

Portraits of pain

Artist creates portraits in 15-minute bursts

EMMA MC GEOWN
STREET NEWS SERVICE

Lukas has a typical German appearance: tall, long and curly hair, blue eyes. He is carrying a large bag on his back where he keeps his study supplies for Olivier-de-Serres. At 21 years old, he spent an Erasmus semester at the prestigious Parisian school of applied arts.

Lukas is from Nuremberg, a prosperous town. He has been studying visual communication for two years and hopes to do something like design or painting, but isn't sure yet.

He immediately said "let's speak in French" when I greeted him in German. Three months ago he barely spoke our language. "How did you think of this idea to do portraits of homeless people?" "Do portraits?" He repeated. He likes

neologism. He embraces it. Lukas explains that he lives in an attic room in the center and that he walks by the Beaubourg every day. There, he discovered the other side of Paris, men and women outside, camping, bundled up in their sleeping bags, while people walked by indifferent. Then, he saw them everywhere. A lot of them. It was shocking.

When his lecturer at Olivier-de-Serres asked him to do a piece on pain, he "immediately thought of these people". The process will be costly for him, figuratively. "I

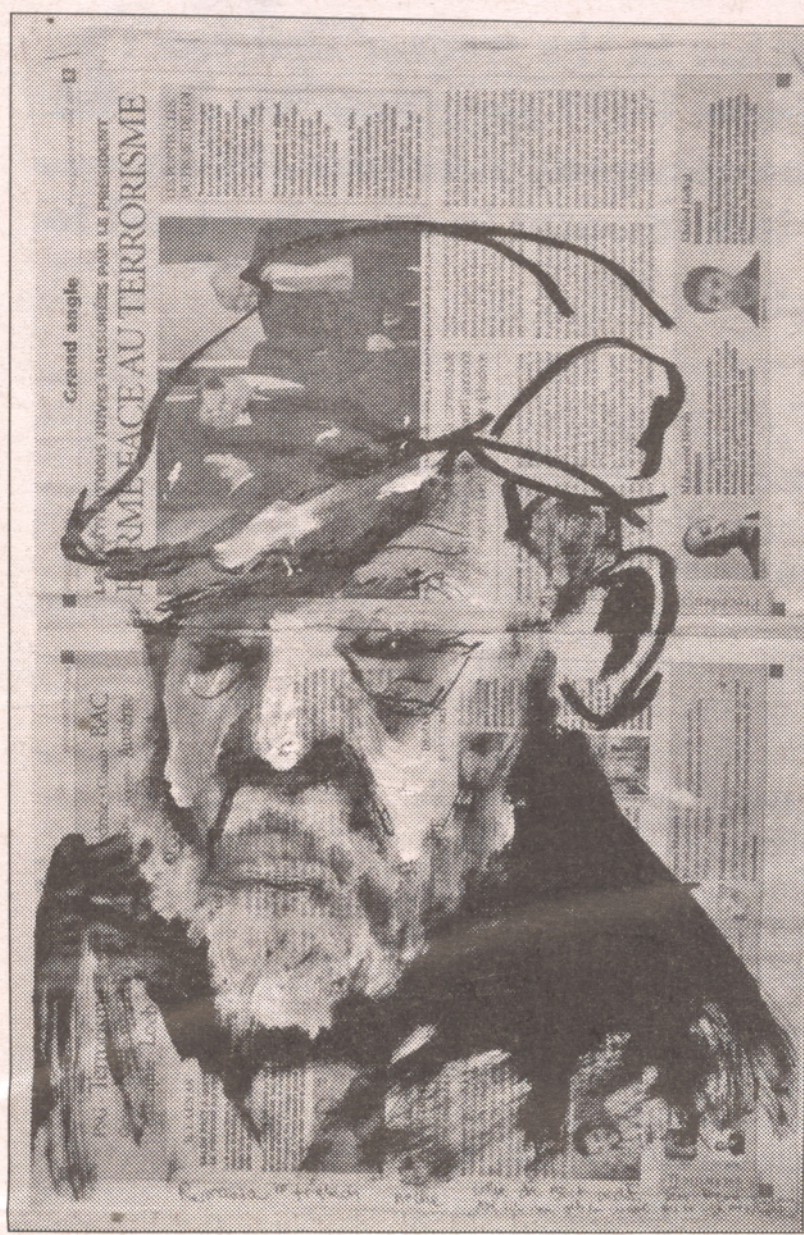
didn't speak French, neither did they. I was refused a lot. And then, a young Romanian said yes... for one euro. We negotiated. It became my price... then, it was easier because I had a portrait to show." Lukas completed twelve in total. Executed in pen and ink and white acrylic, because he wanted to do them quickly, not taking longer than 15 minutes. Naturally, a newspaper was provided: "They read le gratuit for the whole 20 minutes. Then they use it to shelter themselves." After, he ask them to sign it...

Upon seeing the 12 portraits, you want to congratulate the artist. Lukas replies that he is used to "döing portraits" of his friends, that he is familiar with this... he always remembers what happens during the execution of the portrait. He remembers two young Romanians who, at the end of the posing session, asked to "do a portrait" of him as they sat on their blankets and got into position; a man who wore a hat with horns and didn't stop shouting: "The king of idiots poses for prosperity [sic]!"; the only woman who posed, and who was very unpleasant; the old person who wanted two euros and then ten while the portrait was being drawn. "And as I was packing up my things, he indicated for me to continue; a

woman took photos of it."

Lukas leaves for Nuremberg in February. One day, perhaps, he will be an artist. He believes that an artist must be engaged, that he must show what others do not see. He has heard that there is a newspaper in Paris that might publish his portraits. This is why he sent an email to the French street paper Macadam.

Macadam is Street Roots' sister paper in Paris, France.



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