

Simo Bacar

Paul Gondry

Sleep Walkers

March 17 – April 29, 2023

Simo Bacar is delighted to present *Sleep Walkers*, a solo exhibition by New York based artist Paul Gondry. The show is Gondry's first solo presentation with the gallery and his first solo in Europe.

Inspired by European myths and fables that have been passed down from illuminated manuscripts, Dutch etchings, and RPG video games, Gondry's works describe the inner worlds of characters who know little more than suffering – save for the meager offering of escapism and dark magic. Still, these fantastic worlds are relatable and often depict personal moments in his life. The paintings reference the French post-impressionists, a group drawn to spiritualism and nature painting as a reaction against industrialization, as much as they recall Orientalism, a contentious genre that looks to semi-fictional lands, either for pornographic escape or for utopic fantasies.

Paul Gondry (b. 1991 Paris) lives and works in New York. The artist studied Film, Animation and Video at the Rhode Island School of Design. Most recently, Gondry presented works at The Armory Show, New York, with Newton, the Gramercy International Prize recipient in 2022. Recent exhibitions include: *Castelet*, Simo Bacar, Lisbon (2022); *Le pays du soleil*, Futura, Prague (2020); *Various Others*, KAYA (Debo Eilers and Kerstin Brätsch) and Paul Gondry, Deborah Schamoni, Munich hosting Malcolm X (MX) Gallery, New York (2019); *Just So Stories*, Nosbaum Reding, Luxembourg (2019); Kunsthalle Wichita, Kansas (2018); *C. R. McBery Vol. I*, curated by Andrew Hunt and Veit Laurent Kurz, Zwinglison, Berlin (2018); *C. Vomitoria*, Paul Gondry and Duncan Boise, MX Gallery, New York (2018); *Golem*, 15 Orient, New York (2017); *Shpongole*, Shelby Jackson and Paul Gondry, 15 Orient, New York (2016); *Hüttendasein*, 15 Orient, New York (2016). The artist was the co-founder of 15 Orient, New York, and recently joined MX Gallery team to transition into Newton.

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Sleep walkers.

Sat Dec 3

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Dive bar, seen from a surveillance camera, a woman sits at the bar, her hair is messy and she wears a skin tight short black dress.

She seems panicked like she doesn't know where she is, a group of men talk to her trying to understand what is wrong with her.

she looks right at the surveillance camera, we zoom in on her. her makeup is messy and she looks right at us like she understands something we don't.

She resumes talking to the group of men.

She takes them outside, the surveillance camera follows her out and then cut to the unit outside the bar. She continues to talk to them, they don't seem to understand her story, the camera zooms again.

Now she is smiling like she has gotten a hold of their attention.

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We cut to an image of a large pin slowly piercing through a black lipid puddle, the needle goes to the other side as energy is released into the mass.

I recognize this image, something familiar is about to happen, like a film I have already seen before. Everything is now black and white, A young David Lynch sits in a non descriptive room editing his first movie.

We enter the scene in the monitor, traveling through a tunnel.

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Villemagne - family reunion.

All the cousins and uncles are here, we are watching the world cup on TV.

Everyone is laying down on lawn chairs having sex with their respective girlfriends, it feels like dubai. They are all wearing some kind of plastic wigs while the girls wear neon bikinis.

I see my uncle coming and looking at me like I should do the same, I feel gross, this is embarrassing to even witness this incestuous sex circus.

Investors seeking tech companies are here as well. They are financing the weekend in the country.

I think they are crooks with no respect for the house nor the heritage.

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I walk alone in the house, the rooms have changed a lot. It seems that dad has rearranged all the rooms, some are empty with residue of creative artifacts, there are shrines of paper cut out figures with objects from the house. vitrals painted on the window depicting children playing outside. The house has turned into a giant studio overruled by a powerful man/child. paint brushes lay on the floor. I walk through the creative deluge of a cardboard cathedral left in ruins.

I can't recognize much, it seems that the space is fading away the more I progress into this maze.

I want to remember what it use to look like, more holes and tunnels in the walls obscure my memory.

