

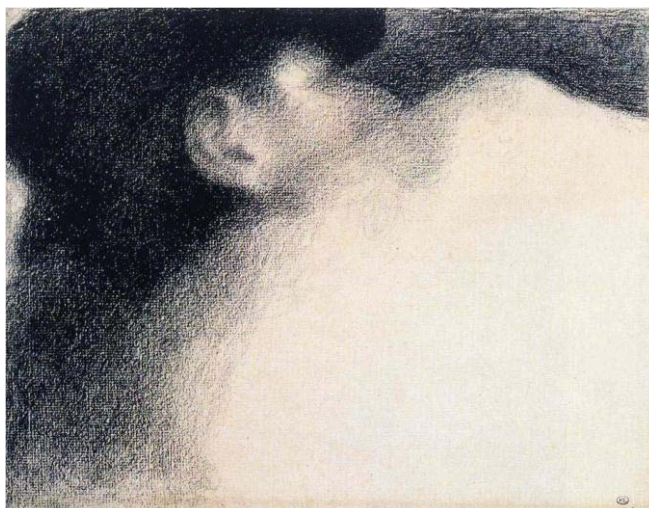
10. Epilogue

To represent sleep implies that a form be interiorized the better to invoke the spirit of dreams. “What is a work of art?” asked Swiss art collector Jean Planque (1910-1998) in a letter to his niece. “A painting has a smell, he wrote, a painting is ‘experienced’ not only by what is on its surface and what one sees, but also by the totality, by what is under it, behind it, what it points to, what is hidden: the painter’s secret, one’s own secret, the discovery of oneself...” (Jean Planque Exhibition catalogue, Hôtel de Ville de Paris, 2003). Indeed, in front of a painting scintillating with matter and spirit, words can only capture so much.

Four final works

Angels sigh in the realm of sleep: Softly allusive is Georges Seurat’s (1859-1891) drawing (a preparatory work for a painting), *The Sleeper* (fig. 162). Pencil in hand, the artist pursues his research in light, rendering in black and white a subtle play of shadows that conjures the sleep of a hatted man.

Figure 162.
Georges Pierre Seurat
(France, 1859-1891).
The Sleeper, 1883.
Conte pencil, 24 x 31 cm.
Musée d'Orsay, Paris - France

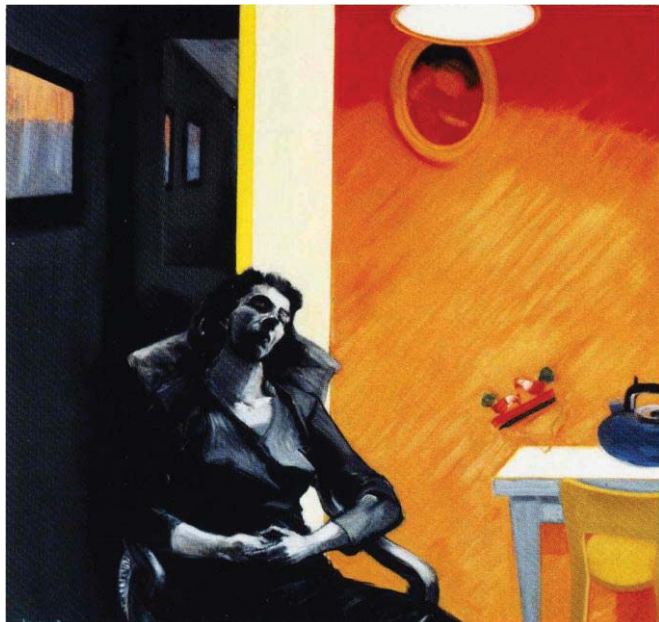


André Masson (1896-1987) experienced at first hand the horrors of the Great War, witnessing scenes such as soldiers with ripped-open bodies, their insides pouring out, twitching in a trench. Such trauma left its mark on all his art.



Figure 163.
André Masson
(France, 1896-1987).
In the Tower of Sleep, 1938.
Oil on canvas,
81,2x100,3 cm.
The Baltimore Museum of Art,
Baltimore, USA
©ADAGP, Paris, 2012

A delirious, nightmare vision, *In the Tower of Sleep* (fig. 163) portrays that horror filtered through the artist's violent, erotic obsessions. In contrast to the escape, the turning inward, sought by his contemporary Joan Miró in a work like *Awakening at Dawn* (fig. 161), Masson confronts horror head-on; his "music of the spheres" is a cacophony played on saw-toothed instruments, a natural consequence of a deranged universe.

