

House of Seiko

3109 22nd Street, San Francisco, CA
5827 N Figueroa Street, Los Angeles, CA

cole@houseofseiko.info
houseofseiko.info



Max Xenio Karnig, Nicolas G. Miller

Dream Story

February 8 - March 15, 2025

Opening reception:

February 8, 2025

5:00 - 8:00 pm

A mask as slight as a thong rests lightly on a pillow in place of a husband's head. In *Traumnovelle* (1969), a made-for-Austrian TV drama based on Arthur Schnitzler's 1926 novella *Dream Story*, the wife's gesture silently declares recognition of marital infidelity by the woman's husband. The mask is a key prop in advancing dramatic movement in *Traumnovelle* and is doubled in the two-person exhibition featuring paintings by Max Karnig and sculpture by Nicolas G. Miller at House of Seiko. Tunneling into multiple renditions of the fertile novella, the two Los Angeles-based artists converge their respective practices to amplify the effect of dual modes of psychological and embodied displacement. Time--travel and collective consciousness, a continuum between waking fantasy and nocturnal dream, is magnified in both artists' work through idealized form and aesthetic control--proposing reality as an elaborate fabrication subject to revision. Through recollection, replication, and subtle distortions of form, Karnig and Miller suggest history underlies and precludes any quest for self-determination. Schnitzler's *Dream Story* generated five film iterations (among them): 1969s *Traumnovelle* to 1999s *Eye's Wide Shut*, and the low-rent 1989 version *Ad un passo dall'aurora* (*Nightmare in Venice*) wedged in-between. In the exhibition *Dream Story*, key aspects of these three films are employed to sync periods and stylistic nuances by era to the novella's primary dramatic dichotomies, further multiplying the distance between dream and wakefulness critical to the story's psychosexual machinations.

Through the mask, a spectator is granted permission to be unrecognizable to the self. Once cloaked, one is liberated from civilizing constraints and may elliptically witness the unknowable or disavowed within. In Nicolas G. Miller's bronze sculpture *Masks* (*Traumnovelle*, *Ad un passo dall'aurora*, *Eyes Wide Shut*), a three-part sequence of masks from successive cinematic responses to the novella spirals downward through the spectator's gaze, inviting an intimate relationship to the object itself. Poised like a telescope central in the exhibition installation, the sculpture presents a first-person encounter with *Dream Story*'s shadowy themes. In Miller's furtively dysphoric diagrammatical display, the mask as object and symbol morphs through time and cinematic location, spanning Austria's demure eye-covering to the bestial Italian edition and capped by Hollywood's ersatz costume-designed version from the turn of the 21st century. Miller accomplishes an inversion of the outward gaze by tripling the implied act of masking and viewing, building a visceral, perspectival dimension to perceiving by way of looking.

In four small, lapidary oil paintings on aluminum panels, Max Karnig distills climactic scenes from *Traumnovelle*, *Nightmare in Venice*, and *Eye's Wide Shut* in queered Northern Renaissance revivals that circle the gallery, one to a wall. In the novella *Dream Story*, the destabilizing threat of female lust spurs the male character's underworld adventuring, leading to his psychic collapse. The cinematic female characters in the three films (decades-spanning, nonetheless) are archetypes rendered one-dimensional by male insecurity and willful lack of imagination. In two of the four paintings, Karnig centers the male gaze as a voyeur of unfettered female desire. Marianne replicates the cinematographer's frame, duplicating the cropped visage of a moaning daughter in a paternal deathbed scene. Amid her father's cooling body, she shockingly professes her secret love and sexual longing for the late father's doctor, our protagonist. In *Denmark*, the kaleidoscopic *mélange* of the protagonist's orgiastic encounter in *Traumnovelle* is reimaged by Karnig as serial, soft-core imagery fanning out sequentially in a processional formation—sexual heat brought to order in a classical frieze.

