

Nico Vascellari

Bugada & Cargnel, Paris

Speaking to Nico Vascellari on the day of his opening, he enumerated an impressive list of great minds and internationally renowned artists from Veneto, the region of northern Italy where he comes from. As if there was something about that place that pushed people into escaping physically, mentally, or both. Vascellari, however, still lives and works in Vittorio Veneto, a remote provincial city of the region, which is (according to him) boring and alienating enough to get him inspired and yet somehow fascinating, as it is at the very core of his art.

The spaces, the energies, the sounds of the harsh natural environment of the city's surroundings are the main material of the sculptural installations he has combined with sound performances for his Parisian solo show at Bugada Cargnel. Entering the gallery felt like penetrating a parallel dimension where one would be in nearly shamanic communion with nature. As a starting point, the artist explored two mysterious places surrounded by legends of evil: the "Bus de la Lum" or hole of light, and "Darvaza," the gate of hell; both underground cavities uncannily produce diffuse lights.

The result is overlapped videos of the two places filmed upside down, projected onto delicate, shimmering glass sculptures and reflected all over the gallery space, creating a poetic ballet of light and shadow in a disturbing twilight. The mystical tension builds to a climax through an endless chorus of voices Vascellari composed with Turkish musician Ghedalia Tazartes. The music brings a jerky rhythm typical of punk or black metal, a rhythm also present in the artist's practice as well as — in this particular show in the form of a series of abstract repetitive collages that convey the same urgent tempo.

Vascellari proved once again to be unclassifiable. He keeps epitomizing the half-shaman, half-showman artist figure described by Alighiero Boetti: constantly on the edge, ready to shift from one mode to the other, taking the viewer with him. Through his hands, noise is turned into sound, darkness into light, matter into shadow, rigor into chaos, instinct into thought. His vertiginous duality and the plurality of means he uses to express it create a perfect synthesis of an unfathomably heavy dark energy and a very particular poetic delicacy all his own. Punk is not dead, apparently.

by MYRIAM BEN SALAH



Nico Vascellari, *Untitled (Lum-in)*, 2012. 9 collages: scotch, printing press ink, pastel, paper, wood frame, 29 x 22 x 3 cm.
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