



Lithograph on handmade paper, 42 x 240 cm.

”HCON REMMI TBEL SIVLE”

(2021) by Valentin Magaro

The title refers to a common conspiracy theory and can be decoded by reading it backwards. (ELVIS LEBT IMMER NOCH = ELVIS IS STILL ALIVE) The writing backwards is a reference to so-called Backward Masking. In the 80s, Christian fanatics saw such backward recorded voice messages on recordings as a deliberately used means of manipulation by the devil and thus conjured up a conspiracy theory.

As an artist, I am concerned with narrative structures in drawing and painting. In September 2020, while browsing the internet, I came across demonstrations in Germany against the governmental corona measures. In this context I noticed the phenomenon of the QAnon movement for the first time. As an artist I am interested in all kinds of fictional stories. Nevertheless, I was astonished about the crude ideas of this movement. After further research, I moved on to conspiracy theories in general. It quickly became clear to me that this topic fascinates me in an ambivalent way, and so I decided to turn it into an artistic work.

To inform myself more thoroughly about conspiracy theories, I read three books on the subject. Besides the book ”Nothing is as it seems” by Michael Butter, there was also ”Angela Merkel is Hitler’s daughter” by Christian Alt/Christian Schiffer and ”Conspiracy” by Roger Schawinsky. (Book titles have been translated to English. Whether the actual books, if translations exist, have the same title, is not given.)

All these ideas about conspiracy theories reminded me of my own youth. Back then, in the middle of the 80s, all kinds of conspiracy theories were circulating as well. And this was before the dissemination possibilities of the internet. I still remember quite clearly, a full-evening slide lecture, around the year 1985, with Christian touch. In this very carefully and elaborately made lecture, we were told that the devil in this day and age (so in the 70s and 80s) wants to capture souls through music. And so ”satanic” schemes such as backward messages in commercial rock music were revealed to the audience. Everything sounded extremely plausible,

the connections made sense. But in the end, it was the same mechanisms we know from today’s conspiracy theories.

The result, based on original drawings, is a lithograph (42 x 240 cm) with the title ”HCON REMMI TBEL SIVLE”. In it, I have sought a visual implementation for various conspiracy theories and intertwined them in a vine-like ribbon. The whole thing is reminiscent of a kind of picture book for adults. In my opinion, it reflects the mechanism of how people fall into an apocalyptic maelstrom based on such theories and thus links all found and invented stories together. Besides the classics chemtrails, flat earth, moon landing, sleeping sheep or reptiloids, there are many small details and visual stimuli, which give new connections and patterns. But the critical viewer of images will soon recognize these as misleading. And so, my work reveals itself as a kind of absurd world theater in which there are hidden messages to discover as in a search picture. The whole panorama picture can be folded to a Leporello with 8 pages.