

For any information regarding availabilities and prices of the works of art, please do not hesitate to ask at our reception.

RODRIGO MATHEUS

Ornament and Crime

7 September - 22 October, 2016

Rue Charles Decoster 8 - 1050 Brussels



Rodrigo Matheus, *Ornament and Crime*, 2016. Mixed media, 100 × 80 cm (39 3/8 × 31 1/2 in.).

The Galerie Nathalie Obadia Brussels is very pleased to announce its first collaboration with the Brazilian artist, Rodrigo Matheus. The artist, who was born in Sao Paulo in 1974, has called his exhibition *Ornament and Crime*, after the text of the same name by Austrian architect, Adolf Loos¹ (1870-1933). The exhibition stages everyday objects that Matheus has meticulously collected and then cleverly assembled into metaphorical, poetic compositions.

A graduate of the prestigious University of Sao Paulo in 2001, Rodrigo Matheus has had numerous exhibitions in Brazil and North America. After receiving his Masters degree from the Royal College of Art in London (2011), he participated in several exhibitions in Europe, including *Imagine Brazil* at the Musée d'Art Contemporain de Lyon in 2014. The exhibition, which had been presented in 2013 at the Astrup Fearnley Museet (Oslo, Norway), and then at the DHC/ART (Montreal, Canada) in 2015, included works by fourteen of the most creative artists of the emerging Brazilian art scene.

For this first solo exhibition in Belgium, at the Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Rodrigo Matheus presents *Ornament and Crime* which includes works on paper and sculptures, some of which are what the artist calls "wall paintings."

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Each of these works springs from an ingenious assemblage of ordinary objects. To this general principle more natural elements such as shells, plants, feathers, sand or even stones may be added. This association gives rise to surprising abstract compositions with a geometrical look, as in the paper works, or demonstrates a less structured organization, giving way to an organic spontaneity, as is especially visible in the sculptures.

The works on paper, which derive from collage, recycle the mail that arrives each morning in the artist's mailbox. Normally destined for the wastepaper basket, the "junk mail" is, in this case, cut, de-structured, and mixed with vintage documents such as postcards or old photos, press clippings, or maps from another era. These paper architectures superimpose the documents and, in a poetic way, create overlapping between the potentially intimate stories (letters, photographs, postcards) and the most impersonal possible communication (advertisements, administrative letters, etc.) contained in them.

The gleeful organization that presides over the assembling of this anonymous correspondence goes against the rigidity embodied by the bureaucratization of tasks and the interpersonal relationships between workers. This metaphorical connection between Rodrigo Matheus' paper sculptures and the world of work, which struggles to liberate itself from cumbersome administrative procedures, reveals the subversive dimension of his creative process, which shares conceptual and formal elements with the cubist compositions of the German artist, Kurt Schwitters (1887-1948) who revolutionized collage techniques in his time.

The sculptures, like the paper pieces, function through the displacement and reorganization of ordinary objects. They create close encounters between the most unusual and antagonistic objects imaginable, such as the cut off hand of a mannequin, the rear-view mirror of a bicycle, or a peacock feather. Their unexpected association illustrates the artist's cherished principle of "circulation of materials." Rodrigo Matheus likes to create dialogues between objects which together take on new dimensions, surpassing the habitual uses of one and the other constituent parts.

The resulting sculptures are therefore loaded with historical, sociological, even psychological content, which makes reference to the readymades by Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968) or Marcel Broodthaers (1924-1976); their polysemy is both playful and critical. Like his two illustrious predecessors, Rodrigo Matheus makes "portrait by the object". In 2015, with *"Portrait of a Portrait,"* he makes homage to the Dada spirit that invented them by reinterpreting the most famous of the "portraits par l'objet," that of Marcel Duchamp himself, done some time around 1915 by the German artist Elsa von Freytag Loringhoven (1874-1927).

Closer to Rodrigo Matheus, the Swiss duo Peter Fischli (Zurich, 1952) & David Weiss (Zurich, 1946-2012), who masterfully practiced the misappropriation of objects in the 1980s, handled absurdity, humor and irony with a verve that continues to inspire the conceptual work of the Brazilian artist.

Under their light-hearted and facetious airs, Rodrigo Matheus' works are nevertheless born from and marked by the upheavals of the political and social history of Brazil, which has been particularly agitated in recent years. His works on paper, like his sculptures and installations, bear the stigmata of this tumultuous genesis, oscillating between amusement and disillusionment.

