

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Nicolas Ceccaldi

The Stroke of Midnight

January 31 – March 2, 2019
8th Floor

The Stroke of Midnight is an exhibition where classical, baroque and gothic inspired elements converge around a sound installation in the center of the gallery. On a keyboard, color-coded keys indicating a sequence of chords invite the viewer to perform the exhibition's musical atmosphere. These basic demarcations are designed to allow some flexibility in the real-time elaboration of a potential soundtrack.

Two framed pieces hanging on either side of the central installation are both titled *Lugburz-Gûl*, which signifies wraith, or the spirit of the dark tower in J.R.R. Tolkien's orcish tongue. Through hollowed-out faces, their fixed gaze stares into the room, evoking the all-seeing eye of deep surveillance. To the left is another face, covered in black paint – a reference to the exhibition title's nighttime theme – and a taxidermied bat nested within. An oil painting at the end of this sequence depicts a frail ghoulish arm reaching into the eyes of the painting's subject, an allegorical representation of its title: *Nocturnal Daementia*. On the western wall of the gallery, the piece titled *Attentat Terroriste* depicts the anachronistic scene of a 2018 Kia driving into the sidewalk of a XIXth century European street. The pedestrians are either unaware of the impending danger or stoically accepting of their fate. Behind a curtain that frames the sound installation a large upside-down crucifix hangs from the wall. This symbol is commonly associated with anti-Christian sentiment but also the effigy of Saint Peter, who was crucified upside down at his own request, since he saw himself unworthy to be crucified in the same way as Jesus. Peter was the first Apostle. He took part in many miracles and major events in the life of Jesus such as his walk on water. The Gospel describes him as enthusiastic but at times hesitant and brittle.

On the opposite wall, an inverted cross appears two additional times: in a painting titled *Atavism (bird with teeth)* and a painting titled *Grey landscape*, both of which were made from manufactured paintings chosen in decoration and furniture stores. These three variations on Saint Peter's cross mirror an episode from the Passion where, facing accusations from the local community, the Apostle on three occasions publicly denies ever associating with Christ, during the night of the latter's arrest.

The term "denial," rather than "betrayal," implies not only that Peter's statements that night were not the cause of Christ's arrest, but also that he was not in control of the situation: passive denial as opposed to active betrayal. This interpretation illustrates the apostle's humanity, as he almost doesn't notice the gravitational pull driving him away from his faith and towards people. In the words of theologian René Girard, Peter is "possessed by the crowd"; he instinctively responds to the universal incentive to belong and, in more general terms, he offers no resistance to the ineluctable, to the pressures of contingency.

The mechanisms and dispositions that led Peter to commit apostasy serve as the inspiration for this exhibition: throughout the night, Peter's subordination to Christ is spontaneously replaced by his subordination to more base incentives. When social demands and personal trajectory coincide, the Apostle is reminded of the tragedy of his own human condition where only the worst ever happens. It's only upon hearing the rooster's song that he realizes what he has done, remembering Jesus's earlier prophetic warning.

Nicolas Ceccaldi (b. 1983, Montreal, Canada) graduated from the Staatlichen Hochschule für Bildende Künste (Städelschule) in Frankfurt am Main, Germany and lives and works in New York. Recent exhibitions include *Hymne à la Joie*, Le Consortium, Dijon (2017); *Les Chemins de la Honte*, House of Gaga, Mexico City (2016); *Drujdrye* (with Mathieu Malouf), Goton & Edouard Montassut, Paris (2016); MEGA Foundation (with Anna Uddenberg), Stockholm (2015); *Permanently Tiedup Version of You*, Project Native Informant, London (2015); *Red Wine*, Kunstverein Munich (2014); *<life> masqueradeofperfection [dot] tumblr [dot] com </life>*, New Jersey, Basel (2013); *Wearables*, Real Fine Arts, New York (2012).

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