

## ***Elad Lassry***

**20.09-09.12.18**

**Monographic exhibition**

Opening

Wednesday 19th Septembre, from 6pm to 9pm

Curator : Xavier Franceschi



*Untitled (assignments)*, Elad Lassry, 2018 © Elad Lassry

**Press visit**  
**Wednesday 19th September**  
**9.30pm \***

**\* Visit of the exhibition *Elad Lassry* at  
Le Plateau then L at Le Château  
A free shuttle will drive you from Le  
Plateau to Le Château : Departure at  
11am -return at 3pm at La Place du  
Châtelet  
Mandatory reservation :  
lohussenot@hotmail.com**

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## Introduction

**The frac île-de-france presents at le Plateau the first exhibition of Elad Lassry in France. Born in Tel Aviv in 1977, Elad Lassry lives and works in Los Angeles. Spanning photography, film and sculpture, his work questions the relationship between object and representation.**

Since 2007, Lassry has been building an image bank, a collection of pictures that he commonly refers to as 'units'. His *units* presented themselves as 'sculptures which happened to be pictures\*' and gave as much importance to the 'objecthood' of the picture as to the image itself. Summoning key art-historical tropes and addressing a wide range of subjects, they took the form of hermetic image-objects, which were simultaneously familiar and strangely contemporary, both 'irritating and seductive\*\*'

At le Plateau, Lassry presents a new series of photographs and sculptures in which subtle, yet conceptual shrewd strategies open up a flexible space where each photograph is invariably reminiscent of another, endlessly replaying the function and meaning of the objects they represent. From an unassigned fashion shoot, a reef fish supply facility, to a photographic darkroom experimentation, Lassry's photographs are shot on an almost extinct technology (8 "x 10" camera). The artist thus combines analogue technology with the dematerialisation of the image, an anxiety-provoking phenomenon whereby the image is deprived of its physical qualities and becomes omnipresent in the form of data. By doing so, he encourages us to ask: What do we see? And how do we see it?

\*interview Mark Godfrey with Elad Lassry in Frieze, Nov.2011

\*\* Beatrix Ruf put in her introduction to the 2010 exhibition entitled Elad Lassry

Born in Tel Aviv in 1977, Elad Lassry lives and works in Los Angeles. His work has been shown at many international exhibitions: Uancouver Art Gallery, Elad Lassry, curated by Jeff Wall, Uancouver (2017); Galerie Francesca Pia, Hans-Peter Feldmann / Elad Lassry, Zurich (2017); David Kordansky Gallery, Elad Lassry, Los Angeles (2015); Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Sensory Spaces 3, Rotterdam (2014); 303 Gallery, Elad Lassry, New York (2013); The Kitchen, New York (2012); PAC, Milan (2012); Rat Hole Gallery, Tokyo (2012); the Contemporary Art Museum, St. Louis, MO (2010); Kunsthalle Zurich, Switzerland (2010) and Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2009). He has participated in numerous group exhibitions: the 54th Venice Biennale; Deutsche Börse Photography Prize, The Photographers' Gallery, London (2011); The Anxiety of Photography, Aspen Art Museum, Aspen, CO (2011); Sculpture Center, New York; New Photography 2010, Museum of Modern Art, New York (2010) and Younger Than Jesus, New Museum, New York (2009). He is represented by Galerie Francesca Pia in Zurich, the White Cube gallery in London, 303 Gallery in New York and Massimo De Carlo gallery in Milan.



## Presentation by Xavier Franceschi— curator

**For more than ten years, Elad Lassry, an artist of Israeli origin living in Los Angeles, has been developing a surprising and important body of works that combines photography, film, sculpture, scenographic installations and even performances to produce images that are unsettling, to say the least. However, that viewers should feel unsettled may seem somewhat paradoxical at first: indeed, Lassry's works distinguish and assert themselves mainly through a kind of obviousness, an undeniable presence, and their materiality seems to have been emphasised in all respects as though to leave no room for doubt as to the fact that they belong to the real world.**

Characters, animals, different and (very) varied objects are there, in front of us – the artist confidently operates within well-defined genres such as portrait and still life, so in this respect as well, there is no doubt that we are treading on safe ground – and if the formal means he uses to make them visible can at times seem excessive, particularly in his photographs, which form the true quintessence of his work – intense light, strong contrasts, bright colours – this is precisely what allows them to appear to us as self-evident.

