

Prescribed Insomnia

Noemi Pfister

Prescribed Insomnia sounds like the promise of a waking dream, an insomnia both suffered and longed for. This half-awake state lures us into dreamlike spaces populated by mutant creatures prey to inner visions: a portrait of a generation on Xanax projecting themselves in desirable commonalities as a means of escaping an anxiogenic future.

Day breaks in a city square, where a body lies in a fetal position, its eyes wide open. Its posture is inspired by a scene from Tarkovsky's film *Stalker*, in which the lead character wakes up from his nap to resume his journey. In *Città Ideale*, the body is depicted in a vulnerable position. At his side, a wolfhound seems attentive to his plight. Inspired by De Chirico's metaphysical landscapes, the environment features the UN palace in the background, reminding us of the everlasting presence of power structures. Facing the canvas, we are placed in a situation of discomfort, conscious of our privileges, yet aware of our inability to act.

Anonymous Artists features a group of hybrid creatures in languid positions. Gathered in a circle to lick their wounds, they seek to help and reassure one another and give each other strength. Confronted with the diktat of individual fulfillment in an inhospitable environment, they have chosen and accepted each other, despite their differences. The collective allows them to escape normative constraints and cheat their solitude, yet their gazes seem lost in the void. Some ricochet off the walls whose windows obstructed by blank canvases allude to an exhibition space, while others lose themselves toward the ceiling or stare at the void. Turned inwards, they are stuck in the prison of their mental space from which arise psychic disorders. The scene evokes a collective struggle and refers to the artists' working conditions through the Free Britney T-shirt worn by one of the protagonists. Born after Spears' placement under guardianship, the movement refers to a particular event, when in 2007, Britney Spears shaved her head, unable to reconcile her career and personal life. They are more accomplished than we are. They have mutated, freed themselves from gender stereotypes, and embraced technological advances. The collective helps to counter the adversities of modern life but also the feeling of isolation. The characters are passive, but this passivity evokes the result of a defense mechanism rather than an acceptance of or an escape from powerlessness.

In *Emma Kunz's Grotte*, the rock cavity offers a hospitable refuge, a sort of answer for those seeking to recharge their batteries away from the world. Nature, here considered in its restorative and compassionate dimension, serves as a therapeutic retreat for the artist. The protagonist, bathed in warm light, evokes the serenity of the present moment. Yet he seems to be in a transitory state. He has fallen asleep, letting his leg dangle to stay alert and not fall completely asleep.

Till the Morning Rises depicts two skateboarders facing a twilight mountain landscape. Sitting on the edge of a lake, they look in opposite directions, despite their palpable complicity. Their flesh is tinged with bluish light, reflecting the surrounding nature (or is it the other way around?) in an entrancing mirror effect. Depicted from behind, they are both spectators and subjects of the work.

In the same way, *No Counterpart* invites us to take part in a 17th-century chess match between the protagonists of a painting by a Caravaggesque artist. However, here only the white pieces remain, placing the players in an asymmetrical confrontation - the game cannot take place. This image seems to allude to the search for meaning beyond binary conflicts, calling for a more nuanced understanding of human and social relationships. The vegetal figure on her left wears a T-shirt with the phrase 'Talk to me' and puts his arm around her neck, a kind of ricochet invitation to confide in him.

Through her works, Noemi questions our living conditions in a floating world and offers a poetic meditation on the contemporary human condition. She addresses universal themes such as fatigue, vulnerability, companionship, and the quest for meaning, drawing on references to art history and mainstream culture in a highly personal way. She depicts the weariness of the world's spectacle, of both external conflicts and inner conflicts that overwhelm us. Is it a world of conflict and power dynamics, as well? Her visions at times turn into predictions of our near future, at others, they offer a distant look at our time, and in which the inner space merges with its environment. She invites us to come to terms with ambivalence and meditate on our condition. Through her phantasmagorical visions, history, like art, is repeated, only to be reinvented in a more humanistic dimension.

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