



It is a crime scene or a camping spree. Shaded faces beneath foliage, illuminated by a sourceless light, hidden by a silhouette in the foreground. It is unknown where these glows come from; a bonfire or a talking circle around which a few bodies gather as if in ritual. Something circulates silently: a conspiracy, or rather a consumption—passing from one to another through an unidentified substance. Some hands carry out a colorless transaction; its object has withdrawn from representation. Others grasp a knife. A shoe seems to have gone footless—and all these absences accumulate like clues scattered across the landscape, the painting like a puzzle to be reassembled. On the other side of the circle, individuals lie drowsing; they sleep a sleep questionably heavy. What remain are unexplained gestures, of dubious logic—a choreography interrupted by the painting, spied upon from the other side of the foliage. The air is impassive, the faces placid; something of suspicion lingers. A troubling inexpressiveness contaminates all figures in these *mauvais foins*.

“Bad haystacks”. The phrase translates something of an ill-fated cocktail or an anxious omen: to be *in bad hay* the way one might be *in dire straits*, the way one might *work oneself into a lather*—a noxious weed to be pulled up, inhaled, embalming the atmosphere of Sebastian Wiegand’s paintings. Perhaps that is what binds each canvas to the next: all these figures are governed by a similar compound, a love potion or benzodiazepines, their narcolepsy spreading like a virus. They sleep in bad haystacks as one would under the open sky. They even seem to absorb into the landscape a little, dissolving their envelope into that of the atmosphere. Complexion, sky, and soil sometimes merge into a single color; the air perspires upon bodies, bleeding into their surface. Everything in Sebastian Wiegand’s pieces seems to grow out of a single stroke, the paint streaking tempestuously across the canvas, as if the image had burst forth in one breath. The titles sometimes allude to a pulmonary component—quality of air, smell (*L’Haleine* [Mouth Breath] 2026), or allergy (*Heuschnupfen* [Hay Fever], 2026). Perhaps this “assembly of sleepers”¹ is bound by the same respiratory condition; asthmatic odalisques beneath an opiated sky. Their *skin opens to the moisture of the seasons*, within an unbroken circle of hormones and toxins (*more hormones, less toxins; less hormones, more toxins; movement between toxins and hormones and their confusion as well*) which, as the poet tells us, lets *the fear of death fall away for a minute*².

Everything falls here, everything stretches out while simultaneously reaching beyond; the silhouettes are extended, floating in a comatose ambiance, somewhere between dream, vertigo, and collapse. *I’m lying [...] in the heat wondering about geometry / as the deafening, uninterrupted volume of desire*³ continues the poem—and this line could just as easily belong to one of Wiegand’s characters. Something of desire shines through these languid postures, a geometry dictated by the canvas, framing the bodies in portrait,

¹ Bertolt Brecht, *Petit Organon pour le théâtre*, Paris, L’Arche, collection *Scène ouverte*, 1978, ¶26, my translation.

² All sentences taken from Lisa Robertson, “The Seam”, *3 Summers*, Toronto, Coach House Books, 2016, p.12

³ *op.cit.* p.10

slicing them in two, sometimes letting them spill beyond the corners. The faces, too, point towards an elsewhere: their eyes are sealed, half-closed, some almost rolled back. They drift across the wild grass. Some read through constellations. *I want stimulants, relaxants, hallucinogens*⁴. Sebastian Wiegand's characters are seized by visions. Their gaze reaches beyond the visible. It rises toward a vaporous utopia; an acid idealism or "psychedelic consciousness" where time expands, decelerates, opening onto "the spectre of a world which could be free"⁵. In counterpoint to these sleeping faces and dilated pupils, Wiegand also stages an eye-to-eye confrontation. Two horses and an ox mirror the viewer in a reflective effect. On the other side of the barbed wire, they oppose us a sober eye, the "insistent gaze of the animal [...] the gaze of a seer, a visionary, or an extra-lucid blind person."⁶

A sense of intimacy perspires from these melancholic portraits; subliminal faces, sometimes borrowed or brought back from other sources. Sebastian Wiegand composes with preceding images, ones that follow and dwell within him. His foliage draws from the garden of the Claude Terrasse family, as painted by Bonnard⁷. There is something of Jack Smith's *Normal Love*, a trace of Goya's sabbath in this shadowed ritual. Paul Thek's phantom might also be haunting some of those dead hippies. These paintings exist between inherited ghosts and chosen lineages. This is all the more true when considering that Sebastian Wiegand is an artist that hosts others—transforming his Berlin studio into an exhibition space (*Scheusal*), run in partnership with filmmaker and sculptor Rosa Joly. In the room adjacent to his works, another invitation places Calla Henkel and Max Pitegoff's *Paradise* side by side to his bad haystacks. *Mauvais foins* shows "paintings under the influence"; not only because its characters seem under the sway of drugs or affective impulses – some touching, biting, even dragging themselves along as one might pull a corpse. It also quietly speaks of how the works are made: somewhere between solitude and companionship, in a circulation of glances and effects; of hormones and toxins.

⁴ *op.cit.*

⁵ Hebert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilisation 2*, quoted by Mark Fisher in *Acid Communism*, Radical Reprint #13, full text available here: https://books.google.fr/books/about/Acid_Communism.html?id=CjA9EAAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=kp_read_button&hl=en&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false

⁶ Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow)*, translated by David Wills, University of Chicago Press, Critical Inquiry, Vol. 28, No. 2 (Winter, 2002), p. 372

⁷ *La famille de Claude Terrasse au jardin* (1896) is one of the many depictions made by Bonnard of his family, the music composer Claude Terrasse having married his sister Andrée. This specific painting is part of the collection of the Alte Nationalgalerie in Berlin.