The title of the exhibition, which makes reference to the most famous theoretical text written by Adolf Loos, illustrates this paradox. The Austrian demigod, considering ornaments to be the "sign of an uncultivated state" preferred decoration, which he understood as "a set of rules that it sufficed to observe in order to render architecture more pleasant, at the same time conferring on it the cultural insignia of its social function." Adolf Loos admired the lasting quality of the classical style. For him, "the persistence of one formal typology from the Renaissance through the beginning of the 19th century, was not a "revival," but rather a tradition. It was a question of forms that had resisted the fluctuations of fashion and that therefore reflected a profound and durable modernity."²

We find this "profound and durable modernity" in Rodrigo Matheus' architected compositions. By juxtaposing "dissonant" objects using his keen feeling for composition, the Brazilian artist gives them a superior dimension, full of signs and meanings. In this way, we discover the artist, inspired by a great sensitivity to the signs of the times, our times, which goes beyond external markers (ornaments) to touch the humanity inside.

By giving a new use to the objects he assembles, transforming the ephemeral into the lasting, the banal into the sacred, Rodrigo Matheus gives form to a constantly evolving personal mythology.

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This brings to mind the anthropological research of Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908-2009), one of the founding figures of structuralism in the 1950s. Like Adolf Loos, who had a major influence on modern architecture, Claude Lévi-Strauss, whose scientific and literary work was particularly well-received in Brazil, drastically changed the human sciences of the 20th century. Both individuals developed their respective theories about the evolution of civilizations (Western or other) and were inspired by, amongst other things, the cultures of so-called primitive peoples in the development of their theories (Lévi-Strauss encountered the indigenous peoples of Brazil, which enabled him to develop the principles of structural anthropology; Loos referred to the traditions of the people of Papua New Guinea to illustrate his "Ornament and crime"). In their respective theories, they emphasized the question of innate versus learned behavior, which is directly related to the confrontation between nature and culture.

Through his assemblages, the artist Rodrigo Matheus walks a tight-rope, in form and substance. Playful and mischievous at first glance, his works, in a subtle and delicate way, call forth all of the wealth with which the history of art nourishes our occidental culture, and divulges a disenchanting view and a scathing criticism of our society. Rodrigo Matheus' work reflects the runaway globalization of our century and interrogates the many issues and challenges faced by society today, including that of consumption, or rather over-consumption. These are all of the ingredients that can be found in Rodrigo Matheus' unfettered and eminently poetic compositions.

¹ Adolf Loos, « Ornament et crime » (1908) & « Architecture » (1910) in *Malgré tout 1900-1931*, Brenner Verlag Editions, 1931.

² Panayotis Tournikiotis, Loos, Macula Architecture Editions, 1991, pages 27 & 30.

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

Recipient of a Bachelor's degree in Fine arts from the University of Sao Paulo in 2001, and a Masters degree in sculpture from the Royal College of Art of London in 2011, Rodrigo Matheus is part of Brazil's young emerging art scene. He has been the object of increasing attention over the last ten years and has exhibited his work in prestigious international institutions such as, in France: the Centre Pompidou and the Palais de Tokyo in Paris, the Musée d'Art Contemporain de Lyon, and the 13th Biennale de Lyon; 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 renowned international institutions such as the Museum of Modern Art in Rio de Janeiro; in Sao Paulo, the Museum of Modern Art, the Pinacothèque, the Tomie Ohtake Institute and the SESC Pompeia ; the Museu de Arte de Pampulha in Belo Horizonte ; the Inhotim Institute in Brumadinho ; la Bienal do Mercosul in Porto Alegre and the 3rd Biennial of Bahia.

His works are held in important public collections like in the United States, the Lea Weingarten Collection, in Houston ; in Brazil, the Museu de Arte Moderna do Rio de Janeiro, the Museu de Arte Moderna de Sao Paulo, the Pinacoteca do Estado de Sao Paulo, the Museu de Arte da Pampulha in Belo Horizonte, the Inhotim Centro de Arte Contemporânea in Brumadinho, the Instituto Figueiredo Ferraz ; and in the United Kingdom, the Tiroche DeLeon Collection in Gibraltar.

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Galerie Nathalie Obadia
Brussels

Rodrigo Matheus
Ornament and Crime
7 September - 22 October, 2016

Galerie Nathalie Obadia
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All Star
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OEUVRES SUR PAPIER



Rodrigo Matheus

Panorama, 2016

Enveloppes, impressions et cartes postales
Envelops, prints and postcards
62,4 × 73,4 × 7 cm (24 5/8 × 28 7/8 × 2 3/4 in.) framed
ID31248



Rodrigo Matheus

Emoji, 2016

Enveloppes
Envelops
45,5 × 51,4 × 7 cm (17 7/8 × 20 1/4 × 2 3/4 in.) framed
ID31250



Rodrigo Matheus

Here, There and Long Ago, 2016

Enveloppes, impressions, photographies et cartes postales
Envelops, prints, photographs and postcards
42 × 50,9 × 7 cm (16 1/2 × 20 × 2 3/4 in.) framed
ID31251



