

GLADSTONE GALLERY



THE WAY OF BEAUTY

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54



Tristan Smiting Morold (commissioned between 1388 and 1413)

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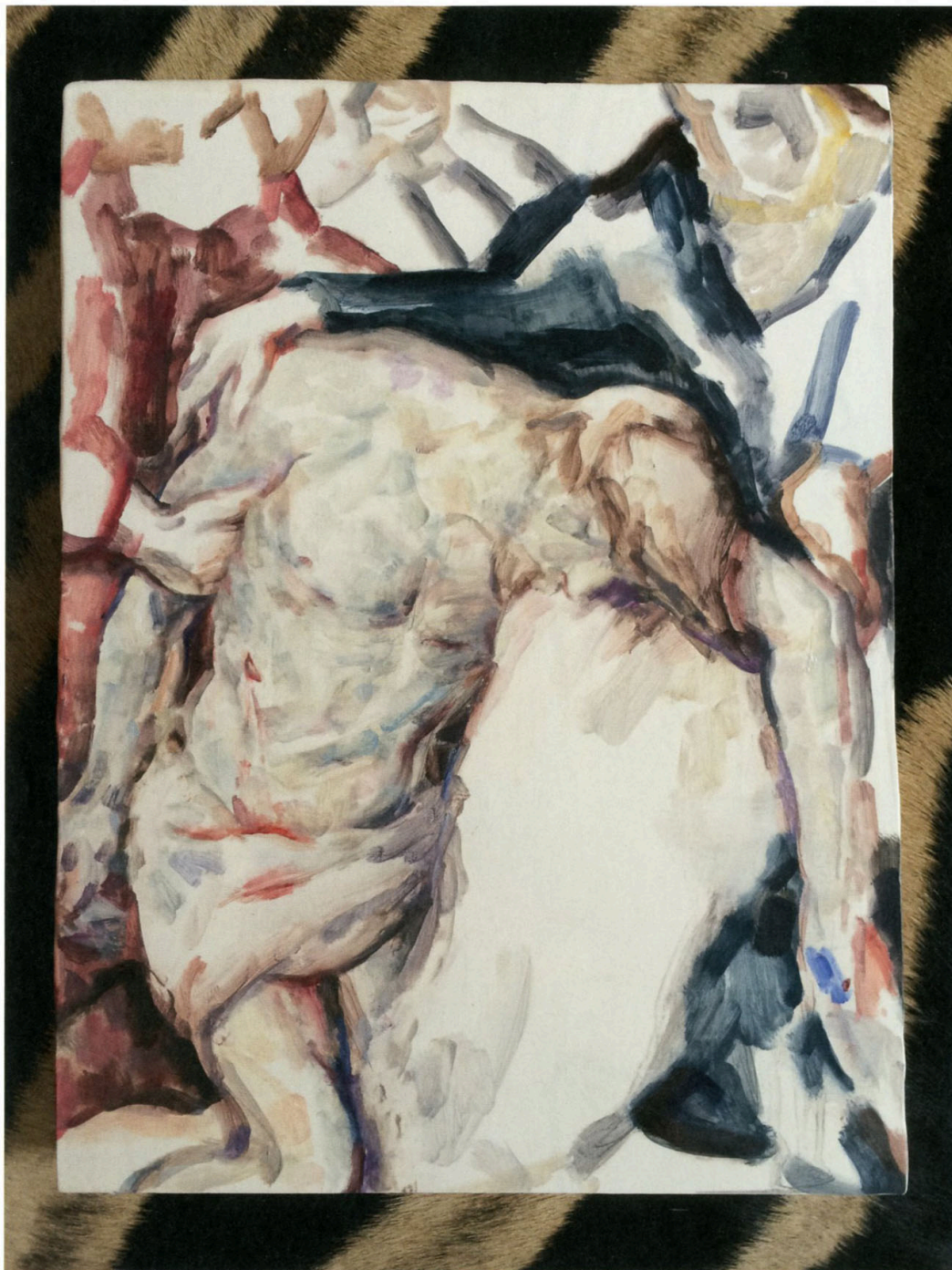
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E (Elias), 2013

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The Lamentation of Christ (After Van Dyck's The Lamentation of Christ, 17th century), 2014

