

## The Transcendentalist: A Note about the Cover Art Heresy Records, 2014

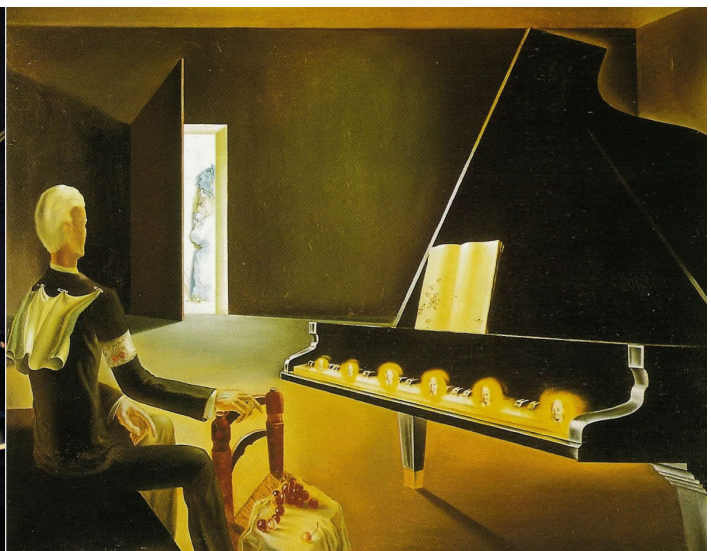


Provocative cover art and visual gestures are an integral part of Heresy's approach. Our album covers often reference pop or classical images, which we transform in accordance with the album's theme, concept and narrative. As Ivan and I discussed the repertoire and the affect we were after for our first collaboration, two things popped into my head: the word "transcendental" and Salvador Dali's painting *Partial Hallucination: Six Apparitions of Lenin on a Piano* (1931). I had never seen the painting used for cover art, and I felt it would instill the right mood and create a sense of mystery.

Dali's painting has been interpreted in different ways. Perhaps the most common interpretation is that this dreamlike work – and its haunting surreal impression – is both an allegory about the decline of decadent western capitalist society, and a hymn to resplendent communist ideology. But the painting also has a spiritual feeling and the symbols seem open to multiple interpretations. As Carl Jung writes in *Symbols of Transformation*, "A symbol is an indefinite expression with many meanings, pointing to something not easily defined and therefore not fully known."

To create the visual expression for *The Transcendentalist* we staged and designed photographs using Dali's painting as a central theme, and then we created variations. We wanted to suggest the painting without slavishly imitating it – something conceptually in line with Andy Warhol, Marcel Duchamp, and even Banksy. What we have created is an homage to the painting rather than a counterfeit. I worked with two regular collaborators: Polish photographer Laelia Milleri and English graphic designer Gareth Jones.

Our objective was to create a scene of transcendence and mystery to support the feel of the album's music and its general concept. The album's title appears like the opening credits of a 1930's film, and the pianist – Ivan Ilić – seems to be watching the projection of a film in which he plays the star role. The name of the album, *The Transcendentalist*, alludes to the artist himself. It is also the title of an essay by Ralph Waldo Emerson that lays out the philosophical tenants of transcendentalism.



Emerson's portrait replaces Lenin's just as transcendentalism replaces communism. The six images of Emerson in a glowing light reinforce the idea of transcendence and illumination. The glowing images emanate from the keyboard because this is where the transcendental forces arise from. The cherries represent the fructifying power of nature, a central theme in Emerson's writing, and the ripe, seductive power of sensual life and its temptations, which all artists must grapple with. The ants symbolize death and decay, which recordings such as this attempt to transcend.



The back cover is a portrait of Ivan which literally turns the front upside down and deconstructs it, using the same imagery. Whereas the front cover invites the viewer into the scene as an audience member, as in a movie, the back cover treats the viewer as a voyeur who has invaded a private domain: that of Ivan's archetypal dream, the album itself.

- Eric Fraad, May 2014