

Wendy Jacob and Jin Lee
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Georges Bataille wrote that humans are only a moment on the evolutionary path from monkey to tall building. Our uprightness distinguishes us; standing we "cut" a figure, in contrast to the low-lying grass, to the dirt, to the snow, to the animals that slither or crawl or gallop, to the scratchy fields that in Central Illinois go on and on. We recognize ourselves even in the most abstract images as vertical strokes against a horizontal ground.

Jin Lee's *Sleep* series of photographs and Wendy Jacob's *Squeeze Chaise Longue* situate bodies perpendicular to this assumed position of the thinking /speaking/ viewing subject as they toy with feminine and pleasurable implications of the horizontal. Horizontality is crucial to the dynamics of gender and power that link these works, which cross between cultivated landscape and Victorian drawing room, and cross-reference the sensual textures of freshly cut grass with red velvet mohair. Horizontality, in case, is implicated in situations for which words fail, and to which we typically surrender: the simultaneous familiarity and total unknown-ness of the place called sleep, and the inarticulate pleasure of a hug and the functional effects on psyche of its abstract pressure.

To the degree that seeing and being seen gives us an identity, closing our eyes and lying down mean giving up our personhood. But about a third of our lives are spent in a supine (belly up), prone (belly down), or recumbent (reclining) position, and in a state of being that is inaccessible to anyone else, or to ourselves once we wake up. In his intro IFreud claimed that "our relation to the world into which we have come so unwillingly, seems to involve our not being able to tolerate it uninterruptedly." Sleep, as he defined it, "appears to be rehabilitation, and its psychological characteristic suspense of interest in the world." But what if sleep were valued instead as a pleasurable aspect of living, in and for itself, regardless of how and what it prepares us for? As a place we go to, and time we spend, willingly, rather than as lost time? Sleep looks like death, from a point of view outside the sleeper, but from inside sleep, it might be felt as alignment with, rather than absence from, the world.

Jin Lee's *Sleep* photographs invoke the long history of landscape photography (as well as that of other arts) in which the female nude is equated with the land -- sand dunes or rolling hills, or, more blatantly, as inert matter or passive ground. In an earlier series, Lee directly addressed the female figure in Marcel Duchamp's *Etant Donne* by photographing her own hand, limp and palm open, while lying down. The vignettted image maintained a restricted and voyeuristic perspective (like that enforced by the peephole in *Etant Donne*) but the eye belonged to the hand and vice versa. Viewed and viewer were united in a subjective space, or, alternatively, separated - the viewer's hand distanced from herself. In either reading, the plot is different, and thicker, than the simple separation of male and female, viewer and viewed. In the *Sleep* photographs, the distant clothed figure is less an object than a clue to consciousness that gives the entire image the quality of a subjective, interior, space - one which the viewer is both intimately familiar with (as a sleeper), and also inevitably distanced from.

As familiar as these midwestern landscapes might seem, they describe places we, as viewers, are always outside of. You can't join your sleeping lover, no matter how much you want to, wherever it is that she goes. In fact, her sleep is a brutal denial of access, even if it seems unwilled; brutal when you realize that she can and will be transported by something more powerful than the desire to be with you. If you wake her up, the door to the place she has been closes behind her as she leaves. No matter how much you interrogate, her description will always be incomplete, and this goes for our own sleep also. We are either there, inside it, or not there, without reliable access or tangible souvenir. Is this denial of access what motivated Freud to probe into dreams, and into the psyches of women suffering from fainting fits? Was it the fact that he couldn't go to that place that made him want to map it?

Becoming horizontal describes both the position of dreaming and the position of articulating the dream. On the couch, feet up, is supposed to induce free association, to unhook language from logic, and provide access to unconscious desire through a puzzle of words. But this articulation is inevitably clouded by the

imbalanced power dynamics of which traditional psychoanalysis is both product and perpetrator. Wendy Jacob's *Squeeze Chaise Longue* suggests Freud's couch, with its plush red velvet, and Victorian aura. But unlike the psychoanalytic couch, in which the client would lie supine and stare up at the ceiling, the one position this couch allows mimics that of Manet's Olympia. It is the famously complicated position of a queenly prostitute, both object (feet off the ground, pedestaled, available) and subject (one who looks back). The squeeze chaise bends the sitter into one who simultaneously submits and resists, not only the analytic situation, but also the implications of feminine weakness and infirmity built into the structure and history of a chaise longue (where she swoons and where she surrenders). There is another important difference in this chaise, in that there is no doctor. Long tedious and expensive hours of talk have been condensed into a simple mechanical action, no strings attached; both the goal and the problem of transference have been achieved and solved by a hug. The only reason for another person to be there is to work the footpump, in response to the simple words of start and stop.

But this doesn't mean that the psychosexual implications of the chaise have been removed. Jacob's earlier *Squeeze Chairs*, in flowered chintz and dusty rose, located themselves in the comfy context of a living room, but as soon as the feet go up off the floor, an entirely different paradigm emerges. This chaise exudes a sexuality of its own, through its textures, curves, and crevices. The sitter's upper body, unlike Olympia's, is obliterated by the two engorged arms that surround (her) torso. By agreeing to enter those arms, you are willingly entering into a seduction, one from which you may never emerge, as sitter and chair together become fused in an embrace. The form of this chaise speaks engulfment and losing one's self; frightening aspects that are also enticing. Like facing the two gyrating brushes of an automatic carwash, you are pulled forward into them by a hook on the bottom of your chassis. At the same time, and again echoing the contradictions of Manet's Olympia, the sitter's queenly pose puts her (you?) in the position of command, commanding pleasure.

A person sitting in Jacob's Squeeze Chaise Longue is both captured and comforted. This chaise is part of a body of work inspired by Temple Granden, whose squeeze machine was a result of her discovery that all-over physical pressure helped her state of mind, although, as an aspect of her autism, she couldn't bear the sensory overload of direct human contact. The fact that Granden invented her own effective therapy, and that it involved neither symbolic language nor chemical intervention, but a mechanical hug is a slap in the face to the authority of conventional medicine. Jacob's squeeze chaise endows Granden's idea with a wholly different form, mechanism, and context, complicating the story with allusions to both the polite repression of Victorian/Viennese society, and to extreme fantasies of sexual abandonment lying underneath its surface.

If maleness is associated with the vertical line, the position of the thinking/speaking subject, and femaleness with the horizontal, the position against which the subject identifies and separates himself, as figure in contrast to ground, then the horizontal and female figures in Lee's photos and the invited and implied client/sitter in Jacob's squeeze chaise are doubly female. But, rather than reiterating the horizontal as "abject" (low), emptied, and other, these double negatives work to smoothly and guiltlessly celebrate this position of surrender and abandonment. If the pleasures of horizontality are what link these works, feet up might also be the most appropriate position to think about and view them from. What happens when you experience the work not from an upright and distanced position of criticality and authority but from one in which you give in to the pull of gravity and enter the picture?