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René Pape, Berlin, 2014

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Fujisan, Japan, 2013

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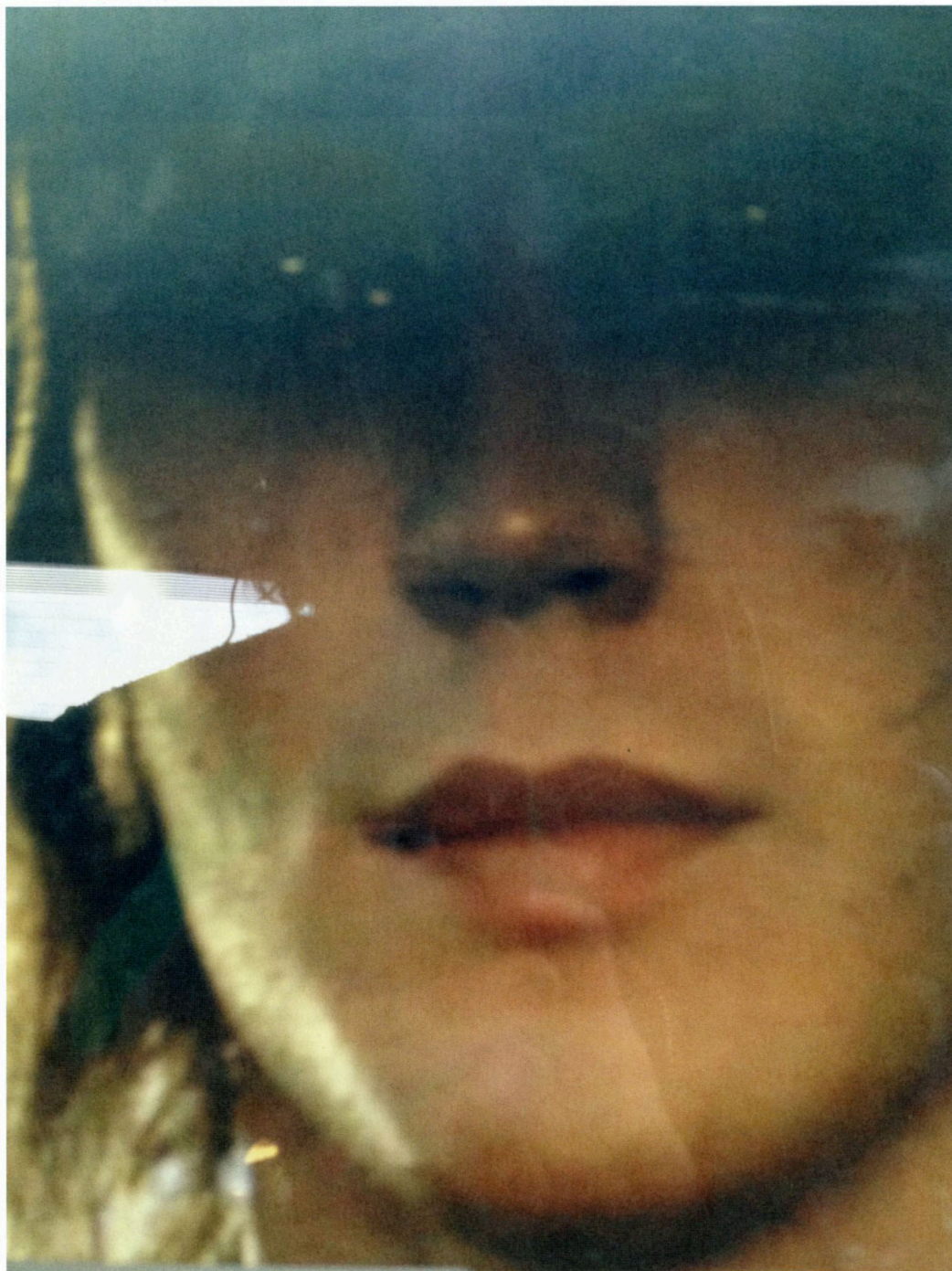
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Musée Gustave Moreau (EP), 2014

