

Frog, Numéro 21

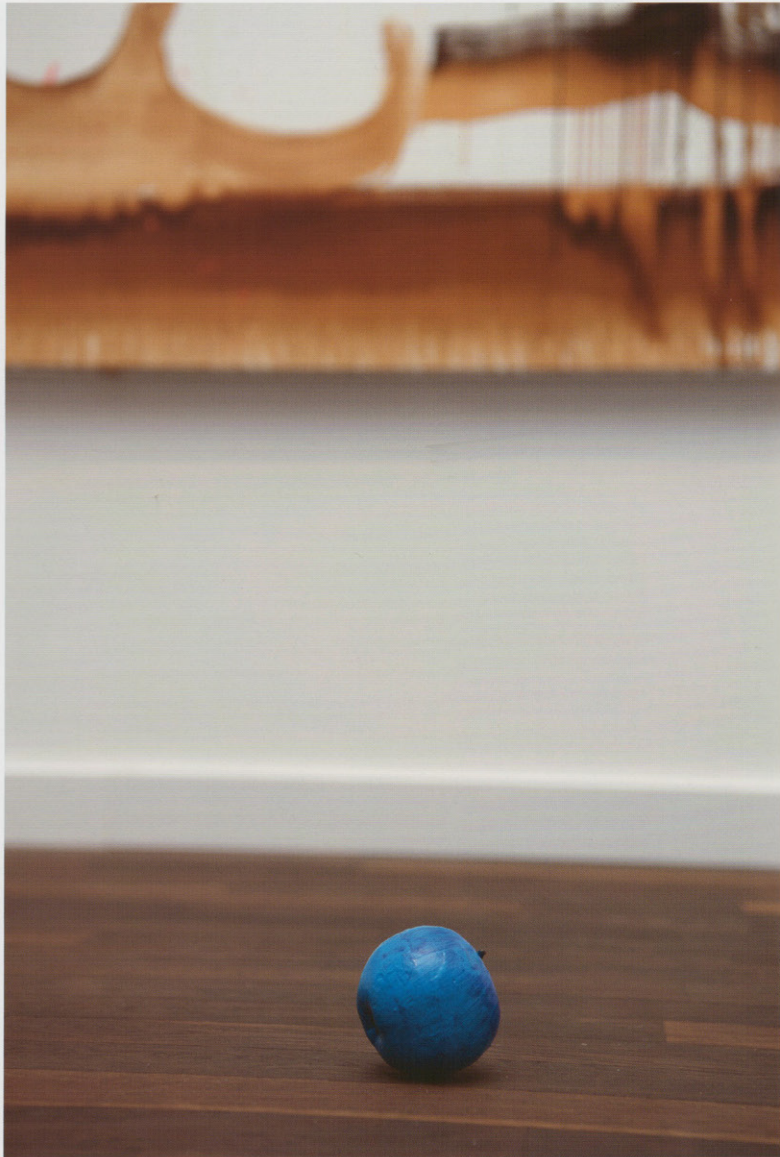
Leclère, Lucas: Interview

Summer 2023





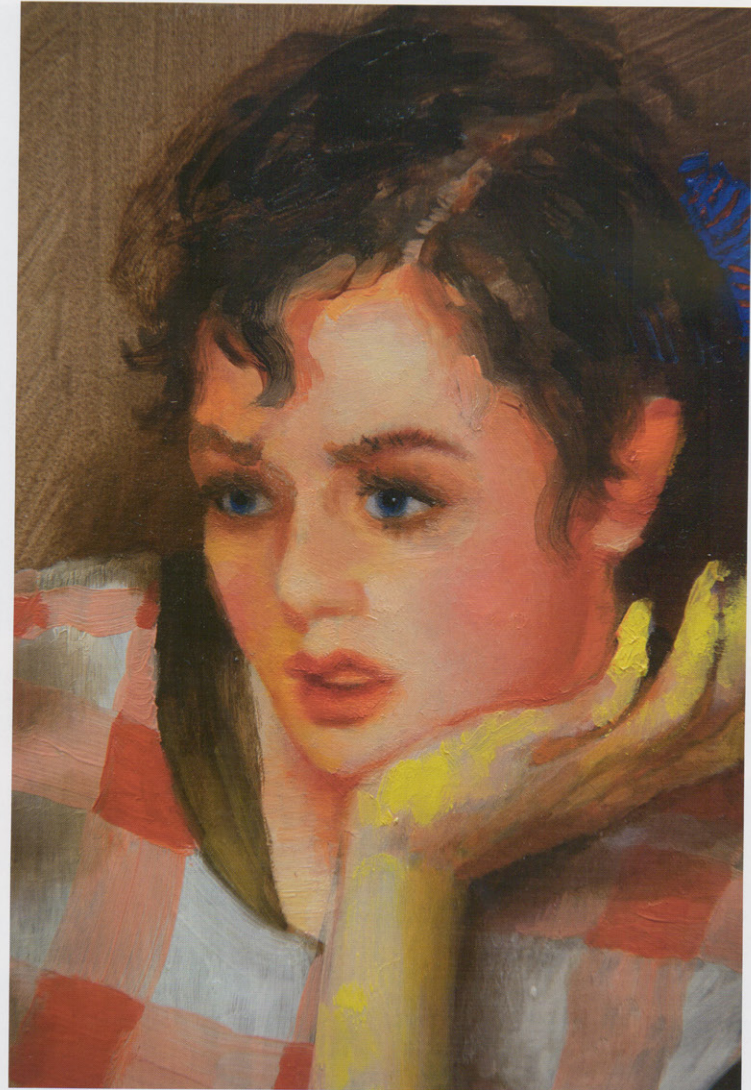
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Tursic and Mille

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ow did you meet?

We met in a nude model drawing class in Dijon in 1993.

— How was your work before you met?

Non-existent

— How conscious was it to start working together?

*Interview
by
Lucas Leclère,
portrait
par
Wilfried Mille,
photographie
par
Eric Troncy*

During our five years at the National School of Fine Art in Dijon, we trained together. Afterwards, having a relatively close way of thinking and a compatible logic, we worked separately on something similar. Ida gave new meanings to clichés (press, fashion, etc.) and I to those of pornography. With the creation of internet, it was tempting to make images say something else.

— It seems to me your moving to the South of France had a tremendous impact on your work—this and having a young kid around. Did you feel a change yourself?

Each changing of studio causes changes in the work, especially since we are very open, in our way of doing, to the unexpected and to transformations predetermined by the place itself. We had always dreamt of a kind of ideal workshop, and in the South-West, I think this is what we've found, an old factory of 4000 m² that we transformed and that gives us the possibility to do everything and to do it autonomously. We will soon create a

ceramics workshop, a silk-screen printing workshop, etc. Yes, we have a little boy, and in our previous workshop in Dijon which was about thirty kilometers from our apartment, we rarely saw him, today he is with us all the time, it's great.

— Is your kid allowed in the studio?

Sure, but he's not really interested at the moment.

— What motivated your leaving Dijon, where you studied?

It had become too complicated to park.

— How do you react to your surrounding now?

The work environment is beautiful, the nature is beautiful, it is very stimulating and I have plenty of parking space.

— Are the local cultural institutions of any relevance in your practice?

Of course, just like the weather.

— If you could choose two paintings to live with for the rest of your life, what would they be?

Probably paintings on wood, for heating in case of emergency.

— What's your emotional bond to selling your work?

It makes us very happy, you know, I was an artist's assistant, an extra at the opera, I was doing masonry work to afford renting a small studio and buying frames, canvas and colors... selling allows





us to work serenely and in a way it's always an act of love and desire.

— Were you ever tempted to rework on a painting that was presented in a show?

We do it quite often, it's part of our way of working, we don't like to leave the paintings too long in the studio.

