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An artist and his muse

Mathias Waske, famous for his witty and original ideas and paintings, explains why art can be such fun

Dreams for Mathias Waske and his wife, manager, muse and model Tina Waske von Reppert may come true more often than for others. The famous German painter, renowned for his witty and original ideas - such as his famous two-faced Madonna - has been dividing

an art collector. Yet Mathias' life has not always been one of luxury and like so many artists he has known the two extremes of wealth and poverty. After graduating from the State University for Art in Frankfurt, he painted just to survive.

When he was young, nobody wanted to buy his pictures, then in 1969 he suddenly discovered the other side of the coin when the Krupp German industrial family commissioned him for a wall painting in their palace in Marakkesh, Morocco. 'It was my first important work as a free artist,' says Waske.

Infact he was already travelling frequently between Germany and southern France, living the wild lifestyle that artists of the time were known for. His wife also has a passion for Provence so it was no surprise when the painter and his muse decided to divide their time between Munich and Les Maillons in Provence where they have a villa on a hectare of land planted with cork oaks and chestnut trees.

A major retrospective

They are down in Provence for the summer, working and entertaining friends and art enthusiasts. Waske loves good food and wine and prepares the dinners himself, often three days in advance.

Currently there are hardly any pictures on the walls as most are out at the Kunsthaus-Wien Museum, one of the

masterpieces of Austrian architect Hundertwasser. There is a big retrospective on Waske with his works from 1965 to today. Some 130 of the 61 year old's modern realist paintings have been on display there since May. Each work in the collection reveals his humorous side, be it subtly or obviously.

Some examples of his work include the Madonna icon drinking deeply from a coca-cola bottle, Goethe as a dog, or Waske himself as Bacchos, the god of wine, with his wife as the goddess of hunting.

Dabbling in paint

He also likes to dabble in other painters' work by adding his own touches. For example, a reproduction of Van Gogh's light café has Andy Warhol sitting at a table. He also repaints classical subjects of the old masters by changing tiny little details as well. Lately, though, he's started to paint his own topics.

Sometimes the subject is art itself, and other times he plays with a picture within a picture of the painting. He often criticises society but also makes fun of his own job as a painter.

'I show that art can be fun if the viewer knows a little bit of art history,' he says. Never short of ideas, he frequently gets inspired by incidents that occur on his travels. 'Sometimes he will suddenly



Waske's 'Art collecting is so Léger' (1990) depicts a family in front of a real work by the painter, Léger



Tina and Mathias Waske

his time between Provence and Munich for many years.

For sure luck has played its part but more importantly is that the couple, who have been married for 25 years, share the same philosophies on life. And while they like working, they also enjoy life to the full.

'We've always remained children,' says Tina. 'When we got to know each other, we dreamt of sitting on one of those yachts in Saint Tropez harbour, in front of the Café Sénéquier,' adds Mathias in his characteristically open, down-to-earth manner. This is one of those dreams they have been able to fulfill - only recently they were guests on a luxury yacht belonging to

stand still, take out his sketchbook and make a sketch,' his wife says. She is, of course, a big fan of her husband and vice-versa, as you can see in many of his paintings. Her favourite is *The dictatorship of gravity*, one in which she wasn't actually a model. In it, Napoleon straddles an obese lady as the bed they're on collapses.

Famous commissions

In the meantime, art collectors from business milieus as well as museums are buying his works, along with many private collectors. For example, you can see his pictures in the home of the tennis player Michael Stich, as well as composer Giorgio Moroder. They are even in the Palace of Monaco.

Soon another dream could come true for the couple. The crowning achievement of any artist is his own museum, and a German art sponsor who lives in Munich has offered to build Waske one dedicated to him.

AS/RB