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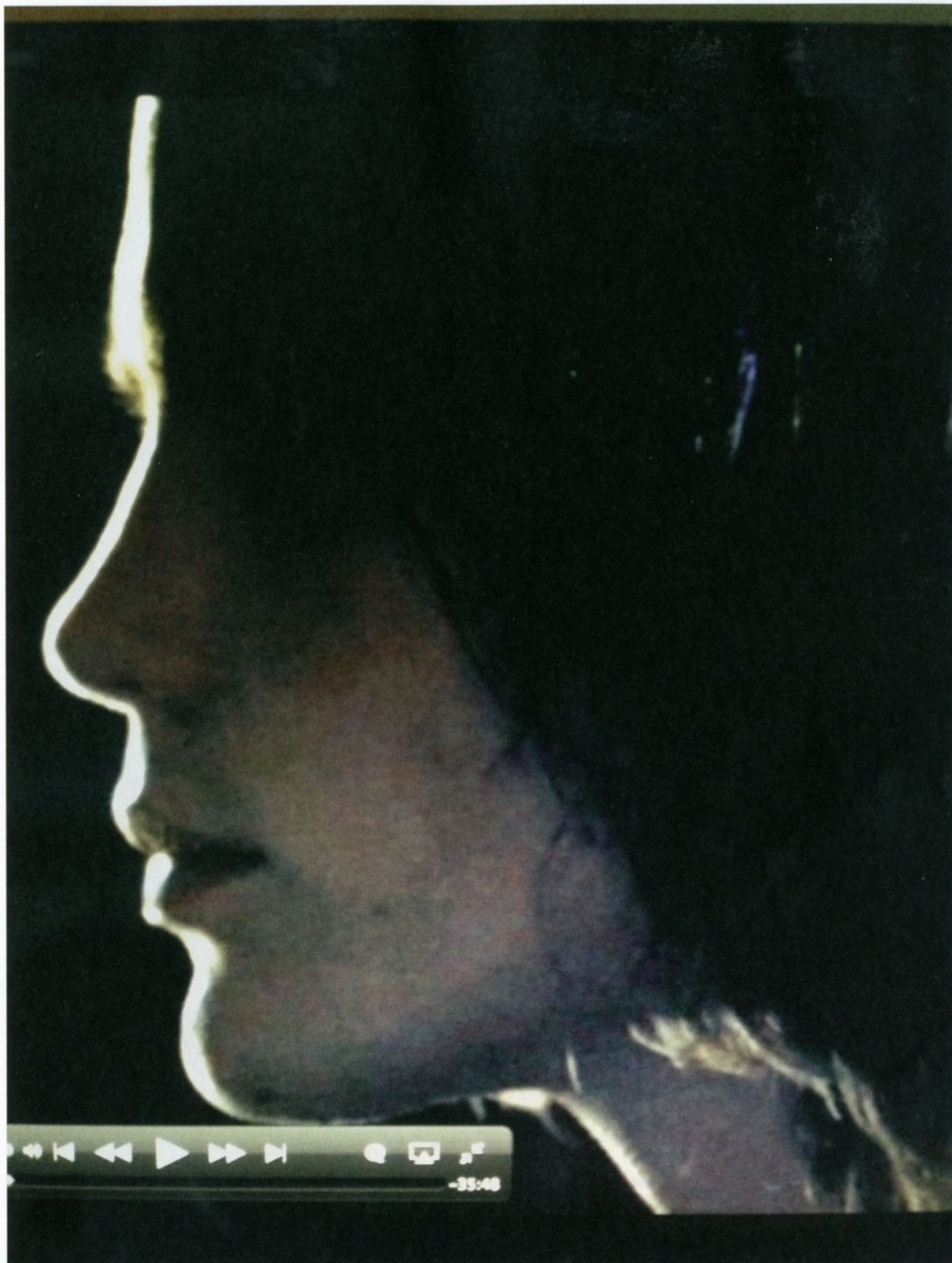
60



Tim (Friday Night Lights), 2013

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63 Interview by Christoph Hend and Daniel Haaksman



Beauty comes over us in so many different, profound ways. For me, this picture of Tim is like Act III of *Parasite* – not that I can say I totally understand what is going on in *Parasite*, but this is how it makes me feel. I need to make something – there is so much that was destroyed and is missing. And I can concentrate really well now. It's like a holiday on a beach in a foreign country. I need to make something – there is so much that was destroyed and is missing. And I can concentrate really well now. It's like a holiday on a beach in a foreign country.

Tim (Friday Night Lights), 2013

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*Jonas Kaufmann and Sophie Koch in Richard Eyre's production of
Massenet's Werther at the Metropolitan Opera, New York City, 2014*

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63 Interview by Christoph Amend and Daniel Haaksman

When did you first realize you were an artist?

For as long as I can remember, I have been making pictures, mostly of faces. There is one that I made when I was eight where I thought I had finally made a picture of the most beautiful person in the world. My mother still has that one.

And you are still making portraits today.

Yes, and I feel grateful for that every day. I had no idea when I was young that I had the strength to do it. As an art student, I never felt like I was outstanding.