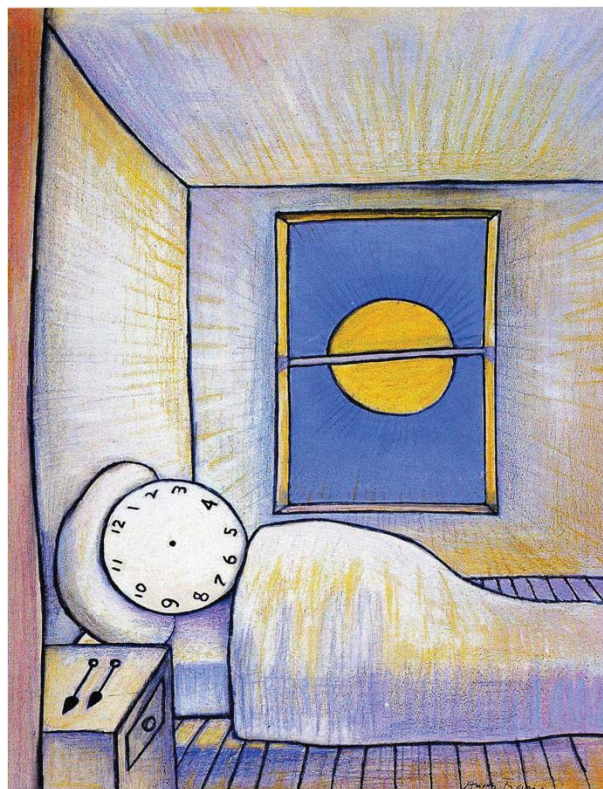


In *Sleep II* (fig. 164), contemporary painter and engraver Thérèse Boucraut expresses sleep in all its ambiguity, portraying a duality of reverie in which day and night occur together. Like death, its twin, which enables a new beginning, sleep is a descent into darkness that refreshes the light of day. In the stillness of this composition, at once balanced and edgy, the bright and the dark appear equally ominous—or equally calm, depending on one's disposition.

Figure 164. _Therese Boucraut (France) *Sleep II*, 2003. Oil on canvas, 130 x 130 cm. Collection of the artist. ©ADAGP, Paris, France

In *Sleeping In* (fig. 165), a New Yorker magazine cover in 1971, Hungarian-born French cartoonist André François (1915-2005) offers a vision of a sleep freed from the constraints of the daily grind, a state of suspension limited neither by the rising sun nor the alarm clock. The stripped-down serenity of the illustration suggests that depriving time of its ruthless turning is the precondition for forgetful sleep—or at least, for a sleep in which trouble is wrapped in peaceful

Figure 165.
André François
(Romania, 1915-France, 2005).
Sleeping In, 1971.
Pastel and ink, 31.5 x 24cm.
The New Yorker (cover), May 1971
©ADAGP, Paris, France



A word on the sleep of animals

The sleep of animals, the object of a fundamental research effort that, since the mid-20th century, has produced rich results internationally, has interested artists across all periods. Dürer, Velazquez, Turner and Dali, to mention a few examples from among many, have often given a subtle and suggestive place to sleeping animals in their work. This stimulating subject, in both its scientific and affective dimensions, merits study in its own right, independent of human sleep, the object of the current work.

By way of conclusion...

In the sands of time all works of art are sifted; some are left by the wayside, others slip into the canon. Ideologies, whether sponsored by commissars, kings or commerce, have always tried to hijack art to their cause. But, as Degas said, with “cunning, trickery and vice”, art outwits all attempts to make it subservient. If art’s watchword is freedom, it nevertheless knows how to thrive under constraints.

And what of sleep? Sleep, too, is a redoubt of freedom, a sanctuary wherein social masks are abandoned and body and spirit are renewed. As in art, demons as well as the divine may populate it. Between art and sleep, then, there is a complicity, a perpetual exchange. Art appropriates sleep’s freedom; the dreams that animate art are the dreams that drift through sleep, making it now disturbing, now delightful. It is when our vigilance is relaxed that new vistas open; it is when our bodies are most still that we move in new realms.
