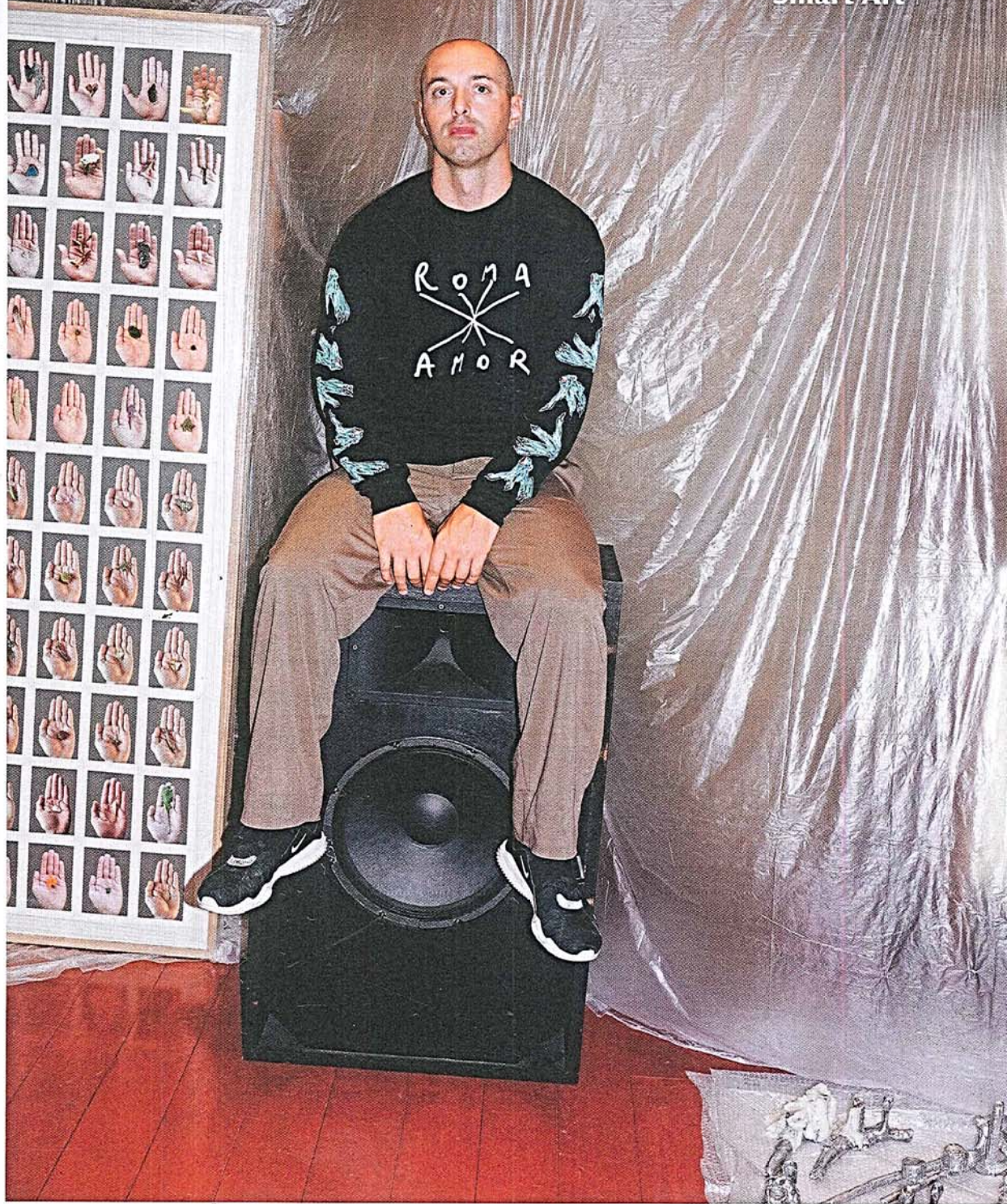


Nico Vascellari in his studio in Rome, wearing a 'Roma/Amor' jumper from the S/S19 Fendi collection he collaborated on, and sitting next to one of his artworks, *Saluti Romani*, 2017

