

COMMERCIAL STREET

Ramsey Alderson

Sleep

December 9 – January 14, 2023

Subjects of stasis; of sleeping, of excess, of passing the fuck out. There's always a moment if I have the spins and am forcing myself to sleep that my vision is somehow oversaturated and kaleidoscopic even with my eyes closed, and I feel myself twirling frantically through space somehow screaming without making any noise.

Ramsey Alderson renders his subjects in a casually deft simplicity that remains attentive to the larger picture at hand and dismisses needless scrutiny. The figures are thoroughly placed in the spaces they occupy; a face or arm is rendered with the same paint handling as a bit of innocuous background. To my mind presenting an undisrupted vision allowing for the psychological quality of the various figures, poses, and settings to rise slowly to the surface. Saturated primary and secondary colors squirm in hushed resistance to the quite literally undisturbed figures whose bodies begin to contort - rather than rest - in quiet obscenity. The softened geometry of the backgrounds suggests various public places and contextualizes all these figures, with their insipid putty faces, in positions of incredible vulnerability - urgent and tenderly ecstatic. Their somnolent world begins to take an ominous and distantly threatening appearance while they themselves lay stuck, unperturbed and unknowing to the featureless anticipatory dread that marks the awareness of being watched. There's an obvious moral dilemma to the two-way mirror provocation that is knowingly thwarted by Ramsey's ambivalently inflected graphic slant of saturated colors and softened edges and figures that remain eternally unaffected by approach. An expressive position all the more absurd for its directedness and all the more intense for its stillness.

There was this one kid I grew up with in Minnesota who would constantly get too drunk and pass out and although we weren't super close I'd see him around passed out for a string of consecutive days seemingly wherever I happened to be - at a bar, on someone's floor, in the literal gutter. There's something undeniably tragicomic about it, and something uncanny about observing someone asleep while you yourself are painfully awake.

-Christine Burgon