

Images sur ordonnance/Prescription Images

Sara Lowthian

<http://www.tk-21.com/images-sur-ordonnance>

Young American photographer, Sara Lowthian has worked rigorously on a familiar topic, as her parents owned a pharmacy, which although a part of our daily lives, is no less a subject almost taboo: drugs. She could have shown us how to take them. She preferred to show us how they are stocked, stored, displayed, labeled, ephemeral as they are when they "expect" to be consumed.

1. There is a certain look to these boxes with mysterious labels, to these bottles of indistinguishable contents, a kind of determination of an entomologist, but at the same time each of these images is a reminder that such rational order of classification is accompanied by unsettling and troubling phenomena. Here where perfect order should reign, exists the risk of drug transforming into poison, due to misclassification for example, a kind of uncontrollable disorder reigns.

It is barely visible, barely perceptible, and yet it is what Sara Lowthian captures with rare efficiency: the coexistence of danger with that which is supposed to save us. But from what? This is what we ask ourselves instantly, and instantly we must recognize that we ignore that from which we want to be saved. From everything, perhaps, but not the idea that we could not be saved.

In the images of Sara Lowthian, such as those of Lynne Cohen, everything speaks of man, his activities, his fears, his anxieties, his phobias, his desires, everything speaks of his presence, everything is full of man and yet he is never physically present. Any man, anywhere, one may say, while noting that the places she shows us are places where expectation endures. The first form of expectation is that we infer by seeing these items stored or placed on a table or sink. Someone was just there or will come soon. This expectation is related to the situation. But it is reinforced by that which is inherent in the image.

A photograph is the result of a capture device that involves expectation of, as brief as it may be, the man or woman who pulled the trigger. But the photograph is also a developer of the expectation itself as in the reward of a glance, it is waiting for a new look to be revealed, to make it active and alive.

In these images by Sara Lowthian operates a junction between these two expectations. These drugs stored, ready for use, waiting for hand to grasp and mouth to swallow them, when they have become image, repeat and amplify this expectation and give it a particular consistency. It further elevates the image outside of its borders and gives a visibility not only to the things it shows, in the absence housed at the heart of the situation it depicts, but also the same expectations of the image's foundational structure.

2. There is of course a sociological dimension in the images of Sara Lowthian. They tell us about our habits, our hopes, our desire to live better, not to be sick, to live longer. All while evoking that which also speaks of our "addiction" to drugs, by whatever name or function. But what it also tells us this is our dependence toward a dream, which is also a dependence on the pharmaceutical industry and the lifestyle that necessitates it.

The strength held within these images gives such hope that is of palpable consistency. They are strictly oriented towards an end, or more precisely, they give us a perception of the tendencies of our actions, these actions we do by habit and to which we pay no attention.

Thus, each image is both a structure of expectation and form of expectation. Absent from the picture, we know that it is we who are expected, it is we who will enter into view, it is we who are going to pick one or the other of these drugs, as it is we who are going to connect to one or the other of these tubes, swallow one or the other of these pills. It is we who are expected in the mirror image of a candy-pink bathroom, with mirror and sink on the edge of which awaits an orange labeled bottle. It is we who are going to enter, and even before the bottle, we will validate again our essence, we say that we are not just a dream, and we "really" exist. This existence however will be only our reflection in the mirror between two neon policemen.

3. Objects, things, mountains, trees and sky, those that populate the stars and those more metaphorical than we believe it is our destiny after death, all that look upon us maybe, who knows, each of these things we are talking about. The photographs of Sara Lowthian have this ability to lift a corner of the mystery of this discourse that we hold. Or at least that they speak to us. Of course, we know that these boxes are filled with drugs, and like any merchandise, they call out to us, buy me, buy me!

They also tell us a little of what we are, we who invented the shelves for storage, beings who are so afraid of disorder that they prefer the imperfection of the order to the magic of the disorder. They also tell us that we are afraid of death, or at least to age in any case, even if we forget how what age we are.

The images of Sara Lowthian speak to us about the things we must do, take the box, open it, seize pills, and take the risk of being wrong, either by swallowing too much or not enough. Silent, like all images, they are still ringing in our ears the words that these things call out to us.

And then there is chance, or luck if you will. To be faced with a rare trace, here finally visible, the real message that these boxes call out to us.

One of the images of Sarah Lowthian carries with it the many layers that make up these messages. It is a box made of smaller boxes or rather compartments for receiving medications for every moment of the day. Forget these requirements and simply read what is written: morn, noon, eve, bed. It is a kind of poem we read, a poem that falls within the genre of concrete poetry. But it is also a story, repeated throughout the world for millennia, which unites morning to night, the bed of desire and love of the first woman, Eve.

And with this picture she tells us something more. She speaks of the promise, that man imagines to have been addressed and it still calls to him, to him as an individual, to him as a species, to him as king of the universe. This is confirmation of the promise he seeks both in taking medication to intoxication, dreaming of she who will see him in his bed.

Looking forward, as he has for millennia, man looks at images, because they alone have the power to show him the same gesture in a single moment, the form of the dream and the words it carries.