

The exhibition of Nicolas Ceccaldi presents a series of new artworks focusing on a central element: a soundtrack the artist made through the process of learning the FL Studio software from scratch and by re-arranging MIDI files downloaded off the internet.

The musical project of Nicolas Ceccaldi was originally focused on a sub-genre of ambient music labelled “Dungeon Synth”, reworking MIDI compositions of diverse sources, essentially drawing from the soundtracks of early PC game franchises such as *Ultima Underworld* or Sierra Entertainment’s. These early remixes, absent from the present show, are to be released anonymously at a later stage. During his research and while perfecting his technical skills, Ceccaldi has expanded his sources of inspiration to include classical music: Franz Liszt amongst others, or Henry Purcell, as a tribute to Wendy Carlos, author of the original soundtrack of the film *A Clockwork Orange*.

Stretching from July to October 2017, this brief musical carrier marks an important turning point in the work of Nicolas Ceccaldi: a transition from Gothic to Baroque, the latter characterized by effects of exaggeration, decorative overabundance, and dramatic tension. At the centre of the room, a sculptural installation invites the visitor to sit and listen on headphones to a selection made from Ceccaldi’s recent music output, amongst them the eponymous *Ode to Joy* by Ludwig van Beethoven. This display is both a sensorial and figurative representation of the condition of isolation under which the musical atmospheres were made.

Also prominently featured in the show, pieces adorning with inverted Latin crosses: also known as Saint Peter’s cross (the apostle is said to have been crucified upside down), the inverted cross is now overwhelmingly identified with an Anti-Christian sentiment, notably through its widespread use in rock culture. In this latter use, the effigy’s inherent content fixates on the very belief it purports to repudiate, making this symbol one of nothing but pure negativity. The works presented in this exhibition proceeds from this latter mis-use of Saint Peter’s cross: a heretic gesture in the literal sense as well as the stereotypical expression of what modern painting has produced in terms of inversions, overthrows of values, transplantations, détournements, and repetitions.

Through his appropriation of authentic religious artefacts and the typically gothic and baroque stylistic treatment, Nicolas Ceccaldi evokes satanism in its ecclesiastical version which originates in the foundation of the Church of Satan by Anton LaVey in 1966. This church could be assimilated to an occult excrescence of the neoliberal counter-revolution: in response to a world in crisis, LaVey’s doctrine situates the human being – reconciled with his deeply animal essence – at the centre of an amoral universe. It preaches to its followers personal development and exacerbated individualism as a means of collective salvation. Within the context of the present exhibition, the satanic motif

exceeds the framework of occultism to become a kitsch allegory of artistic practice as professional activity.

These variations and dissonances characterise Ceccaldi's universe, a world drawn from the metamorphosis in which the spirit of the Baroque lives along its paradoxical non-actuality, in an infinite process of rumination through tastes, the generic and the unique, various modes of input, reception, and beliefs.

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