

Modern Art

Julien Ceccaldi

Gourmandises

Modern Art Helmet Row
24 February – 19 March 2022
Private View: Thursday 24 February, 5-7pm



Wrinkly Little Bird, 2022

Modern Art is pleased to announce an exhibition of new paintings by Julien Ceccaldi at its Helmet Row gallery. This is Ceccaldi's first solo exhibition with Modern Art.

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Working in painting, sculpture, and comic books, Julien Ceccaldi explores a set of archetypal characters that morph and develop in different iterations of themselves. Influenced by the Shōjo manga genre - which focuses on romantic relationships and heightened emotions, Ceccaldi portrays characters as yearning or aspiring in some form or another: for love, sex or success. Attention or affirmation is sought through different means, and Ceccaldi's world tends to be split into two polarised types of being: hulking, muscular, glowing bodies – aloof targets of sexual and romantic desire – and the unnoticed, exhausted other in this unrequited dyad. Through compositions framing the gaunt, almost repulsive, figure as a lead protagonist, the artist hints at the grace and nobility lying underneath their off-putting traits.

This tension between desirability and unsightliness is omnipresent in Ceccaldi's work, at times in a libidinal, almost adolescent-like perspective. The embarrassment and disarray of hormonal excess often lurks somewhere in Ceccaldi's paintings, some embodying it explicitly, such as Zit Popping (2018), in which a character's pimple shoots out a beam of ooze. Ceccaldi personifies the splendour and agony of longing– sometimes in separate figures, and at other times in single characters whose ambivalence and contradictions are laid bare in an amalgam of cuteness and morbidity.

In recent exhibitions, Julien Ceccaldi presented sculptures that embody his eternally waiting protagonists: seemingly decomposing skeletal mannequins - sometimes in hand-painted garments or the artist's own clothes, adorned with big expressive glimmering eyes. For example, Marie-Claude (2021) is a teal-haired skeleton wearing a white frilly victorian dress – once pure as a bride on her wedding day; now covered in dirt. Her broad emaciated smile reveals an enduring optimism despite the hurdles she's faced. In another iteration of the same character, Marie-Claude II (2021), she is dressed like a fast-fashion influencer, carrying a small shopping bag containing trendy makeup products. She adjusts her sunglasses for an imaginary paparazzo, while her exposed glittery brain levitates above her blond fringe. Ceccaldi's craft of creating layered, equivocal characters has been honed over decades. He has been drawing comic figures since he was a child, and the several self-published comic books he has printed since 2010 further define their personalities and inner worlds.

Julien Ceccaldi was born in 1987 in Montreal, where he received his BFA from Concordia University, in 2009. He currently lives in New York. His work has been exhibited in institutions such as Kölnischer Kunstverein, Cologne, Germany; Oakville Galleries, Ontario, Canada; Swiss Institute, New York, NY; or the 9th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, Berlin, Germany. Ceccaldi's comics and drawings have frequently been featured in online and print publications, including Artforum, Frieze and Mould Map.

For more information please contact Alex Glover (alexander@modernart.net)