

REM: A PUBLICATION FOR RESIDENTS AND FELLOWS

Media Review: *Sleep in Art: How Artists Portrayed Sleep and Dreams in the Last 7000 Years*

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Dr. Meir Kryger's *Sleep in Art: How Artists Portrayed Sleep and Dreams in the Last 7000 Years*, published in 2019, is a book likely to captivate the interests of those in sleep medicine. This book features hundreds of paintings, sculptures, and drawings by various artists. Artwork by Raphael, Henri Rousseau, Pablo Picasso, Vincent van Gogh, and Norman Rockwell are among the many found in this book. The intersection between the worlds of science, religion, and art are all explored as each artist expertly depicts the human enthrallment with sleep throughout time.

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INTRODUCTION

Centuries of fascination with the beauty, science, and unknowns of sleep are displayed in the book *Sleep in Art: How Artists Portrayed Sleep and Dreams in the Last 7000 Years* by Dr. Meir Kryger. The author is a physician and researcher with accomplishments including professor of medicine at Yale School of Medicine, chief editor of the well-known textbook *The Principles and Practice of Sleep Medicine*, and former president of the American Academy of Sleep Medicine. Dr. Kryger published this book for use in his Yale University course "Mystery of Sleep"; however, it can be enjoyed by sleep specialists, art lovers, or curious members of society.

This book, available by hard copy or e-book, is separated into 13 chapters, portraying sleep-related topics including dreams, rest, myths, innocence, lust, danger, and death. By sharing his interpretations of each art piece, Dr. Kryger informs the reader on how artists, scientists, philosophers, and society throughout time have portrayed sleep and how our knowledge about sleep has greatly changed. The chapter on dreams gives us insight as to how various civilizations over centuries have questioned the purpose of dreams and often perceived them to be an extension of mystic or meaningful communications. We learn that Macrobius around 400 AD described 5 types of dreams—*Somnium* (enigmatic), *Visio* (prophetic), *Insomnium* (nightmare), *Oraculum* (oracular), and *Visum* (apparition)—and how artists often depicted these themes in their work. Artists show how our daytime emotions and experiences can become the distorted content of our dreams. The author describes how Sigmund Freud believed the interpretation of dreams had therapeutic value in treating psychiatric conditions and connects artwork to the present-day diagnosis and treatment of posttraumatic stress disorder and depression. Dr. Kryger explains that despite depictions of dreams for centuries, rapid eye movement sleep was only discovered in 1953 and that dreams may

be caused by random neuron firing and could have no meaning at all. He also discusses how artwork demonstrates other features of rapid eye movement sleep, such as rapid eye movement atonia.

Parasomnias, sleep apnea, insomnia, and other sleep disorders are also discussed and shown in artwork. Dr. Kryger explains the circadian rhythm and changes in sleep patterns throughout aging. He describes sleep paralysis and hypnagogic hallucinations and discusses how these are shown in artwork, such as the perception of a demon sitting on one's chest during these experiences. The rejuvenation, innocence, sensuality, and power of sleep are also demonstrated. Additionally, the vulnerability of sleep is displayed in artwork in the chapter about danger, discussing that the limited ability to respond to stimuli during sleep may put one at risk.

Whether the reader chooses to gaze at the artwork for entertainment or to become enlightened by the historical perspectives and interspersed facts of sleep, this book is likely appealing to many, allowing the reader to depart from typical textbooks to learn about sleep. It transports the reader through the various sleep-related themes with ease of comprehension by use of artwork in a straightforward manner, immersing us in the world of sleep and art.

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DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

The authors have seen and approved this manuscript. The authors report no conflicts of interest.