At the same time, this self-evidence is thwarted by the way in which these various subjects are selected and then staged.

It seems useful to highlight certain principles, certain recurrent techniques he employs in his work, which in effect determine the perception of what he is showing to us.

First of all, concerning mainly his photographic works – but also, most of the time, the screenings of his filmic works – the choice of format turns out to be crucial. Far from the kind of competition that could be observed not so long ago, where the value of a work seemed to be directly related to its size, Lassry's pieces are small, hardly exceeding 40 by 30 cm. Beyond the formal command it requires, this small format (that one is tempted to call 'handy') vouches for a greater density of the image, which thus undeniably gains in tension, but also, necessarily, for greater attention on the part of the spectator, who is forced to get closer to the work in order to see its details. Yet although Lassry works in series that he likes to mix and mingle in his exhibitions, one would be hard-pressed to derive any narration from them.

Another characteristic of his work is that the images are repeatedly expanded by means of quasi-sculptural interventions that reassert the objectual dimension of photography. These interventions are like extensions of the photographic image: they can consist of work on the actual frame of the image – and here too we notice the same assertive choices (in terms of materials and colours) as in the artist's photographs – or of an addition of various objects that seem to grow out of the figures in the images.

Clearly, Lassry is not the first artist to operate in this realm where image and object intertwine. Tutelary figures such as Richard Artschwager or Haim Steinbach come to mind, whose work went far in overcoming the boundaries between presentation and representation.

The reader will have understood by now that the work of Elad Lassry is an ongoing questioning of the perception of images, regardless of their nature, which is by no means a trivial undertaking at a time when mankind, thanks to new information technologies, produces and disseminates several billion images every day.

For his exhibition at Le Plateau, the artist has produced of a series of new works. In order to deepen the analysis of his work, it therefore seemed useful to talk to him in detail about these new pieces, which extend his previous work and open up as yet unexplored paths.



# Elad Lassry & Xavier Franceschi — Interview

## Xavier Franceschi

The exhibition at Le Plateau presents a set of almost entirely new artworks, photographic and sculptural, produced especially for the occasion. What were, for you, the starting points for these new projects?

## Elad Lassry

The starting point was probably just where I had left things off. I believe you reached out to me after seeing some of the sculptures I made last year. They are actually an extension of a body of work I started in 2015 for an exhibition here in Los Angeles, where I presented these sort of carriers—structures that were paradoxically solid and hollow, dense and occupied, and that could claim a resemblance to several things: baskets, kettlebells, Ro-ro vessels, etc. I installed them in a linear, interconnected way that would activate notions of a system—and they were a system. The work I've made for this new exhibition at Le Plateau continues to look at these ideas. I find myself working out, in a rather joyous manner, and in ways I can only hope come through, different methods of making order and meaning from seeing and negotiating this shift from dimensionality to flatness, and vice versa.

## XF

Compared to these sculptures, which resembled baskets and were even incised and painted with the shapes of assorted produce, these new pieces seems more abstracts, although you're using actual objects. A real air compressor has been sliced open and stuffed with a cushion so that it literally contains it. How did this shift come about?

## EL

Yes, I used discarded air compressors to make container shapes, with the cushions essentially as lids. What has been consistently important to me in my work is to find ways to activate sprawling conversations and thoughts with a rather contained gesture, a gesture that acts as though it were “non-negotiable,” and therefore comes off as “an executive decision.” This is geared towards sharing my ideas more clearly, while also curbing personal interpretations. Here, too, I'm hoping to elaborate on an earlier idea—that of the “baskets.” Except, in this case, the containers are visibly empty. You can see through them via cut-outs in their walls. Moreover, what literally contains them—the lid—is also some kind of domestic, sofa-cushion-like element. The uselessness, if you will, of this proposed and imaginary system requires us not only to acknowledge the echo or ghost of systems in any and every element of modern life, but simultaneously cancel it and accept its limitations.

