

## A Dream of Camille Serisier

by Zacha Rosen



There's dreams, and there's talk. And it's hard to pull the one into the other. Things jostle in our hearts for attention, but turn to dry puffs of dust as we try to speak to them out loud. Our bubbling dreams don't look the same in the light as they did when they were deep inside. But even so, we keep trying to talk about them. One day, they might get out. One day, they might come out right. Camille Serisier pulls things out into the ordinary world from the realer world within. And sometimes they go the other way, as well.

The creatures in *Animal Offerings* at first seem to have no dream to them at all. They look like a series of nature studies. The animals are innocent and playful, drawn with a soft line and looking back at you without guile. But these are not vegetarian drawings. You notice that the animals are drawn along with other objects — a stag with a wall-mount for its neck, an elephant with a drum kit, a horse with tinned dog food. The juxtaposition casts the vitality of the animals into a human world. Some adapt well. An Ox lies with incense, a stereo, a plate of offerings and a pair of towels, as though its visiting backpacker has only stepped out for a minute. But the horses will soon be in their accompanying pet food packets. Ostensibly life-like, these animals live in an unreal space and look to a processed future.

In Hands of God everyday things grow saintly auras, as though they've been steamed off a wall in Vatican City, or ripped from a tessellated saint in a Byzantine mosaic. Eight god rays shoot out from a white, sacred space. In its centre are a pair of devout hands holding up familiar objects. Fish fingers, a foil bladder of wine. Though the products are presented with irony, they are still all loved things. My DVD, my matches, my brand of condom. The pieces make you smile all by themselves. And when you read their names, you snicker again at labels which give saintly meanings to Russian Vodka and chocolate eggs. Ordinary things occupy places in the heart once reserved for the religious.



By contrast, the individual images in *Breath of Life* have no names. There are no words for their currents and longings. Serisier has taken the subjects' dreams from inside and drawn them out across the wall. The *Breath of Life* presents five people in expressive profile, each one breathing their life out as things: ships, cats

hamburgers, chocolates, tomatoes, guitars, hamburgers, pandas, mushrooms. The lives on the wall branch out like vines, or rising steam — or the forking paths of actual lives. There is something directional to the art — like a western comic, it reads from left to right.



In the first an eagle grows from the neck of a breath; also a frog, a boat, a tree. Although the photo is of a woman in front of an image, the image looks real while the woman — in perfect profile — looks two-dimensional. Her heart is blown across the wall, coming out as a flower a gum tree, a palm, a rifle, a frog an eagle and a sailing ship. Her face itself is subdued, almost underwhelmed. But what emerges is dreamlike and expansive. Crossing oceans, finding islands, remembering a day hunting with her father. Her face can't swell enough to express the longings inside her. But outside they take to their own lives, and are easily seen.

The second figure is rough, unkempt and handsome. Blokey things blow out from between his casual lips - a magnum icecream, a yellow beer can, a flash car and Voltaren. But this is only one tier of things, lower down he also breathes out fresh carrots and a tin of mushrooms. Is he a gourmand? Does he dream of being a Michael Caine super-spy, with rough violence and a gentle manner, but wowing his boss with his tinned champanions in dour London? On his face, his mind is elsewhere, but his dreams emerge all the



same.

The third figure dreams of China.



The fourth figure has a black wispy beard and a stripy shirt. His shoulders bow a little, as if he expects you won't understand him. But he produces a baby lion on a branch, a short vine of ripe tomatoes, a kid's scrapbook, a milky bar. Some bread spills out. Buried in the middle is a little football, as if — as almost the second's opposite — he's hidden his love for sport in a sea of cuisine. A guitar sits as well, and a gravestone with red roses.

The fifth is different. She seems to wear on her face what she has in her heart. Slightly self-conscious, mostly happy, her dreams spill out on the wall. A Tonka truck flies in the air — we suspected her boyishness from her face — but in her dreams the boyishness isn't only obvious, it's first in line. Her cat is playing with a child's drawing of a cute-as-anything dinosaur with fiery rainbow breath. She smiles out her dreams with a toothy overbite, like she's singing. Her dark hair covers one eye.

One the wall around them, blue breath envelops the images — reminding you that a dream can appear anywhere. On any wall, even here. A small one sprouts in the corner — the embryo of a dream.

Across the exhibition, these three stories draw things across the boundaries of the natural and the artificial. And if you don't know the dreamer, you're never sure if they've come out right or crooked. But you know they feel right to you.

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