

MATHIAS WASKE: TO LAUGH IS AN ART





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By David McKenzie

Although he skirts the common techniques of the Modern Art canon, Mathias Waske's body of work has distinctive techniques often remind of the Old Masters and Renaissance painters, with a masterful control of traditional painting techniques playfully provocative and undoubtedly modern.

Born in the town of Crailsheim in Germany's Baden-Württemberg region, Mathias Waske grew up surrounded by American-controlled Frankfurt am Main. After graduating from the city's State University for Fine Arts in 1967, he made visits to Florence and Venice, coming into contact with works from the high point of the Italian Renaissance. Since then, his work has been exhibited in galleries and museums across Europe and the South of France, but his popularity and artworks have spread all over the world.

The intricate precision and attention to detail of Waske's paintings allow them to be not just aesthetically pleasing but also thought-provoking. The subjects he has raised and explored by his stimulating works are contemporary ones: our obsession with icons (be they historical figures or celebrities), the debilitating comfort in familiarity, the unifying or dividing power of cultural symbols and mass production, the tension between the past and the present, and irrational social conventions unthinkingly accepted as the norm – to name just a few.

But the way Waske invites the audience to ponder such contemporary issues is a mixture of old and new. A masterful use of shading and perspective make immediate impressions of Old Master techniques rather than modern ones. The subjects are easily communicable – these realistic depictions induce the audience to notice their paradox with the works' subject matter.

The style and content are often at odds with one another. This makes ideas leap out of Waske's paintings. He juxtaposes the familiar with farcical, comical subjects. From the ancient Greek *Discobolus* of Myron to the *Mona Lisa*, Vincent van Gogh's beloved artworks and deprives them of their original context and intention, creating an entirely new means of expression.

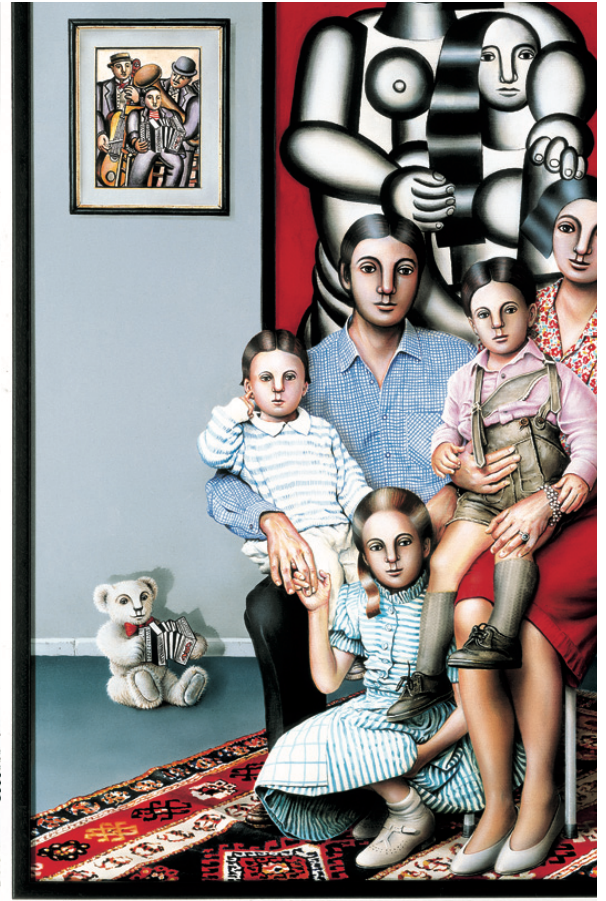
Waske's work maintains a light-hearted tone, and his comical, bizarre combinations often make laughter the first response. Yet deeper contemplations arise. Why do we find such things amusing, what is it about our connection to the ideas he explores? Waske's work in effect caricatures much of what people unconsciously accept if accepted only through convention. It is a collection of parodies of things we know in everyday life. They may be funny, but Waske's work challenges our ability to separate the two.

Mathias Waske's unique style, founded in expert artistic technique but fuelled by prescient social and cultural commentary, has made him a contemporary artist and primary exponent of Modern Realism. This recognition has been accompanied by numerous exhibitions and awards.

bestowed the title of *Summa cum Laude*, the highest possible honour from the Kunsthof Schloss Reinhartshausen collections and permanent gallery collections across the world. The pensive scope of Waske's work and its all in the long list of prominent people who have admired Waske's work enough to include it in their private collections. The former Pope John Paul II, the Royal House of Monaco and even the astronauts from the successful Apollo 11 mission.

In Mathias Waske we have a precious artistic talent. One with the potential to inspire, intrigue, shock, or, above all, to elicit human responses.





"The intricate precision and attention to detail of Waske's paintings allow them to be not just aesthetically pleasing but also thought-provoking."

"A skilful harmony between compatible colours and expert control of shading and perspective make immediate impressions."

"From the ancient Greek Discobolus of Myron to the Mona Lisa, Vincent van Gogh and Pablo Picasso, he takes the original context and intention, creating an entirely new means of interpretation."

"Waske's work in effect caricatures much of what people unquestioningly take for granted – the normal and the everyday."

TAGS: Art, artist, detail, Frankfurt, German, Germany, Mathias Waske, Old Masters, paint, painter,

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ADDRESS

Succ. H – C.P. 1268 N

H3G 2N2 Canada.

info@artemonaco.cc

Elena Mildner

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