lights in the sky are the bright moon and the red glow of airplanes far above.

Those that live in urban centres are separated from the earth by steel and concrete jungles, while we breathe in the polluted air and look away from the smog-filled skies. Are the great advancements made through technology worth the destruction of the natural world's beauty and resources? Perhaps humanity needs to follow the will-o'-the-wisps back into the forests, to reconnect with the past that has been chopped down and near-forgotten, lest they are gone forever.

Emily Cho is an environmentally-minded artist fascinated with legends from around the world. She seeks to remind people of the past by bringing these stories into the present through art. To connect viewers to the creatures of folklore, a small girl wanders through the vastness of the space who embodies or interacts with the supernatural beings. She exists in a moment between life and death, always present yet outside the boundaries of time and space.