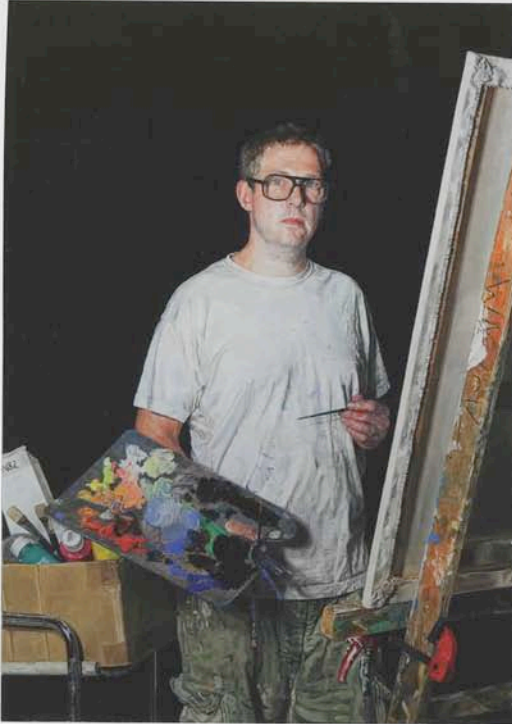


Galerie Daniel Templon

Paris

ULRICH LAMSFUSS

ELEPHANT, spring 2014



Ulrich Lamsfuss, *Selbstportrait/Self-portrait*, 2010, oil on canvas, courtesy of Galerie Daniel Templon, Paris

Painting knows texture. It can still render the idea of touch, whereas the world of digital and virtual imaging has been completely desensitized to these, becoming a sort of 'textural wasteland' [see Nicola Bozzi's piece in *Elephant* 14].

Painters entertain an intimate relationship with accident, without having to give up on purposeful action and method. Like great writing, painting is not indifferent to meaning, yet it is equally attentive to singularity. From Velázquez's portraits of King Philip IV of Spain to Josephine King's self-portraits, painting has an almost unique ability to represent mental states. In the same way that a painter can be deeply aware of anatomy without having to dissect its subject on canvas, it can also render the pathos associated with human suffering and emotion without having to dive into complex and often questionable psychological analysis.

The DNA of an Image

I have already touched upon the fact that painting has proved to be incredibly adept at adapting itself to new times and new techniques, from the first mechanically reproducible images to the challenge of photography, film, etc., managing each time to adapt and stand up to the challenge of new socio-cultural and technological environments, from the re-discovery of the laws of perspective in the Renaissance to the great aesthetic revolutions of the second half of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth – not to mention the great leaps into abstraction and mass culture which took place after that. It continues to do so today.

While images are constantly flying around, being digitalized, re-used, cropped, intercut, blown, shrunk, lit, printed, projected, edited, Photoshopped, etc., and are all the time fading, losing their original meaning, poignancy and context – painters keep going back to their studios and slowly, patiently, trying to hold back the flood, brushstroke by brushstroke, working with their hands and their eyes as much as with their brains, avoiding making big conceptual statements, focusing on small decisions, often on almost imperceptible shifts and slides, rhythms and textures, stepping backwards and forwards, like a chef tasting 'slow food', helping it on its way, spicing it up every now and then. The daily practice of their art allows painters to give their creative impulses both time and space.

**Painting is continually and incongruously
defying performance
(call it 'über-slow-motion-performance')**

When a painter like Ulrich Lamsfuss selects an image from a magazine or newspaper clipping and works on it for weeks, if not months, he is like a scientist studying the DNA of that image, tracking back the convoluted story of that image, its path through the world of mass media, from the original event to the position it occupies in our consciousness, re-examining the intensity of the original moment or act, as well as the incongruity of the whole situation. 'I am more interested in subtext than in the story and in the end everything is media.' Ulrich told us, 'The zeitgeist is defined by attention deficit disorder and that really makes me want to move slowly and with exactitude. So I slow it down to a maximum of ten images a year – in the end, my dream would be to keep on painting just one image over and over again.' Anna Bjerger, who paints almost exclusively from found photographs, described this process as 'deciphering an image'.

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Ulrich Lamsfuss, *Dirk Haskokar, Michel Houellebecq*, 2006, oil on canvas,
90 x 90 cm, courtesy of Galerie Daniel Templon, Paris.



Ulrich Lamsfuss, *The Incredibility of Saint Thomas*, 2001,
oil on canvas, courtesy of Galerie Daniel Templon, Paris.