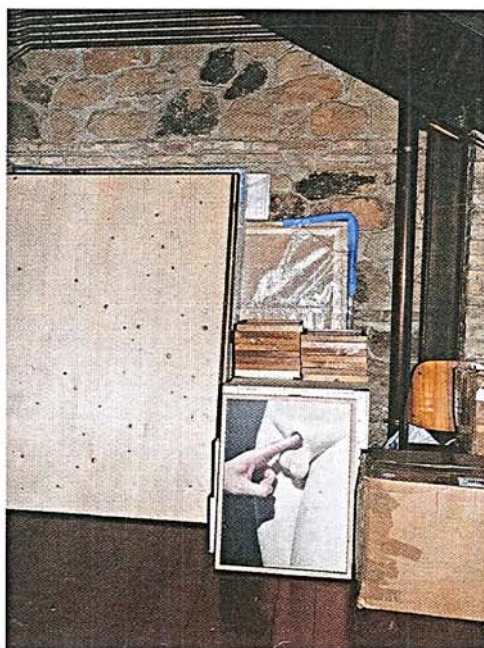
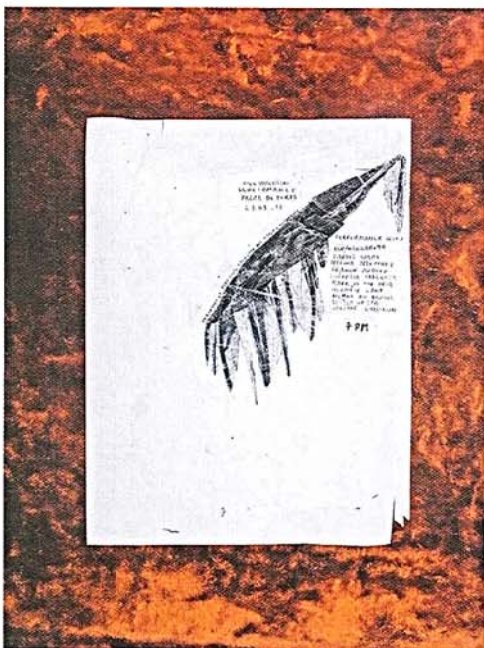


DARK STAR

Multimedia artist Nico Vascellari confronts his demons in collaboration with Fendi for S/S19

‘Take a walk on Fendi’s dark side, and back. Playfully,’ began the show notes for the Italian powerhouse’s S/S19 menswear collection. It was a fitting opener to the parade along a glossy black runway, emerging from a lava-red archway emblazoned with neon caricatures of snakes, demons and a clawed frog. At the centre of the archway, illuminated text reading ‘Fendi’ morphed periodically into its anagram, ‘Fiend’. The collection itself was a play on contrasts, with sturdy elements made light by perforations; paper masquerading as leather, and vice versa; all of it generously sprinkled with anagrams and the distinctive ‘double F’ logo.

As usual, the clothes were the work of the brand’s matriarch, Silvia Venturini Fendi, but the infernal set, and the prints and logos appearing throughout the »



collection bore the mark of her son-in-law, the 42-year-old punk musician-turned-multimedia artist Nico Vascellari. He follows in the footsteps of previous guest artists John Booth, Sue Tilley and Hey Reilly.

'Silvia attended my show titled "Bisca Vascellari", in which I transformed the exhibition space into a gambling house,' recalls Vascellari. 'People would come to gamble on games I created for the occasion to win works of mine. She had then just started working on the new collection that was by pure coincidence twisting around the idea of games in general. That is when we started exchanging ideas.'

Venturini Fendi and Vascellari began by developing patterns from his rough sketches. 'Silvia insisted on me drawing quickly and roughly,' says the artist. 'It was a liberation.' They also rummaged through the Fendi archives, where they found an old tag written with 'Roma Amor' next to the brand name. 'We immediately decided to link to a recent work of mine based on an anagram of the word "Dream", which becomes "Merda" [shit] in Italian,' says Vascellari, who incorporated the artwork into the collection.

The 'double F', designed by Karl Lagerfeld in the 1960s, was a point of reference throughout. It suggests

Clockwise from top left, Vascellari's 2009 sculpture, *Dripping On The Feet Of The Mountains*, seen on the left, among other objects on a vintage sideboard in his Rome studio; a Fendi S/S19 T-shirt sporting Vascellari's anagram artwork; one of the artist's 2014 *Into the Infinity of Thoughts* wooden artworks and *d.c.*, a 2018 photographic print; an invitation to Vascellari's 2017 show at the Palais de Tokyo

parallel realities – a concept that Vascellari has long explored. *Revenge*, an installation created for the 2007 Venice Biennale and presented again at his solo show at Rome's Maxxi this summer, featured 60 loudspeakers borrowed from European underground bands, playing a soundtrack that switched between white noise and a recording of a musical performance that was staged in the Maxxi's car park on that show's opening night.

Venturini Fendi observes that the concept of duality also applies to Vascellari, who became a father of twins this year, on a personal level: 'I see two sides to Nico. When he is working, he's a demon, then when he's with his children, he's so tender and calm.' Fatherhood certainly has not diminished his creative output. He's now working on a series of drawings, alongside two series of paintings. He's also preparing new chapters of *Scholomance*, a choral performance piece initially shown at Paris' Palais de Tokyo last year. 'It's based on a Transylvanian legend, and involves nine different performances inside a large installation comprising 200 cast aluminium pieces,' he says. And with the enthusiastically received Fendi collaboration under his belt, it's only natural that he would dream big. ★ fendi.com; nicovascellari.com