

Press release

Marcin Maciejowski

Around You

7 October—23 December 2023
Opening Saturday 7 October 2023, 6—9pm

Thaddaeus Ropac
Salzburg Villa Kast
Mirabellplatz 2, 5020 Salzburg



Marcin Maciejowski, *Basquiat Documentary (YouTube)*, 2023.
Oil on canvas. 50 x 70 cm (19.69 x 27.56 in).

I can say that my artistic practice originates in reality, but it is a special kind of reality – created by me in my studio in the process of selection. Lately, I have been looking for visual harmony in a turbulent world and that is what I want to portray in my paintings. I am interested in things that are the simplest and most important, and therefore – maybe – timeless.

— Marcin Maciejowski

This exhibition presents new paintings by Marcin Maciejowski, highlighting the Polish artist's continued exploration of the often-overlooked moments of everyday life and urban culture.

Contemporary scenes are shown alongside works that reference prominent artists of the past – or their artworks – including Kazimir Malevich and Pablo Picasso. Ranging from present-day moments to depictions of artworks from various periods of art history, Maciejowski's paintings reveal both a strong fascination with the past as well as a desire to engage with the discourse of today, of which he himself is a part. The artist sources his imagery from a variety of media, including his own photographs, capturing moments in time that range from the seductive to the mundane.

Maciejowski combines a graphic, comic-book aesthetic with realism to present an enigmatic form of social commentary. By using a palette that seems almost nostalgic and does not differentiate between the historic and current events, these varied works – shown side by side – achieve a certain timelessness. Paintings executed in black-and-white are further reminiscent of archival or documentary material. They seem to preserve a subject or an impression, but at the same time, Maciejowski detaches the original from its temporal context. The framing of the image and viewpoint it presents to the viewer is selected by the artist to accentuate this disconnect or sense of uncertainty. In *Basquiat Documentary (YouTube) (2023)*, for instance, the strong close-up view enhances the composition's ambiguity by compromising its legibility.



Marcin Maciejowski, *Polish Cinema (Polanski 1961)*, 2023.
Oil on canvas. 35 x 27 cm (13.78 x 10.63 in).

In his painting *Polish Cinema (Polanski 1961)* (2023), Maciejowski depicts a film still from Roman Polanski's Academy Award-nominated *Knife in the Water*. He draws attention to the act of looking by granting the viewer of the painting the same perspective of a woman changing her clothes as that sought out by the voyeuristic young man in the film. Maciejowski's selection of this specific scene highlights the troubled social dynamics encapsulated

in the film, evidenced in a narrative marked by human desire and dark fantasies – issues that are only further reinforced by the criminal allegations made against the Polish-French filmmaker himself. Similar themes, such as the power relations implicit in this act of image appropriation, are taken up in another painting depicting the actress Sharon Stone in front of a work by Malevich. Here, the embedded caption, a frequent addition in Maciejowski's works, disturbs the illusionary character of the painting while referencing the sensationalism of the art market – a part of the art world that Maciejowski frequently highlights in his paintings.

The work *Yves Saint-Laurent* (2023) shows a cropped image of a fashion model walking towards the viewer, presumably taken on a runway. The motif stems from a Polish fashion magazine from the 1990s and in the bottom left corner the image is prominently captioned with the designer's name. For his rendering of the clothes' fabric, the artist drew on sculptural forms, specifically on Michelangelo's *Madonna della Pietà* (1498–1499), creating a 'sculptural form on canvas,' as he explains. By incorporating this art historical reference into this composition, Maciejowski plays with ubiquitous pathos formulas that have been valid for centuries.



Marcin Maciejowski, *Yves Saint-Laurent*, 2023.
Oil on canvas. 180 x 120 cm (70.87 x 47.24 in).

For *Wife as (Jan) van Eyck* (2023), the artist reinterprets the universally revered self-portrait by the titular painter in an act of substitution that replaces the artist with a depiction of Maciejowski's own wife. The work highlights the artist's central theme of the role of women in art and raises a more general issue of representation of gender in society. He translocates the original composition by Jan van Eyck (1390–1441) into a contemporary dialogue and thus questions how the canon of art history has shaped today's understanding of representation and identity construction. As for all works in the exhibition, the social and political implications of Maciejowski's subject are retained in his painted versions. They are brought into stark focus through the change in medium, in a sense creating a new reality for these universal codes of mass culture.



Marcin Maciejowski, *Wife as (Jan) van Eyck*, 2023. Oil on canvas.
70 x 50 cm (27.56 x 19.69 in).



About the artist

One of Poland's best-known contemporary painters, Marcin Maciejowski first came to international prominence as part of the Grupa Ładnie (Pretty Group), alongside fellow students from the technical university in Kraków. He explains that the group 'used joking and triviality instead of imitating pompous school teaching' to achieve an honesty and accessibility in painting that helped revitalise the medium in Poland. A chronicler of everyday life the artist is nevertheless continually attuned to art history. Found images are translated into a unique painterly idiom that reflects his background in graphic art. Personal scenes appear alongside those with broader public significance, although his works evade any explicit narrative. The artist often equates political rhetoric with the platitudes of an art critic to question the role of contemporary art in society.

Maciejowski's work is represented in distinguished public collections, including the Belvedere, Vienna; Volpinum Kunstsammlung, Vienna; Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary Foundation, Vienna; Museum der Moderne, Salzburg; MOCaK Museum of Contemporary Art, Kraków; Ujazdowski Castle Centre for Contemporary Art, Warsaw; SCHAUWERK Sindelfingen; and Burger Collection, Berlin. The National Museum in Kraków held a comprehensive solo exhibition of Maciejowski's work in 2010, followed by solo shows at Ostdeutsche Galerie, Regensburg the same year and the BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead in 2013. More recently his works were included in exhibitions at the Państwowa Galeria Sztuki, Sopot (2019), the Museum of Contemporary Art in Kraków (2020), and currently at the Belvedere Museum, Vienna (until February 2024).

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