

Aesthetics of the Nightmare

What we perceive in nightmares usually triggers panic and attempts to escape – and yet it seems impossible to escape the horrifying ‘evil’ forces. In nightmares, the individual existence is endangered, and sometimes the entire world. In its most intense form, the nightmare is the experience of an apocalypse. Danger often emanates from monsters, demons or other types of ‘aliens’, or from figments of the imagination that may have their roots in religion, mythology or superstition. On the other hand, the threatening scenarios are often characterised by a pronounced ‘realism’: major elements that appear in them are borrowed from the dreamer’s real life.

During the 20th and into the 21st century, artistic responses to both personal traumas and major civilisational catastrophes and atrocities such as endemic abuse, wars of extermination, genocides, torture and prison camps, have often been informed by aesthetic principles derived from the experience of nightmares. This nocturnal horror emerges as the epitome of suffering and torment

C. W. Rauh, *Maßloses Insekt*



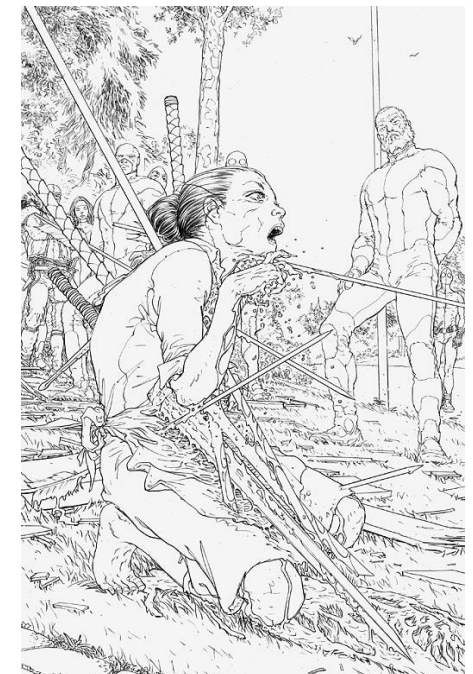
and as the most appropriate metaphor to express an all-encompassing social and historical barbarism.

This exhibition presents works by two artists: one from Germany formed by the experience of WW II, and one from Scotland representing a generation advancing into the new millennium, brought up on science fiction dystopias, the occult and esoterica. Beyond such obvious differences, both artists endeavour to represent scenarios inspired by nightmares; their dialogue is a joint exploration of unconscious fears that never stop haunting us.



F. Quitely, *Professor X trapped inside his evil twin's mind*

Frank Quitely was born in Glasgow in 1968 as Vincent Deighan, but realising that, quite frankly, his work might offend his family, he hid behind the spoonerized penname. His output is vast and varied, and he has worked with many icons of the graphic novel including Neil Gaiman, Grant Morrison, Mark Millar, Alan Grant and Bruce Jones. In 2017 he was awarded an honorary Ph.D. from the University of Glasgow and was elected as Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh in 2021. The dream-like world he creates for *The Sandman* can flip to the surrealist nightmares of the *X-Men* wherein Prof X is trapped within the mind of his evil twin, childhood memories of seaborne disorientation from *Flex Mentello*, the terrors of *The Walking Dead*, the Joker's indelible derision, or indeed the literal surrealism of Salvador Dali. Frank Quitely's iconic clear-line creations haunt us with their evocations of the not-so clear distortions of the mind.



F. Quitely, *Lady Liberty*