— What's the worst thing a collector ever told you about art?

Someone asked us once why we didn't remove the bubble wrap from the paintings, the thing is that there was no bubble wrap on the painting. This someone understood he preferred the porn paintings, that they were easier to understand, but that unfortunately his wife didn't like them.

— Are there any particular places where you'd really like to show your work?

Things are done when they have to be done, and we are very happy to be working on an exhibition at Pietro Sparta's in Chagny, the last one was almost ten years ago. In 2024, we will do an exhibition at Almine Rech's Gallery in New York and later at Max Hetzler Marfa, which is very exciting.

— How often do you think about your past works?

It's hard to say. We consider our work as a kind of line drawn, of course with several directions, of course with contradictions, some disasters, ruptures but uninterrupted... and Tempus Fugit.

— What's the one thing you wish you didn't have to do and that is pivotal to your practice?

Washing brushes with acetone.

— For your latest show at the Galerie Max Hetzler in Berlin you were inspired by the "Mound of Butter" (circa 1875 – 1885) by Antoine Vollon. It's a rather small painting (60 x 51cm) and it took him ten years to paint. When did you first see it?

Quite recently, it is a masterpiece, a real piece of painting that speaks only for itself, in short a minimalist painting of the 19th century, which is in itself very contradictory, a minimal figurative painting.

— This is for our marketing team at Unilever: what would a Tursic and Mille candle smell like?

Turpentine and cold tobacco.

— You started painting in the 90s when the medium was disregarded. Why?

Probably a French "esprit de contradiction", but it was also a powerful medium with a simple application.

— Now that painting is all the rage and the refuge value of every art fair in the world, which anti-trend medium would you consider turning yourself to?

Well there are quite a few scabs...

— Your exhibitions seem to be built like your paintings, drawing the attention of the viewer to focusing points. How relevant is the experience of the viewer in your displays?

Yes, it is the same work, in any case it is the same empirical way of doing. We always start from a reduced wooden model of the exhibition and the final display is often reached a few days before the shipping of the works. The exhibition is conceived in parallel with the evolution of the paintings. Painting is a strategy of the glance set in motion for the glance of the spectator, an exhibition is the same.

— Do you sometimes have titles even before the painting starts?

Yes "Cul Ass", "AUTO-PORC-TRAIT" or "Lapin-Ture" for example.

— Please tell me about the geometrical paintings shown in Serignan in 2009?

Well, that was some time ago... but I guess after considering how to make a nude today (porn), how to make a portrait today (a facial ejaculation), how to make a landscape in 2000 (the fires), the question was how to make a geometrical painting without being boring, by using optical processes. In fact, the first years of a painter, up to the age of 30 or 35, are the years when they create themselves, when they invent their language, their way of thinking, when they impose themselves. After this phase, one must strive to destroy everything, to rebuild everything. For us, it is the only way to keep a creative process alive and not frozen, it is a constant quest for freedom.

— Why has this kind of motif shied away from your vocabulary?

It's not fun to do.

— Would you consider painting a mural in a house? Have you ever?

No, we don't paint walls.

— Can you tell me about the sculpture presented at the Prix Marcel Duchamp (that you won)?

It was a set of paintings on cut wood of 4m height by 16 length which was called "Eight or Nine Paintings to Know if We Can Continue Like This" starting from a title of Martin Kippenberger, "8 Paintings to Know if I Can Continue Like This," we saw two colored spots, a male nude, a female nude, a flower, a Labrador and a cut palette. It was an object neither figurative nor abstract, neither a painting nor a sculpture, it was a question...

— What are your retirement dreams?

I don't know, right now we are in Marfa, I've been driving for 10 hours and got lost without GPS in the Big Bend National Park.

p. 252: "Saint Jean-Baptiste dans le désert" (2022) (detail)
Oil and gold leaf on wood, 190 x 153 x 7 cm. Courtesy Alfonso Artiaco, Naples.

