

INMAN GALLERY

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NEW SCULPTURE BY CATTELAN TURNS OUT TO BE AN ART PRANK It previewed in a Gallery in Texas, but was made by the artists Eva and Franco Mattes

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In spite of an immediate and enthusiastic reception by the art world, a new sculpture by Italian art-star Maurizio Cattelan currently featured at Inman Gallery Annex in Houston, TX, is actually the work of artist-provocateurs Eva and Franco Mattes—also known as 0100101110101101.org—created by adopting the famous artist's style and materials.

"I was never very good at making art. But, modestly speaking, I'm pretty good at copying," declared Franco Mattes, "so I thought, let's wear the mask of a famous artist and see what happens: Will people realize it immediately? Will they say 'this is his worst work ever?' Or will they love it?"

Since November 6th local arts enthusiasts and visiting arts professionals have been stopping at Inman Gallery Annex to catch a look at the new work by Maurizio Cattelan. The sculpture features a small yellow taxidermy bird perched atop a birdcage that imprisons an angry-looking taxidermy cat.

The reception of the new sculpture by Houston's art community, who is especially familiar with Cattelan's satirical sculptures given his recent retrospective at the Menil Collection, was very positive. "I'm sorry for the cat," remarked Eric Irving, "but this is tragic and comic at the same time, Cattelan's ironical and anti-authoritarian approach stands out at his best."

Photos of the sculpture circulated widely, generating dozens of comments: "He's a genius," wrote Jonathan Line on Facebook. "He is the only one able to surprise me every time."

The Mattes' "Cattelan" is included in *Weasel*, a group exhibition on view at Inman Gallery Annex through January 15, 2011 that presents duplicitous, evasive and contradictory gestures by contemporary artists.

Kurt Mueller, co-curator of the show with Chelsea Beck, observed: "I would expect an exhibition titled *Weasel* would make viewers suspicious—and some

were—but even the sharpest eye is influenced by the way something is presented. We’re all prey to context.”

“Sometimes ‘the label’ is as important as the content,” added Beck.

“The sculpture was conceived in Cattelan’s style, and it was made by the same artisan who made most of his past work,” explained Eva Mattes, “Cattelan is a great artist but this work is not about him. We could have chosen any other artist to make the point, I think. The sculpture itself is actually a copy of a cat meme image we found on the Internet.”

The New York-based Matteses have been working for years using different identities and names in their artworks, impersonating the Vatican, Nike Corporation or Hollywood movie producers. They invented the life and work of an artist who was then invited to participate in the Venice Biennale. They remixed works of other Internet artists and stole parts of many dozens of different art masterpieces, from a Kandinsky to a Warhol, in a performance that lasted two years.

As in their previous works this latest project is about demystifying notions of authorship and originality and the almost holy aura of the work of art. “Appropriation of visual culture,” said Eva Mattes, “has always been part of human history, of the way humans progress and learn, and art is no exception. It would be more useful to look for references in a work of art instead of originality.”

Eva and Franco Mattes
aka 0100101110101101.ORG
Catt (Fake Cattelan sculpture) (detail)
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Taxidermy cat and bird, polyurethane resin,
cage, wood
55 x 40 x 40 cm