Monica Majoli



Max Xeno Karnig
Albertina, 2025
oil on aluminum
9 1/4" x 12" inches

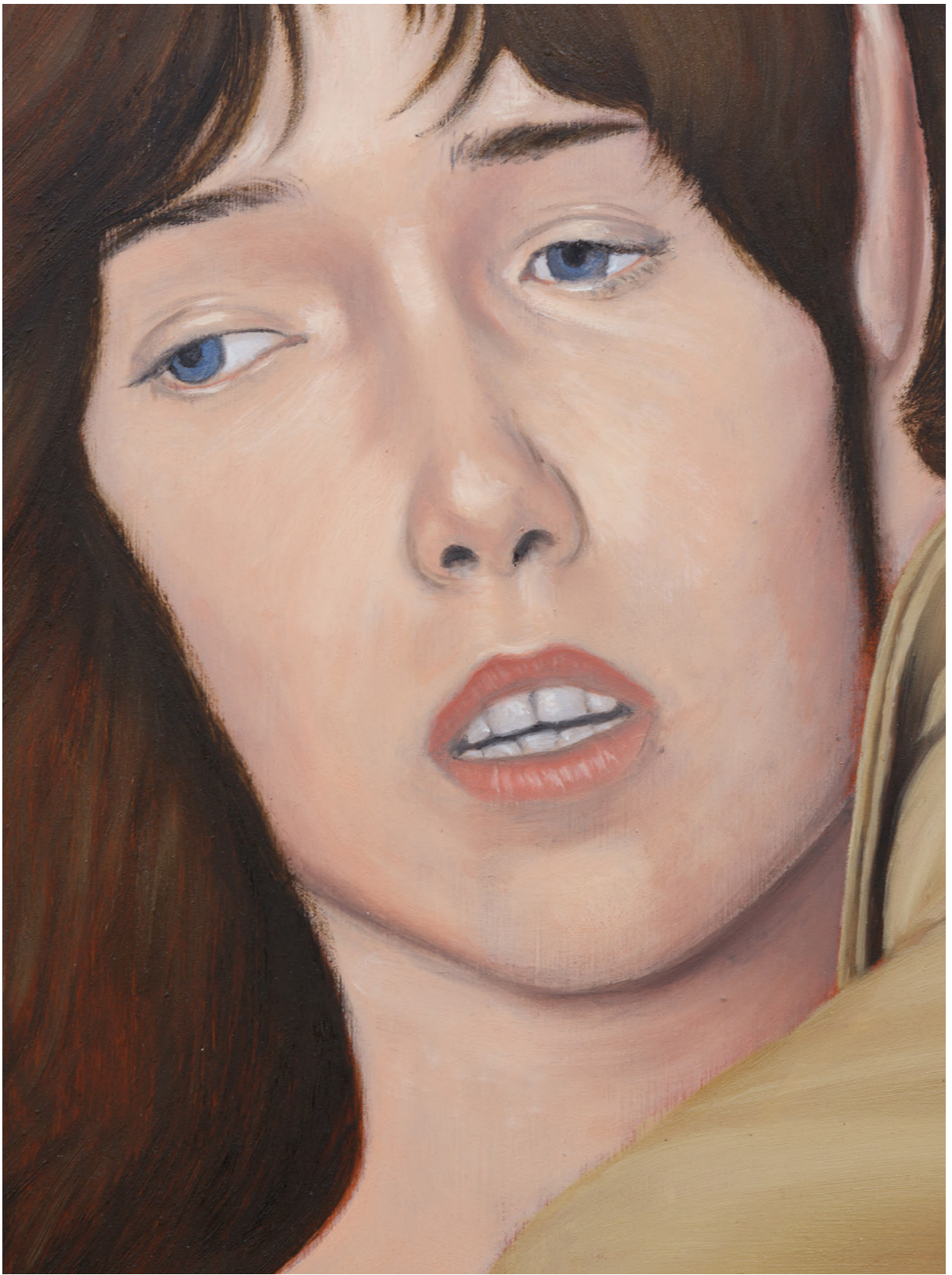






Max Xeno Karnig
Marianne, 2025
oil on aluminum
10" x 12" inches







Max Xeno Karnig

Mask, 2025

oil on copper

4" x 6" inches







Max Xenon Karnig

Denmark, 2025

oil on copper

5 1/2" x 14 1/4" inches







Nicolas G. Miller

Masks (Traumnovelle, Ad un passo dall'aurora, Eyes Wide Shut), 2025

Patinated Bronze, Painted Steel, Felt

6" x 13" x 15"

Edition of 3 + 1 Artist's Proof







House of Seiko / 3109 22nd Street / San Francisco, CA / cole@houseofseiko.info / +1 408 228 7560

Installation Images