## XF

I said more abstract, but I could perhaps have said more minimal. Can you speak about this in regard to the new series of stacked gray carpeting?

## EL

Yes, the sculptures made with carpets double almost as stations, by which I mean they are tied to an oscillation-like activity, somewhere between a flat experience and a dimensional one. What I'm referring to here is a tension I find in the act of viewing between the stability of the compressed picture and the experience of objecthood. I've discussed before the object-like qualities of the picture and vice versa, i.e., the collapse of dimensionality of the object. My sculptures of cribs and chair frames come to my mind as examples of the latter. Their position against a wall or in a corner opposite the gallery entrance often creates an optical illusion, whereby their dimensionality appears to sink back into the wall; they shift into a frieze almost. Alternatively, this might be experienced as a purely physical limitation, as with the stacked carpeting: something is in your way as your eyes meet the pictures on the wall.

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**XF**

Among the new photographic works is a series of images showing three young women, who could be identified as fashion models, posing for a commercial shoot. These images meet the standards of this genre of photography—they are optimally clear and precise—and yet the whole thing—the poses, the wardrobe, the facial expressions, etc.—appears to hold a sort of tension. How did the idea for this shoot come to you?

**EL**

I remember at my thesis exhibition review, when my show was discussed and critiqued by my fellow grad students, we considered the proximity of two photographs. On the right was a portrait of a blond family; on the left, an abstract constellation of air, reflectors, and shelves. Or more generally speaking: an abstraction paired with a family portrait. I remember making the argument that these pictures are the same. Of course, I was being rather provocative. On the other hand, I felt strongly that that was the case. I believed that they shared similar information—the core of which was the yellow hair, the surface of it—and that, in many ways, that was the most the photograph could convey. I am bringing up this anecdote as I think it is tied to your question. I often find myself looking to problematize the notion of a picture, and I realize I do so mainly from a place where the way I look at pictures—and perhaps by default I assume I share this way of looking with other people—is one of proposal. What I mean by that is, I'm not interested in accepting visual conventions. Not out of rebelliousness, or a wish to problematize for the sake of problematizing, but because I genuinely consider it to be the position from which it makes most sense to work with this medium—a medium, one mustn't forget, that is historically riddled with doubt; one has only to think of the trials around spirit or fairy photography, or of iconic wartime photographs that were later found to have been fabricated or manipulated, or simply of what one can do today with Photoshop. So, in effect working out of a space that's been invested with the failure of making meaning, as well as with the rapture, or seizures, in our biology and psychology. Another aspect very much of interest to me is the rather funny debate and ongoing negotiations around photography within the art realm. For one, there is the phenomenon of the crafty commercial photograph as a strangely elevated type of photograph. Perhaps in this context, craft serves as a legitimization. I'm reminded of a visit to New York in my early twenties when an acquaintance "hooked me up" with what she called a "UIP art opening" in Chelsea. There was a guard at the entrance to the gallery and a man checking the guest list for names. Inside there was an array of fashion photographs, all black and white, of Caucasians and some animals, slickly captured and available in many sizes for acquisition. I remember my new friend saying, "He promised me a print." This word, said in the same tone I recall her using, would be said to me many times over the next decade—by my subjects. When I proposed to photograph someone for a work, I would often be asked, "Do I get a print ?». I never thought I was making "prints," or perhaps I was realizing—and this is very much connected to aspects of my practice—that there it was, yet another element of this split in how the picture is viewed. At the Chelsea exhibition, fashion assignments were viewed as skilled photography, mastery even. Their voidness of meaning seemed irrelevant; there they were considered on the basis of almost pre-modern qualities. Before conceptualism. Detached from recent cultural shifts. They were this other thing: they were, I learned, good photographs.

**XF**

To continue with this idea of combining photographs: you've talked previously of "units" that you were accumulating in an image bank. Is this still the case?