Rodrigo Matheus

Lady X, 2016

Enveloppes et photographies
Envelops and photographs
60,4 × 55,9 × 7 cm (23 3/4 × 22 × 2 3/4 in.) framed
ID31252



Rodrigo Matheus

Carnival Costume, 2016

Enveloppes, impressions, photographies et cartes postales
Envelops, prints, photographs and postcards
70 × 59,5 × 7 cm (27 1/2 × 23 3/8 × 2 3/4 in.) framed
ID31253

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BRUXELLES



Rodrigo Matheus
Breeze, 2016

Enveloppes, impressions, lettres, photographies et cartes postales
Envelops, prints, letters, photographs and postcards
86,6 × 113,6 × 9 cm (34 1/8 × 44 3/4 × 3 1/2 in.) framed
ID31256



Rodrigo Matheus
Entre Tempos, 2016

Enveloppes, impressions, photographies et cartes postales
Envelops, prints, photographs and postcards
40 × 50,4 × 7 cm (15 3/4 × 19 7/8 × 2 3/4 in.) framed
ID31257



Rodrigo Matheus
Grey Zone, 2016

Enveloppes
Envelops
65,4 × 65,4 × 7 cm (25 3/4 × 25 3/4 × 2 3/4 in.) framed
ID31248



Rodrigo Matheus
Time Lapse, 2016

Enveloppes et photographies
Envelops and photographs
122,5 × 92,6 × 9 cm (48 1/4 × 36 1/2 × 3 1/2 in.) framed
ID31385

SCULPTURES



Rodrigo Matheus
L'équilibriste, 2016

Technique mixte
Mixed media
250 × 78 × 60 cm (98 3/8 × 30 3/4 × 23 5/8 in.)
ID31422

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BRUXELLES



Rodrigo Matheus
Lost and Found, 2016

Objets divers
Assorted objects
93 × 55 cm (36 5/8 × 21 5/8 in.)
ID31259



Rodrigo Matheus
Ornament and Crime, 2016

Technique mixte
Mixed media
100 × 80 cm (39 3/8 × 31 1/2 in.)
ID31381



Rodrigo Matheus
Triptico, 2016

Technique mixte
Mixed media
63 × 89 × 12 cm (24 3/4 × 35 × 4 3/4 in.)
ID31423



Rodrigo Matheus
Flow, 2016

Technique mixte
Mixed media
150 × 45 × 43 cm (59 × 17 3/4 × 16 7/8 in.)
ID31418

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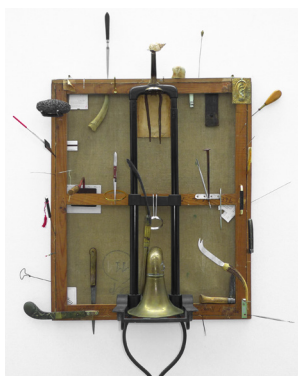
Rodrigo Matheus
Objects of the Mind, 2016

Technique mixte
Mixed media
120 × 90 × 50 cm (47 1/4 × 35 3/8 × 19 5/8 in.)
ID31426



Rodrigo Matheus
Portrait and Still life, 2016

Technique mixte
Mixed media
72 × 69 × 28 cm (28 3/8 × 27 1/8 × 11 in.)
ID31420



Rodrigo Matheus
Motivation, 2016

Technique mixte
Mixed media
127 × 84 × 33 cm (50 × 33 1/8 × 13 in.)
ID31380



Rodrigo Matheus
Good Fight, 2016

Technique mixte
Mixed media
236 × 33 × 33 cm (92 7/8 × 13 × 13 in.)
ID31460

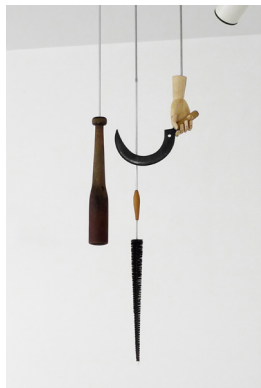
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Rodrigo Matheus
Daydreams, 2016

Technique mixte
Mixed media
55 × 46 × 29 cm (21 5/8 × 18 1/8 × 11 3/8 in.)
ID31421



Rodrigo Matheus
Three Elements in Composition, 2016

Technique mixte
Mixed media
164 × 48 × 12 cm (64 5/8 × 18 7/8 × 4 3/4 in.)
ID31454



Rodrigo Matheus
Extension, 2016

Technique mixte
Mixed media
262 × 12 × 12 cm (103 1/8 × 4 3/4 × 4 3/4 in.)
ID31459



Rodrigo Matheus
A Tail in a Thousand, 2016

Technique mixte
Mixed media
Dimension variable
Variable dimension
ID31461