

Baku and Maruka

mixed media on panel

26 x 18 cm 2022

Maruka loves to dream. But she's afraid to go to sleep. Sleep is a particularly vulnerable state of being for Maruka because she believes, as young as she is, that her spirit and physical body seem to separate while she dreams. She read that somewhere. And now it's real. Maruka has thought about this eerie feeling a lot and has come up with the profession of pillow shifter.

You see, to Maruka, the pillow is not what a pillow is to you. It is a threshold, a sort of magical device, that allows her to travel to another world. Because of this, pillows must at all times be treated with respect. Up until today, it would have been so disturbing to her to wake up and discover that her pillow had been shifted. If her pillow would have been moved while she was asleep, it was possible that her spirit would not be able to return to tiny body. This threat turns a seemingly harmless prank of the Pillow Stealer into a super scary one because of the vulnerable unconscious state of dreaming.

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So now Makura wants to be a pillow shifter when she grows up. She doesn't have to go to sleep in order for her to dream. She just needs a pillow. And in case she does fall asleep, she has Baku. Baku is a dream-eater, is a benevolent, cuddly but ravenous creature with a specific appetite for and the power to eat nightmares.

BAKU AND MARUKA work smart when they can, and only hard when they have to. And most of all, they work together. Maruka has a deep desire and an equally deep fear. As a professional dreamer, she knows that thinking, fearing, desiring or feeling something makes it as real as it gets. So, she maps it all out. Her dreams, her desires, her fears, her doubts and her thoughts. And together with Baku, she works around the problems. Not by sidestepping, but transforming them into ideas, opportunities and solutions.

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Chris Berens

Chris Berens studied illustration at the Academy of Art & Design in 's-Hertogenbosch, graduating in 1999. He has developed a complex and time-consuming painting technique, mostly shown as mixed media on panel.

"I'm most comfortable using fine brushes and drawing inks and graphites, but I also regularly use water color paints, markers and acrylics", Berens says. "For some time now I've added digital image making to my line of techniques, meaning 3D sculpting, digital painting and image processing. I combine and mix them with my more traditional media."

After his first major solo show at Jaski Gallery in 2005, Chris Berens' fame spread quickly. The young artist has already exhibited all over the world, from Amsterdam to New York, from Tokyo to Los Angeles, Seattle and Singapore. He also designed the cover for Panic of Girls, an album which was released in 2011 by Blondie. Deborah Harry and Chris Stein, founders of the band, are admirers of his work.

Back home Chris has been the subject of a television documentary. Chris Berens, Master of his Magical Universe was made for Dutch broadcaster Avro's Close Up series in 2013 and has since been broadcast several times at home and abroad.

Chris Berens also featured prominently in the television documentary Krabbé searches for Van Gogh, in which actor/painter Jeroen Krabbé traced the path of Vincent van Gogh in co-operation with Dutch artists.

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