



NATIONAL SPORTING
LIBRARY & MUSEUM
MIDDLEBURG, VA



Field Notes

Walter Matia

Deputy Director & George L. Ohrstrom, Jr. Curator Claudia Pfeiffer



An exciting indoor/outdoor bronze sculpture exhibition, *Field Notes* | *Walter Matia*, by contemporary artist Walter Matia, reflects the engaging artist's honed talent and thoughtful insights. His study of biology, early work as a taxidermist, successful career as a conservationist, and life-long drive to observe nature as a hunter-naturalist, inform his sculptures of wild and domesticated animals and bring them to life.

Seven large-scale works of wild turkeys, a pointer, a Peregrine Falcon, Green-winged Teal Ducks, Whooping Cranes, and a Great Blue Heron greet visitors throughout the NSLM's grounds. Two interior galleries continue with sculptures, bas reliefs, and a fire screen. These various bronzes depict sporting dogs and hounds, bison, gamebirds, and waterfowl.

Some of the sculptures in the exhibition serve as a reminder of threatened species in need of protection, and proceeds from the sale of two works on loan are fundraisers for conservation organizations. The bison, once endangered, is the subject of a bas relief which will benefit the American Prairie Reserve. In support of the American

Bird Conservancy, the regal bronze of three Whooping Cranes stands in silent testimony to a species that has suffered severe habitat loss and over-hunting. On loan from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, a bronze of a red knot pair draws attention to the subspecies endangered status due to the commercial over-harvesting of horseshoe crabs whose eggs are the birds' food source.

Some of Matia's artworks spring from an imagined title for an idea, and other sculpture titles are inspired by the completed three-dimensional form. A pair of ducks, having avoided the wingshooter in the blind and descending over cattails, are *Crossing to Safety*. The *International Harvester* an English pointer, stands on guard in a field of corn, rear left leg raised and tail stretched to the sky in a classic point, forever alerting hunters to the game beyond view. *Rewards of First Light*, a striking pair of wild turkeys captures the species'





habitual early morning movements. *No Country for Old Frogs* introduces a pair of herons, one head raised in a majestic silhouette and the other focused on the marshy surface, ready to strike for a tasty meal. At times whimsical and others serious, the sculptor's titles speak to his creativity and experience while afield.

Matia approaches his subjects through the lens of a lifetime of unrelenting curiosity. The fluidity with which he navigates through several different disciplines reflect his deep knowledge and experience.

As a sportsman, conservationist, and a biologist, he embraces the ethos that for field sports to be sustainable, ethical hunting practices and conservation of habitat are paramount. As a researcher, he has studied the works of 19th and early 20th century sculptors like Antoine-Louis Barye (French, 1795–1895), Rembrandt Bugatti (Italian, 1884–1916), François Pompon (French, 1855–1933), and most influentially, Albert Laessle (American, 1877–1954). As a sculptor, Matia is guided by a drive to classify, catalog, and capture his surroundings. His sculptures are his field notes: “If I make my audience feel the intention of those moments, then I am making an authentic effort to add to the canon of sporting art.” 🦉

Field Notes | *Walter Matia* is generously underwritten by Susan and John Mullin.

Opening to the public on June 18, 2021, the exhibition will be on display throughout the summer and fall, closing on January 9, 2022.

To learn more please visit NationalSporting.org

P. 9, top to bottom: Walter Matia (American, b. 1953) *A Point of Honor*, 2012, bronze, 14 x 20 x 12 inches, Collection of the artist; *Bison*, 2016, bronze, 34 x 44 inches, Collection of the artist. P. 10, top to bottom: *Rewards of First Light*, 2012, bronze, 46 x 56 x 17 inches, Collection of Mr. and Mrs. John Mullin; *The Tides that Bind*, 2011, bronze, 15 x 16 x 9 inches, Collection of the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation. P. 11, left to right: *No Country for Old Frogs* (detail), 2018, bronze, 41 x 18 x 14 inches, Collection of the artist *Crossing to Safety* (detail), 2017, bronze, 68 x 18 x 12 inches, Collection of the artist.