Been working all night havent you...

You don't get to rest when I sleep.

Some kind of force is putting me at work, imposed assignments that I have to complete.

Who is in charge?

You don't get to ask questions, all you do is watch and take notes!

The sinking feeling yet again, into the heavy ground, the roots brush against your temples transmitting thin crystals of memory.

Sopranos.

Fell asleep watching the sopranos again. Woke up inside a sitcom.

The tv crew is nowhere to be found, I'm working long hours in an office for Pully (character from the Sopranos). He has me do errands for him, taking out the trash, watering the plants, and e-mails on the computer. Tony soprano finally walks through the door and tells me that I am ready, I follow him through the door.

"ready for what?" i say.

"Ready for your transformation" he says.

"What do you mean, aren't I already working for you?"

"No, no, this isn't real you see, I'm just an actor playing a role. The TV crew is right over there." he points in the direction behind me.

"They are masters of disguise, look behind the cabinet" he says.

Behind the cabinet and through a small office plant I notice an entire film crew cramped into a corner.

"they've been filming you all day for the trial outs, you made it to the audition for the pilot episode!" Suddenly Tony removes his ponytail and a long mullet spreads out from underneath his skull:

"See! This isn't my real hair".

Still smiling and talking in show biz LA accent: "I just talked to the producers, they're going to have you play a french man straight off the boat, real scary type with a bad european temper and a thick french accent".

I tell him I can't act at all and that they might be making a hug mistake but he says its already been decided.

A makeup artist appears from a hidden slit in the wall and gestures in my direction. I follow her to a clinical chamber behind the set where she asks me to sit down: "don't worry, you won't feel a thing".

She begins to floss my teeth and I feel this thick piece of flesh starting to crawl out from behind my gums. It doesn't seem to stop coming out of my mouth as it gets bigger and bigger. Now, crawling out of my mouth on its own like if the flossing has provoked some kind of inner worm living inside of me. It feels like a giant flesh parasite that is in fact the shell in which my soul inhabits.

Once removed, I begin to feel like I have transformed into a hollow shell. I am ready to be filled by something new and sculpted all over because my personality has been removed. I watch them place the parasite into a jar.

The makeup artist removes my hair like a wig and places a new haircut like if i was a plastic figurine.

My body begins to levitate into an infinite floating coat rack. Hundreds of clothes traverse my naked body until the perfect suit grafts itself onto me.

I walk to the mirror, I am ready for TV.

December 8

All the buildings in New York have transformed into art deco buildings made of glass and shiny steel. My friend Ben tells me to join him to th9is new spa that just opened on top of this building.

It's very clinical; inside, the light is always the same, like being in the clouds. The city from above looks like a giant purgatory space inhabited by reflective spires of glass, there are no living people outside.

I realize that the spa is actually a futuristic opium den where they inject your veins with morphine through delicate glass tubes.

“ This is the new thing “ Ben tell me:

“ This is the future! pure architecture and intravenous morphine. All you have to do is relax and breathe in the city of glass”.

July 16

This is the last day on earth. I am walking among a procession of what appears to be teenagers. For them it is their last day in school, this day will last for an eternity.

We are a collective fleet affronting the end of the world and leaving the living behind,
all attached to one another, all walking forward in the same direction.

This is the last day of the collective memory

They seem to all know each other and want me as a witness to the march toward the last day on earth. There is a stand up contest on a basketball court where kids are giving their last performance. Last chance to impress someone you might have had a crush on. I make a fool of myself and begin to entertain the youth one last time.

They applaud and laugh.

The eternal sun shines through this eternal day.

I slowly coil into your soul leading me in the golden stream of your memory.

A light that never leaves the instant moment.

Darkness awaits around the bend, below the horizon, it is here.

Awaiting a chance to join the party, murmuring in the distance.

The entire school walks in a golden prairie, it resembles Long island long before humans lived here. We all walk side by side greeting the dead and their memories along the way. There are hordes of birds migrating above our heads. Swarming the sky and densifying causes various black holes to appear above us. The black hole gives birth to a digital entity: a three headed mandala goddess with a computer screen as its third eye looks through my soul.

