

**Lukas Müller**  
\*1986 in Kassel  
lives and works in Berlin

Absent faces. Unstirred brows. Sunken eyelids. Lips, crimson or shadow-swept, slightly separated, allowing for yet another breath. In Lukas Müller's paintings, the Kassel-born artist (1986) first venture back into painting for more than a decade, we are faced with sleepers. Sleepers wholly oblivious to our presence here, in the gallery, watching them. We might notice how their muscles relax or contort. How they lean sideways, guided by fatigue. How an ear, a cheekbone, is rested on an open palm. How a baby's tiny fist is flexed in the midst of a dream, whilst the other hand is softly brushing against a cheek.

What is sleep? A condition of the body and the mind, though this hardly feels adequate.

A wrinkled white t-shirt. Miniscule details of ashy eyelids. Concealed eyes searching deep within. Isn't there something instantly uncanny about watching people sleep? About seeing people depart for someplace else, somewhere hidden? Like several of the German artist's works, the paintings of sleepers feel like an intrusion of privacy, an ambivalent step a little too deep into the spheres of intimacy. Like moving through the open door of a stranger's house. And the works themselves seem to be aware of this.

What is sleep? A double life? A chemical drama of the not fully functional mind? A blank space inhabited by loose concepts of futures and pasts? Self-indulgent geometry?

An amber mattress against the austere contrast of an asphalt street. A childish duvet-cover, multicoloured, busy with meanings. Pillowcases – chromatic and patterned, one of butterflies blue and yellow, one Rorschach-like with a myriad of oily ink dots and dark eyes, several flowery, another of two faded hearts – stemming from a homeless shelter in Moabit are coupled with dreamy visions: a deserted street with a bridge, an odd creature twisting its neck, a planet before a bright light in the night sky.

Moving from the dreams to the absent faces to those absent from the frame entirely, one is left with questions not of *Traumdeutung*, nor of the origin of our dreams, but rather of who is allowed rest? Entitled to sleep? Of who lives to dream and who dreams to be?

- Mads Kirk

*Mads Kirk is a Danish writer based in Copenhagen. He graduated from the Royal College of Art MA Writing programme and has written for magazines such as ArtReview.*