

Basler Zeitung, August 28, 2008

**Trophy Hunt.** Roland Faesser, "Not in the Wildest Dreams" (2008)

## **Antlers in the Clouds**

Art trophies by Roland Faesser in the mitart Gallery

Maria Becker

**Roland Faesser's colourful menagerie has taken over the mitart Gallery. This invasion is hardly hostile as the artist has named his exhibition "Friendly Outgrowth".**

The story of the race between the hare and the hedgehog is somewhat similar. Just as Faesser's hunting trophies in the "Friendly Outgrowth" exhibition have reminded one of Jeff Koons, the American master of handcrafted kitsch, one reads the title "Ceci n'est pas un Koons". Yet this metallic blue varnished deer head, with an inflated plastic monkey growing from its antlers, really is a Faesser original. Nine of these "trophies" are displayed on the walls of the mitart Gallery. Sylvia von Niederhäusern, the owner of the gallery, reports that eventually there will be fifty and that a well-known racing driver is interested in Faesser's objects. The concept that a piece of art can be a trophy, must be quite familiar to a sportsman.

This is not the first time that Roland Faesser, born 1953 in Lima, has worked with such hunting trophies. Back in 2005, he covered antelope heads with tartan cloth and displayed them on a wall in rows like ancestral portraits. The wilderness had finally established itself in interior decoration. The new series, beginning in 2006 with the work "Fishing Clouds", the only prepared animal skin with a strip of cloud caught in its antlers, is more colourful. Faesser put a red patent mask over one of the plastic heads which is laced down the back of its neck. This red deer carries numerous naked Barbie dolls attached to its antlers with black cable straps. A SM variation? Yet again, we are reminded of the title "Not in the Wildest Dreams".

**PLAY INSTINCT.** Fantasies are merely in the mind of the beholder. Faesser's intentions are only playful. For instance, he assembles three giant poodles into a black and white composition or glues as many soft toys as possible together to form a compact block. Perhaps Faesser seeks refuge in art from the necessities of the field of architecture which he studied in Zurich and Winterthur, or he has developed a personal variation of Latin-American magical realism. Maybe he just wants us to see every day life in a different light. As in one of his construction art projects in a kindergarten in Frankfurt, a line of tiny lizards bite into each other's tails along the top of a wall. If this procession had not been installed, barbed wire would be there instead.

Sylvia von Niederhäusern has been running her gallery for almost a year in a former bakery in the Reichensteinerstrasse. Small play objects can be seen in the display window, a knitted teddy bear in a red ski boot and a comical tortoise on a stake. Any kind of toy inspires Roland Faesser. For example, he interprets the term domestic animal literally and lets the head and hind legs of a poodle, or rows of monkey heads, emerge from an elongated house-shaped block. Thus the imagination runs wild in many friendly and comical ways.

mitart Gallery, Basel  
Reichensteinerstrasse 29  
Until September 27, 2008  
Wed. 4–8 p.m., Thurs. & Fri. 4–6 p.m., Sat. noon–4 p.m.  
[www.mitart-gallery.com](http://www.mitart-gallery.com)