

## LOMBARD FREID GALLERY

Interview with Ulrich Lamsfuss

1. Date and place of birth:

*I was born October 20, 1971 in Bonn/Germany.*

2. Residence:

*I live and work in Berlin since 1991.*

3. Could you tell us a bit about your background? Were you from an artistic (or completely non-artistic) background?

*My parents are teachers and active 68ers which made pretty clear to me that words are just words and that the power of pictures is much more relevant to understand. I really love that pictures don't talk.*

4. Do you remember the first time you told yourself: 'I think I want to be an artist?'

*I must have been pretty young, cannot remember a certain point of enlightenment, but it seems to me that I always found the world in a bad shape and I always wanted to belong to those trying to bring some light and beauty in.*

5. Did you go to art school? How was that?

*I went to a couple of academies: Rotterdam/NL, Düsseldorf and finally UdK Berlin in the masterclass of Georg Baselitz, but I was not really able to learn. I was seeking for relevance and evidence and did not find that at school.*

6. Did you attend life drawing classes? Do you feel that they useful?

*Yes, I did, though it seems to me now that it was just about killing time. Don't know if someone can call this useful.*

7. How did you develop your current technique?

*My painting-technique is basically none. It's just about putting directly the right colour on the canvas exactly where I find it on the original. It is more about plotting. I wanted to have a straight, non-artistic, just dry, honest and evident surface (and work). You can follow every brushstroke, you can see and understand how it is done. No tricky tricks.*

*So my artistic development is just about getting more exact. My drawing-technique is the opposite. It is more spontaneous and juicy and faulty, it is therapy.*

8. Do you paint from life, or from photographs, memory?

*Just photographs. I don't like the "live" momentum.*

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9. How did you develop your own personal style? Did it come naturally, quickly, or did it take a lot of work, some wrong turns?

*It took lots of power to keep on keeping on. I needed quite a while to understand that what I am doing is shifting from showing to seeing, and that that makes sense to me.*

10. You seem to have an uncomfortable relationship to the notion of authenticity. What do you look for in a subject, if not that?

*I think what is called authenticity is something pretty ideal (and good to sell) and I am sick of looking up; my art should not be more intelligent than the spectator. I prefer low thresholds. Art which makes you feel real makes you understand reality which produces reality.*

*Wherever I go somebody has been there before; everything is said just not by everybody. The only way of being authentic is by admitting that you can't (really be different).*

*I am interested in mirroring this situation. So I choose to confuse.*

*A subject can be anything as long as I have the feeling that it makes a proper painting which means it has to have the potential to be a good fetish, something you want to have. So it should be entertaining, interesting, confusing. It can be right or wrong, true or fake... anything goes.*

*The source is also interesting: for what it was intended, where it was published, who the piece did, its history etc.*

11. +12. Has a news story ever sparked off a painting or a series of paintings? How does that process work? How would you characterize your relationship to the media?

*I don't remember a specific story. It is more about themes, about Zeitgeist. Probably I am more interested in subtext than in the story and in the end everything is media.*

*I can read everything. But the point is that the painting does not talk - just the spectator. Actually the contradiction and diversity of the subjects is ment to make them stop talking. If that does not work repetition helps.*

*The Zeitgeist is defined by attention deficit disorder and that really makes me want to move slowly and exactly. So I slow it down to a maximum of 10 images a year – in the end my dream would be to keep on painting just one image over and over again.*

13. You seem to have a similarly wry relationship with art history. How would you characterize that? Does placing your work within the context of art history – as opposed to inside the media maelstrom we all live in – help?

*The problem of history is the judgement of an author; the problem of the media maelstrom is the missing judgement. I like both problems.*

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14. What role can the realistic mode in painting still play in art and in relationship to the media in general?

*Since pictures seem to get more relevant than words nowadays it should make sense to look at them. To me photorealism and appropriation art have never been more evident.*

15. Can painting capture the way we live today? The feeling of being alive today?

*I try to make my way in the ruins of modernism, and hope this is a visible effort.*

16. How would you position your work in relationship to the tradition of portrait painting?

*I do not know. If I paint a portrait it is likely that I have the same problems as Hans Holbein had (for example). And I have the feeling that even the view on a portrait as a portrait is a traditional art issue. It is nothing really new.*

17. Do the lives of those around you inspire, interest or intrigue you as a painter?

*For sure. It's chaos-physics.*

18. I remember seeing your portrait of the writer Michel Houellebecq. How did that painting come about? Was your relationship with him (as writer or media provocateur) like? What sparked off this portrait?

*I like him and his role. He is a star, he is virulent and ambivalent. I knew I had a show in France when this image popped up. So it was a hot potato. The release of his book topped it though it was not translated to German by then. I read it after the painting was ready. It is a little bit like dj-ing. I always like to have images which make it easy for an audience to connect with and then come up with more queer stuff.*

19. Have you read his latest novel, *La Carte Et Le Territoire*, and if you did so how did you feel about the main character (an artist initially painting on a realistic mode and whose paintings somehow I imagined as being yours)?

*It was really strange to read. I really loved the artist taking pictures of products like screws. And the paintings sound absolutely amazing. I would like to see them. Fantastic titles! Could not follow the other works and the story though, he could have pointed out the ambivalence of the art market more radically. My favorite still is *The Possibility of an Island*.*

20. Did you ever have violent or unusual reactions to your paintings?]

*Sombody cut a painting on an art fair in Paris. It is a fashion-piece with breasts and neonlight. Maybe too sexy?! Never really got the reason.*

21. Does your work contain narrative(s)?

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*It talks to me.*

22. Did other painters inspire you? Which ones?

*Actually I do not feel so very much as a painter. First there is an artistic attitude and then one chooses the medium because of personal preference. So it should be about contents, attitudes and ideas and not about media or techniques. I am mainly inspired by all appropriation artists from Duchamp and Picabia via Warhol and Sturtevant to Sherrie Levine, Richard Prince, Robert Longo, Franz Gertsch etc. I also like people working on misunderstandings, mistakes, fakes or similar transgressions of appropriation like Fischli/Weiss, Kippenberger, Christopher Williams, Wim Delvoye, Maurizio Cattelan, Aernout Mik, Jeremy Deller, Elmgreen+Dragset, Tobias Rehberger, Douglas Gordon, Bernadette Corporation to name a few.*

23. Do you always work from a studio?

*Yes, I need a steady private place for perfect contemplation.*

24. How do ideas come about?

*God only knows.*

25. How do you see the role of figurative painting today in the age of photoshop?

*A photoshopped image can be painted, too. Such lies are very interesting and real and nothing really new regarding art.*

26. Does painting still have a role in terms of shaping up contemporary culture?

*Contemporary culture is entropy. To me it is very complex, not intelligent but ignorant. Maybe there is swarm intelligence. I have no idea how to influence or to shape up these times. But every time gets the culture it deserves, and this is probably a time, which will be named after its economic system and not after its art. It is for sure the capitalistic era – art does not matter much be it painting or any other media.*

27. How would you define, in your own words, what it is that you do?

*I am working on the utopia of a motivated life. I try to give my best and to avoid being too stupid. I hope to bring my confusion to a higher level and in the end I try to entertain.*