

GALERIE NATHALIE OBADIA

PARIS - BRUXELLES

RODRIGO MATHEUS

L'ANTICHAMBRE

January 21 - March 18, 2023

3, rue du Cloître Saint-Merri, Paris 4^e



Rodrigo Matheus, *Skyline*, 2022
Suitcase, felt, coated polystyrene, foam and acrylic paint, 79 x 69 x 20 cm (31^{1/8} x 27^{1/8} x 7^{7/8} in.)

Galerie Nathalie Obadia is very pleased to present *L'Antichambre*, Rodrigo Matheus's third solo exhibition, after *City of Stars* (2019) at its Paris gallery and *Ornament and Crime* (2016) in Brussels, which was the first successful collaboration between the artist and the gallery.

A graduate of the prestigious University of Sao Paulo in 2001, Rodrigo Matheus's work had already been the subject of several exhibitions in Brazil and in North America, when it was presented in Europe following his Masters at the Royal College of Arts in London.

L'Antichambre unveils a group of new works by the artist, subtle compositions made of ordinary objects. The recent mural sculptures inscribe themselves in the continuity of his examination of assemblages of eclectic things. Between his capacity to disjoint them and his desire to fit them back together, the diverse elements become entangled, enter into dialog with each other. These assemblages yield surprising compositions that border on abstraction, lending the objects a new dimension that goes beyond their normal usage.

For his new series, Rodrigo Matheus chose to exhibit elements that are as ordinary as they are clashing: plain windows whose openings are blocked by a metallic grate share the space with suitcases spilling their contents, presented vertically along the wall. Most of the elements outside and inside the exhibited objects – like the uneven bricks around the windows or the minutely aligned containers in the suitcase – were made entirely by the artist from blocks of polyurethane foam. This lightweight material is easy to sculpt and gives the works a sense of weight and density. The unusual assembly of each element, coupled with the trompe-l'oeil quality of their material composition, puts the viewer in an unstable and mysterious space, at the gates of reality.

The idea of a "transitional place," referring to the evocative title *L'Antichambre*, is central in the exhibition. The window and the suitcase are, beyond just objects, spaces in themselves. The suitcase acts as the incarnation of the private space, capable of being hand-carried when we are in transit: "Its interior," says the artist, "can be metaphorically considered as an extension of our interior, of our intimacy and of our needs." The window also brings up a certain ambiguity: it symbolizes the transition, the passage between two spaces, from inside toward outside and vice-versa. As for the walls of the room, painted in alternating shades of blue and yellow, they limit the exhibition space from the rest of the world that drifts past the gallery's bay windows. The viewer then penetrates inside a timeless, placeless space, where circulation games, mental projections, physical and imaginary journeys occur. Thus, when considering the narrative argument of what the objects signify to the artist, Rodrigo Matheus's works also activate the spectator's memory, as they recognize familiar elements here and there, ranging from objects to the architecture that accompanies his everyday comings-and-goings.

However, despite their apparent lightness, these works are serious, marked by Brazil's tumultuous history and by the global ups and downs that characterize this third millennium. Rodrigo Matheus mentions a trompe-l'oeil painting by Pere Borrell del Caso, titled *Escaping Criticism* (1874), in which the window suggests breaking out, the possibility of flight for a child attempting to escape. Recurring motifs throughout art history for the numerous meanings they convey, the window and the suitcase are symbolic figures; they reflect the beliefs and practices of their time. In Vermeer's *Girl Reading a Letter at an Open Window* (1657-1659), for instance, the window lets in a gentle light that bathes the room in a mystical, almost divine atmosphere. Rodrigo Matheus's contemporary works, conversely, show a total absence of light: the screened windows, devoid of luminosity and perspectives, could signify the universal feeling of uncertainty about the future that awaits us, reflecting the preoccupations that are at the heart of our contemporary times.

Although they appear, at first glance, mysterious and playful, the exhibited works can subtly and delicately evoke the very ambiguity of our shared spaces: they create a link and distinguish inside from outside in their motion; they separate and connect, link, frame, divide and reveal at the same time. While in both reality and fiction these objects play "supporting roles in our everyday life," here they become the main subjects.

L'Antichambre is incarnated here as an intermediate space, where time no longer appears to have a hold on the elements, which open up to the viewers, revealing the infinite depth of their interiors, and invite them on a journey through unfathomable spatiotemporal depths.

Born in São Paulo in 1974, Rodrigo Matheus lives and works between São Paulo and Paris.

Rodrigo Matheus graduated in Fine Arts from the University of São Paulo in 2001, and from the Royal College of Art in London in 2011 with a Master's degree in sculpture. He is part of the young emerging Brazilian scene. He has had numerous exhibitions in Brazil and North America. After obtaining his Master's degree at the Royal College of Art in London, he participated in several exhibitions in Europe, including, in 2014, *Imagine Brazil* at the Musée d'Art Contemporain de Lyon. The exhibition, which was presented in 2013 at Astrup Fearnley Museet (Oslo, Norway) and then at DHC/ART (Montreal, Canada) in 2015, brought together fourteen of the most creative artists of the emerging Brazilian scene.

Over the past ten years, he has received increasing attention and has exhibited in prestigious international institutions such as, in France, the Centre Pompidou and the Palais de Tokyo in Paris, the Musée d'Art Contemporain in Lyon, and the 17th Lyon Biennale; in the United States, the Swiss Institute and the New Museum in New York; in Canada, the DHC/Art Foundation in Montreal and the Art Gallery of York University in Toronto; in Norway, the Astrup Fearnley Museet in Oslo; in Sweden, the Bonniers Konsthall in Stockholm; in Portugal, the Manuel Antonio da Mota Foundation in Porto; and in the United Kingdom, the Brazilian Embassy in London.

In Brazil, Rodrigo Matheus has exhibited in many internationally renowned institutions such as the Museum of Modern Art in Rio de Janeiro; the Museum of Modern Art, the Pinacoteca, the Tomie Ohtake Institute and the SESC Pompeia in São Paulo; the Museu de Arte de Pampulha in Belo Horizonte; the Inhotim Institute in Brumadinho; the Bienal do Mercosul in Porto Alegre; and the 3rd Bahia Biennial.

Rodrigo Matheus has a solo exhibition in 2019 at the Ghisla Art Collection in Locarno, Switzerland.

His work is held in important public collections in the United States, Brazil and the United Kingdom: such as the Lea Weingarten Collection, Houston, Texas (USA), the Museu de Arte Moderna de Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), the Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo (Brazil), the Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo (Brazil), Museu de Arte da Pampulha, Belo Horizonte (Brazil), Inhotim Centro de Arte Contemporânea, Brumadinho (Brazil), Instituto Figueiredo Ferraz (Brazil), Tiroche DeLeon Collection, Gibraltar

Rodrigo Matheus is represented by Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris/Brussels, since 2016.

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Rodrigo Matheus
L'Antichambre
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