An elderly woman approached me asking what I'm doing.

I tell her that I'm looking at god manifesting itself through the metaverse. The elderly woman suddenly freezes up like a statue.

There are groups of young people celebrating in circles and remembering their elders and the people who held an important place in their lives.

A young Russian woman with a lisp walks up to me. I tell her that I knew her relatives, Tom and Hellen, they used to be my neighbors. I assure her that they are ok.

Everyone walks towards the never ending rolling prairie of light touched by the eternal caress of the past. The rolling hills slowly transform into a giant concrete overpass that leads to a sanctuary.

I see my friend from a far being carried on the back of this tall awkward girl.

My other friend arrives in his shiny white car, he says that a great deluge is going to destroy the world and that we need to put our school bags in the back of his car and leave with him all at once.

I tell him that there is nothing we can do about it, that it has already begun. We continue to walk through a cemetery of remnants from the twin towers. We talk about the death of mythological spaces and structures.

I explain to him that this is the birth of a new world where we begin to leave the physical one as a collective entity.

There are guardians all around me like watch towers above the bed, they survey my lifeless body, opening the doors to the next realm. Ancient pathways leading to sometimes refuge for the dead, landscapes that have been forgotten through the passing of time. This dream journey can lead to landscapes of

purgatory where the marshes breath and speak under the asphalt its been buried under. All these elements come together in the world of dreams searching for a receptor so that they can be seen naked and remembered.

A distant memory that doesn't seem to belong to me.

People I have never seen before show me where they live.

A child is initiated and striped naked for the laughter to bleed down his body..

There's a recurring photograph, it's old and looks like the house I once lived in, it must be 1860.

Inside the bedroom of the house in the photograph, I wake up like every morning, get out of bed and walk into the garden.

The backyard is deserted, there is nothing around but a dirt road leading to a patch of woods. All the other houses are gone like they never existed, it feels like the past is frozen in a single breathing image, a suspended memory of the land I once slept on is now communicating through me. The ground is barren, an old tire, weeds blowing in the wind, there's a shack that seems to have been vacated not long ago, broken furniture on the ground, all the colors muted like an old photograph.

There is no human presence here, the dead are disguised as objects, They are one with the ghostly nature.

Sometimes when I dream I go to my family home in the mountains of france. I always bring people from New york with me as visitors. The path leading to the house is always the same, we start off in the woods and make our way up the hill to the old estate. the moon is out but I can't see it, everything is blue, I lead the way along the old stone wall. Inside the house nothing has changed, the dust is suspended in the air like shimmering spirits.

Behind the house is a little bridge that leads to another structure, it is a mirrored image of the house but older and in poorer shape.

inside, the walls are falling apart, the furniture are sparse and some of the rooms haven't yet materialized. A body appears on the bed, it looks like my dead grandfather but in the body of a child. He has just woken up and asks me if he's been asleep for long. I don't want to tell him he's been dead for more than 10 years so I pretend I'm happy to see him, trying to act normal. I am scared to tell him he's dead, I don't want to offend him .

I hold his hand and begin walking to the previous house, he tells me can't go there because it's not allowed. His face is innocent, it is tho he knows he is no longer alive but has forgotten it, he is here to see me and to remind me who he is.

I pick him up and cradle him into my arms, I remember his gentle face now, just like he appeared to me as a child but he is now the child that I once was. We spend an afternoon together that seems to last for an eternity.

I start to forget he is dead.

I watch him move, I remember what made him alive.

An eternal sunset separates our bodies.

I woke up.

Caring for the dead:

They never seem to know that they are dead, they have forgotten, they live in an infinite present where we come and visit them. Share a moment that will become a memory that we can pass on once we are deceased as well.

The dead rest close to you when you sleep,

they can walk again and you both forget they are no longer alive. We share a moment, take them outside watch the sunset, I think it's time to go

I wake up as they go back to sleep.

-- Paul Gondry, *Sleep Walkers*