



Julien Ceccaldi, *The Stylist in the Mirror*, 2021, acrylic on canvas, 72 x 48".

NEW YORK

## Julien Ceccaldi

JENNY'S

9 Pell Street 2B

September 10–October 23, 2021

LOMEX

86 Walker 3rd Floor

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At Jenny's, cohost of Julien Ceccaldi's current exhibition "Centuries Old"—the other half of which unfolds at Lomex—a mannequin constructed from a bodysuit, a wig, lashes, and the artist's clothes slouches over her vanity, pointing to a starred and circled passage of Joris-Karl Huysman's 1891 novel, *Là-Bas* (The Damned): "*l'art d'évoquer les démons*." The "art of evoking demons," winkingly quoted by Ceccaldi, is exercised through the necromantic mode of figuration that defines his paintings,

light boxes, and sculptural tableaux.

This conceit is sometimes delivered quite literally, as we see in the painting *The Demon in the Laptop* (all works 2021). Here, a satanic fairy shrouded in mist flies out of a pink computer screen, having been unleashed by a blue-haired androgyne whose activity at the keyboard, if they are anything like the rest of us, likely amounts to a spectacularized diary. Similarly, in the painting *The Stylist in the Mirror* a young blonde nonchalantly selects an outfit, unperturbed by her monstrous reflection, whose skeletal body suggests the limits of sartorialism as a vivifying form of becoming, à la Dorian Gray. These paintings, which capture ostensibly intimate moments of self-expression for the public's delectation, engage a distinctly Huysmansian interest in decadence. Rather than uplift, deny, or subvert, the often cadaveric characters that populate Ceccaldi's exhibition passively idle in the unredeemable spiritual muck of solipsistic broadcasts.

The five figurative sculptures on view at Lomex, which reflect the aesthetics of Dimes Square dilettantes, are especially effective in this regard. Cottagecore, kitten heels, a mini purse, baggy jeans, and Lolita-LARPing Mary Janes are all on view. These styles, programmed to transmit a sense of bohemian singularity, are presented by Ceccaldi as ready-made archetypes, soulless as the mannequins on which they hang. Here we find a petrification of affect that instinctually seems related to the increasingly close relationship between corporate branding schemes and "countercultural cool." In lieu of critiquing this process through strategic reversals, however, Ceccaldi hyperbolizes its effects, offering a panoply of actors too drained, demented, or stupid for recuperation.