

## The Wind Menagerie

The nature and development of aquatic animals – an exhibition

In the animal world, there are creatures who swim and those who do not. Then, there are others who swim only after they have been inflated. (There is also the bullfrog – he inflates himself.) The creatures belonging to the third category are displayed immobile, flattened, and inconspicuously on the shelves of larger and smaller department stores or at seaside kiosks, until someone comes by and breathes life into them. Once inflated to full size, one can sit astride them or hang on to their curvy bodies and throw oneself into the ocean waves or drift along on the pale blue stream of the Ungerer – wonderful! From a hygienic point of view, inflatable animals are highly recommended companions. They do not make a mess, do not bite, smell only slightly of rubber, and never make a noise, except maybe when they are on their last legs. A continuous “hiss” might then be heard. Even when you stub out a cigarette on them, they still make no noise.

Those people who have crossed the Atlantic, sometimes criticize these creatures' poor durability. The body usually gets a puncture somewhere sooner or later and then slowly collapses. For some who have wanted to travel from Africa to the Caribbean on the back of a rubber crocodile, a sea urchin on the beach has led to disaster before the journey had even begun. (The author once had the idea of being the first person to sail from Marseille to Algiers with an inflatable, black gorilla. However, during the preparation, little Marie took the animal for a walk and passed too closely by a rose bush. That was the end of that).

Swiss artist Roland Faesser could not stop thinking about the brief existence of inflatable animals. He inflated several of them to full size and then, so to speak, mummified them. Faesser's “series of household pets” can be seen until the 6th. August in the Brochier Gallery, Klenzestrasse 32. Here, we were informed that he wrapped the creatures in material soaked in plaster and then made a cast in a sort of cellulose mixture. (Please excuse this amateurish description!) He then smoothed the surface to such perfection that, at first glance, one would think one was looking at the original if only Faesser had not defamiliarized the creature's shape during this working process. His interpretation of the expression “household pets” is that every animal, whether crocodile or swan, carries one or several houses either on its back or as tumorous projections from its body, or as with the sculpture “Hausvorstand”, the creatures themselves stream out of the houses.

Can one do this? One might ask what has happened to the original animal in the meantime! Is it really still in there? Is the artist telling the truth? Is the crocodile, swan or fish inside Faesser's objects still alive? Is it still inflated and just carrying its hard outer shell? Maybe the creature is bracing itself against the shell, trying to burst it from the inside? Like a suit of armour, does the shell serve as protection against the “prickly” situations in life? Or, did the animal wither away at some point in time, dead, so that the empty shell is just a memory of a creature who lived long ago? Its monument?

To put it in a nutshell, has this to do with the immortalization of a living or of a deceased creature?

It is worth mentioning that during the conversation with the owner of the gallery, he drew our attention to the fact that the smooth surface of the sculptures is characteristic of our times. We would like to add that, because these animals are inflated and made to be so durable, we think these pieces of art are very suited to this summer, infact to the nineties in general and to the city of Munich. To quote the owner of the gallery again: “I think they're absolutely relevant”. That is putting it mildly.