**EL**

I called the pictures I exhibited over the years "units" mostly to avoid calling them things that distracted from my project. I wasn't interested in them as photographs. I didn't care to make an interesting photograph, or a beautiful photograph, not because that's a frivolous thing to do, but because it wasn't what made me take pictures. As a matter of fact, I've often said I'd rather not take pictures if an exhibition wasn't calling for one. So back to terminology. Considering that I was approaching the work from this angle, one in which the photograph was as much an object as a picture, and where my subjects were made to appear of general existence, of confused origination, even "orphaned" in some cases, belonging nowhere yet everywhere, I proposed thinking of them as "units". They are units because they are blocks, because they are a currency, because they are washed out yet saturated. Present and absent at once. Do they constitute a bank? Yes, in the sense that there is a woman and a

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man, a dog and a cat, an apple and an orange...I'd say I work in similar ways philosophically: I'm still not interested in photographs as such; I'm interested in photographs as other things. What they are I'm not quite sure.

**XF**

You have mentioned that the women posing in these photographs that seem to conform to a fashion editorial aesthetic might be recognized from their commercial work. That reminds me of those pieces you made that include photos of Anthony Perkins. It's interesting that even if we recognize him, we still harbor doubts. There is something curious and disturbing about this, and indeed it's what made the proposal so very strong. Is the same principle at work here for you?

**EL**

Well, sure. I bounce back and forth between actual industries and invented ones through their affiliated individuals—who are never highly recognizable, since my interest is not in the celebrity aspect, but in aspects and strategies of inclusion. I mean inclusion in a systematic not a political sense. Systems that function, systems that do not; systems that have very much infiltrated the mainstream or that have stayed somewhat at the fringe of things. So the possibility that some subjects might bring in an additional context is very relevant to what I do, as is any confusion there might be around the origination of the picture. Once a picture is “backed up” by some sort of commercial entity, certain changes take place, at least in terms of reception.

**XF**

To stay—maybe—in this fashion universe: other photos show pairs of (once again, timeless or classic) shoes on display stands, sometimes in association with found images of fish or other sea animals, but always retouched with patterns of white paint. One more time: Why these shoes? Why these pictorial interventions? Where does this sea fauna association come from?

**EL**

Frankly, from my perspective, neither group of works has to do with fashion. The boots are large-format 1950s negatives photographed for a department store. They are utilitarian, a means to organize, archive, and sell goods. They are an example of the aspect of pictures that has to do with utility and industrialization, and they are collaged with yet another example of functional photography, that of showing a breed, a kind, a species—a display, in other words. I was interested in having these examples married to a very different effort, one that is associated with expression and experimentation. There is a duality, even a tension, between the two ways a picture is processed. The plane of some of these works is further interfered with by intentionally simplistic interventions. Other shapes and forms protrude from the surface, establishing a new picture. The space of representation is literally disturbed: blocked or covered over in some places; in others, raised where once it was flat.

**XF**

Let's take an example, and let's try to be precise. In one of your pieces, there are three elements: an image of a woman throwing a ball, a larger image of a salmon, and a sliced stainless-steel ball. There are some similarities between these elements, but can you tell us more about this improbable display?

**EL**

I don't see similarities, to be honest. I would go so far as to say I see collisions. I suspect, from the way the question is set, that you are recognizing metaphors, yes? I am terrified of metaphors when it comes to my work. If I have to address your example, allow me to start with the framed picture: this is a contact print of a 35mm negative, cut out of a roll of 36 exposures, printed on fibre. For me, these two decisions anchor the piece to an industry, a history, and a certain conversion: from the visual vocabulary that comes with the analogue silver-gelatin print to the distinct 35mm negative—or even to the now-historical event of its opening up photography to the public, decades ago, with the introduction of the point-and-shoot camera. The salmon image is glued onto the print. Somewhat obviously sourced from printed matter, it is of a straightforward, utilitarian nature, calling to photography's capacity to categorize, archive, and so on. In cases of utilitarian usage, visual elements are of less relevance. Lastly, the sliced stainless steel ball is “hijacking” the photographic space by embedding itself into it.

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As if thrown onto the photograph, it cuts through the frame's glass, the print, and finally the mounting acrylic. I see this as an invitation to reconsider the space of representation, where the three-dimensional is taking part in blocking a part of the picture, addressing again its composition and space.

