

Series Number Four:
Sleep-Madison & Naomi-1987

Eleven Photographs
Michael Nye

Series Number Four - Sleep 1987: Madison and Naomi



Sleep # 1

The Sleep Series is an extension of the Cattle Auction photographs, but instead of fear and stress there is comfort and security. Both could be described as instinctive shared movements and moments. The Cattle Series could be described as a march while the Sleep Series is more of a waltz.

Our close friend artist, Nancy Lowrey drew images of birds in flight over time. In the drawings, you could see the swirls and loops and connected shadows of the birds traveling with their latent maps. There is no accidental destination. Their shared journey made sense and had an aesthetic appeal.

All parents watch their child sleep. They listen to baby sounds – feel the rapid heart beating -- watch the soft rise of lungs – their careful fingers twitching. Just before sleep there might be holding and rocking and crying. Responsibility is the air that parents breathe most.

The sleep series came out of this careful and protective watching. Naomi was getting up at 4 am to write – so at noon Naomi and baby Madison would take a nap. A baby sleeps for 16 hours a day during the first year.

We put a mattress on the back porch – soft light bled and filtered through our backyard pecan trees then into our porch. In the beginning the sound of the 5x7 view camera shutter would cause my wife or son to move or awake. I put on music – Gregorian Chants together with a metronome – clicking at two-second intervals. It worked -- the shutter clicking sound went unnoticed.



Sleep # 2

X. J. Kennedy wrote a poem titled: *“The Purpose of Time is to Prevent Everything from Happening at Once.”* We need places in between other places. We need rest and sleep and reverie, places lost in thought, dreamy states of being. Sometimes there can be strength in darkness. Dreams have airy roots - remembering and forgetting go unnoticed.



Sleep # 3

In sleep, Naomi lifted her arm – Madison would lift his arm. Naomi turned to her side – Madison followed. A shadow follows a person in sunlight but also in sleep. I was surprised how they moved together in unconscious moments. A baby understands his mother is nearby -- a mother is cognizant of the presence of her child.

Watching someone sleep is an awareness of being awake. What I did not think about while working on this series is how far away I would be from those moments now.

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Sleep # 4



Sleep # 5



Sleep # 6



Sleep # 7



Sleep # 8



Sleep # 9



Sleep # 10



Sleep # 11