When did you know being a painter could actually work out for you?

Only recently. I actually thought, "I guess this painting thing is going to work out." But that feeling of security doesn't last too long. Every time I start a show, it's like the first time. But sometimes, when I'm on a plane and think about it crashing, I feel it's okay because I will leave some good paintings behind.

The works we are presenting in this issue of ZEITMAGAZIN consist of previously unpublished paintings and photographs. There are two portraits of Elias Bender Rønnenfelt, the singer of the Danish band Iceage.

I heard Iceage on the radio one day and was immediately fascinated. There is such a devastating life-or-death honesty in their music. I am very inspired by Elias and the rest of the band.

Several images in this series relate to the world of opera, for example your photograph of René Pape, the great singer from Dresden.

Yes, that is a photo of René in my Berlin studio. His voice is so deeply moving.

There is also a picture of the German tenor Jonas Kaufmann.

The first time I saw him was in *Die Walküre* at the Met. His way of embodying and conveying the emotion of the character he is playing is devastating. Recently, I saw him in *Werther*, also at the Met, and there was such long applause after his arias that it seemed like it was going to disrupt the feeling of the opera. But Jonas just got more and more deeply into his role. It was crazy.

What was it like to meet him?

It was very disconcerting because I had spent so much time making pictures of him from flat, two-dimensional photographs. When I saw him in three dimensions it made my brain hurt. I met him right after a performance of *Tosca* in Munich, straight off the stage – he was still covered in blood from just having killed himself onstage. I knew it was fake blood, but as we were talking I was really getting worried about him!

What's the story behind the two close-ups on pages 58 and 59?

That's Tim Riggins, a character in the TV-series *Friday Night Lights*. Tim is played by the actor Taylor Kitsch. When I look at this picture, it immediately makes me feel much better.

Why?

Beauty comes over us in so many different, profound ways. For me, this picture of Tim is like Act III of *Parsifal* – not that I can say I totally understand what is going on in *Parsifal*, but this is how it makes me feel: that so much suffering has happened, some peo-

ple have died, some have found redemption and we are all definitely going to die. But the beauty of that opera makes it feel like I can live with knowing all these things and feel good about them, too.

The second Tim Riggins-portrait shows some video controls at the bottom of the image.

I like these artificial colors that don't exist in real life. They only exist because it's a still from a film, which I took from the screen of my computer. It's a very particular, abstract form of beauty.

From punk to opera: musicians are often the focus of your work. Why is music so important for you?

I do a lot of work about people who make things – as artists, writers, or musicians. I love the power that music has to immediately convey emotions.

How do you find your subjects? How does an Elizabeth Peyton picture come about?

It happens in many ways. I think a lot about how to make pictures of human feelings – and then I find things that help me dive into them.

Several of your portraits seem to contain hidden self-portraits. Many of the people you paint or draw have a certain resemblance to you.

My interests are portrayed in the choices I have made of what to paint. Painting is an unconscious physical act. The more I let go and trust my intuition, the more feeling gets into my paintings.

When you showed your first exhibition in 1993, at the Chelsea Hotel, the fact that a young artist was painting portraits was considered sensational. Since then, painting has become a lot more popular again.

Painting was never really gone. Painting is eternal: it's deep and beautiful and will never go away. In my case, the thing that was setting off alarm bells for a lot of people wasn't so much the painting itself, but rather *what* I was painting – King Ludwig II, Napoleon, characters from the works of Balzac and Proust. Also, I said, without any irony, that I loved these people and believed in them – that was quite upsetting for some people.

You work in New York City and sometimes in Berlin. When did you visit Berlin for the first time?

In the fall of 1994 I joined my husband at the time, Rirkrit Tiravanija, in Berlin for a while. There was never any traffic, it was very cinematic. It seemed like a frontier city in the wild West.

In 1999 you received a scholarship at the Hoffmann collection in Berlin.

Yes, I worked in the Hoffmanns' basement on Sophienstraße. There was hardly any daylight, but it was great nevertheless. I made a lot of watercolors and worked in a very focused way. It was a very productive time. Today I still feel that when I'm in Berlin, I can work well.

Why is that?

Other cities are more complete, and so beautiful, they don't seem to need anything else. In Berlin, I feel like I need to make something – there is so much that was destroyed and is missing. And I can concentrate really well there. It's like holidays on a beach in a foreign country: You can relax because you don't understand what the people next to you are talking about.

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