**XF**

We are also going to show this extraordinary film you've made, *Untitled (Eggs, Eyes)*. Can you describe it?

**EL**

I'm glad you enjoyed this work. The film was made originally for an exhibition I was invited to do at The Kitchen in New York, and was later shown at the Guggenheim. It cuts between two scenes and was entirely shot on a "table-top" setup in a studio. Both scenes were shot fixed frame on 16mm film. In one scene, two groups of eggs from opposite directions are arranged and then shaken; in the other, a Kodachrome red screen has three apertures cut into its surface, like human eyes, but with fragmented shutters, so that the apertures open and close, as if attempting to see and reveal at once. Towards the last cut of the film, a set of colored blocks made into metropolitan skyscrapers are seen spinning from behind. There is an engagement with early experimental film and the mechanism of movement, especially in the way the apertures open up. One can really recognize the primitive mechanism behind the choppy movement. Same goes for the bounce of the eggs, recalling the shake of a washing machine. I was also thinking of the horror of the science film, or more specifically early science films. Authoritative and matter-of-fact, detached from other filmic experiences, they read almost like governmental films.



## Images available



Elad Lassry  
*Untitled (Facility A)*  
2018  
© Elad Lassry, courtesy 303 Gallery,  
New York



Elad Lassry  
*Untitled (Assignment 96-10)*  
2018  
© Elad Lassry, courtesy 303 Gallery,  
New York



Elad Lassry  
*Untitled (Assignment 96-7)*  
2018  
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New York



Elad Lassry  
*Untitled (Pod, Holiday Peppers and  
Bows, 3)*  
2018  
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New York



Elad Lassry  
*Untitled (Ski Set, detail B)*  
2018  
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*Untitled (Corals Grid)*  
2018  
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Elad Lassry  
*Untitled (Pod, Holly Berry, 3)*  
2018  
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New York



Elad Lassry  
*Untitled (Assignment 96-3)*  
2018  
© Elad Lassry, courtesy 303 Gallery,  
New York

## Rendez-vous\*

Offering you reasons to come back to the plateau during the exhibition time

› **Curator tour**

Saturday 25.11.18

5.30pm

With Xavier Franceschi

› **Plateau-Apéro**

Late-night openings, up until 9pm, every 1st Wednesdays of the month, with a guided tour at 7.30 pm

Wednesday 03.10.18

Wednesday 07.11.18

Wednesday 05.12.18

› **Guided tours**

Every Sunday

4pm

Meeting-place at the reception

## ***Wefrac 2018***

3rd occasion of the Frac's week-end

23 Frac, 23 vip guests

frac île-de-france special guest :

**Laetitia Dosch\***

\*online program available in october

**Uisit-workshop «en famille»,**

proposed as part of the exhibition

*Elad Lassry*

Saturday 17.11.18

4pm

***Le frac île-de-france, from le Château to le Plateau ...***

Guided tour of the exhibitions *L* at le Château and *Elad Lassry* at le Plateau with Xavier Franceschi, curator of the exhibitions, followed by a snack.

Saturday 18.11.18

3pm

Free shuttle for the event, leaving from la Place du Châtelet at 2pm

Booking mandatory: [reservation@fraciledefrance.com](mailto:reservation@fraciledefrance.com)

## L'homme aux cent yeux (revue)

Artists invest the plateau the time of an evening

**Bertrand Larmarche**

29.11.18

7.30pm

## La vitrine

Every month, the "Window Display" at l'antenne is home to a new art project linked to le Plateau's exhibitions, collection and educational outreach ventures.

**Jacques Floret - *Manger 5 fruits et légumes par jour***

19.09-04.11.18

Opening Wednesday 03.10.18 at 7pm

***Dessins sans papiers***

07.11 - 02.12.18

Opening during the Plateau-Apéro Wednesday 07.11.18

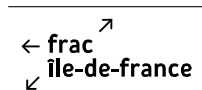
**Justin Morin**

05.12 - 03.02.19

Opening during the Plateau-Apéro Wednesday 05.12.18

**L'antenne culturelle**  
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\* free events



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**TRAM PLATFORM**  
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**02**

## Practical informations

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