

LORIS GRÉAUD MAKES A TRADE AT A CROSSROAD

By Katy Donoghue

The work of the conceptual artist Loris Gréaud ignites the imagination, challenging the possibilities of art. We'll give you an example—he's currently planning an underground sculpture park in Mexico, where his pieces will be completely buried underneath a garden, unviewable deep beneath. Visitors are invited to dream up what these works could look like, ponder their new role of giving life to the plants above, and consider the possibility of their coming to life à la the walking dead.

Gréaud's practice exists at the intersection of fiction and reality, part brain-teaser and part long-term experiment with a wink and a nod. This fall in Paris, his complete editorial works will be on view at Centre Pompidou / Bibliothèque Kandinsky in the exhibition "The Original, The Translation." He'll also debut a new body of work with Galerie Max Hetzler at FIAC. And *Whitewall* spoke with Gréaud about what's in store for 2020.

WHITEWALLER: Can you tell us the story behind the series of paintings "CROSSROAD" that will be on view at the Galerie Max Hetzler booth at FIAC?

LORIS GRÉAUD: For a long time this collective image of "doing art with the soul" has been on my mind. A potential answer came up five years ago when researching on Robert Johnson and Tommy Johnson's stories saying that they sold their soul to the devil at a Mississippi crossroad in exchange for playing blues music. So I went there with a simple note and sketch book, spent some time at the real crossroad in Rosedale—not the one in Clarksdale tourists go to—sketching this series of paintings.

Later on, the Voodoo Queen and Priestess Miriam Chamani in New Orleans, Louisiana, told me what I did that day: The crossroad is not about selling but exchanging with an entity, "Papa Legba." It's a simple trade: You leave something there and you take something.

So far, a series of 29 paintings (following the 29 songs of Robert Johnson) exist of this particular work. The first one will be shown on October at Galerie Max Hetzler's booth at FIAC.

WW: 2020 is a big year for you. You'll inaugurate "The Underground Sculpture Park" in Casa Wabi. Can you tell us about this space?

LG: Casa Wabi is an incredible place located in Puerto Escondido, desert of Oaxaca. The building and residencies have been created by Tadao Ando. You can easily imagine how unreal it is, to have a beautiful concrete, sharp architecture by Ando in the middle of south Mexican desert.

I've been exchanging for many years with Bosco Sodi about it. I'll bury my works in the garden designed by Alberto Kalach around Casa Wabi. Nothing will remain, and the vegetation organized in the garden will grow, and the works will be there forever.

So it's many things—a conceptual sculpture park where the works are present but invisible, but it is also the image of a pirate's treasure. From my point of view in the studio, being in a Parisian suburb, the Oaxaca desert is quite exotic and the works buried there is a very romantic idea for me. Finally, it is like a cemetery and I love the idea of potential zombies . . .

WW: You'll also open your new studio, designed by the late Claude Parent. How was the studio designed to accommodate your vision for future projects?

LG: For a long time I've known I needed a real workshop, where I could have more space to experiment and produce works. The most exciting part was having the courage to ask Claude Parent—my hero—to design it! He accepted to write and conceive a "mental architecture" for my feature film *Sculpt*, and consequently we started talking about this idea of a new workshop together. I am very grateful to have been able to work with him on this space, that, by definition, will affect and shape the future work, even more grateful to have known, exchanged, and thought with this visionary and great man.



Loris Gréaud, MACHINE, 2018, photo by Charles Duprat. © Loris Gréaud, Gréaudstudio, Galerie Max Hetzler Paris, Berlin, London.



Loris Gréaud, Crossroad, Portrait, 2015, photo by Gréaudstudio. © Loris Gréaud, Gréaudstudio.