

## LUTZ &amp; GUGGISBERG

MONICA DE CARDENAS - MILAN



LUTZ & GUGGISBERG, *Heldkopf (Woodhead)*, 2008. Wood (32 x 52 x 52 cm), painted (35 x 35 x 40 cm). Courtesy Monica De Cardenas, Milan.

In *Postmodernism or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991), Fredric Jameson infamously stated that, in postmodern times, "Pastiche is, like parody, the imitation of a peculiar or unique, idiosyncratic style [...] But it is a neutral practice of such mimicry, without any of parody's ulterior motives, amputated of the satiric impulse, devoid of laughter." He probably didn't take much humour into account, nor could devise its luxuriant, Dada-fuelled, Pata-physics-imbued, and pun-friendly branch by Swiss artists Lutz & Guggisberg.

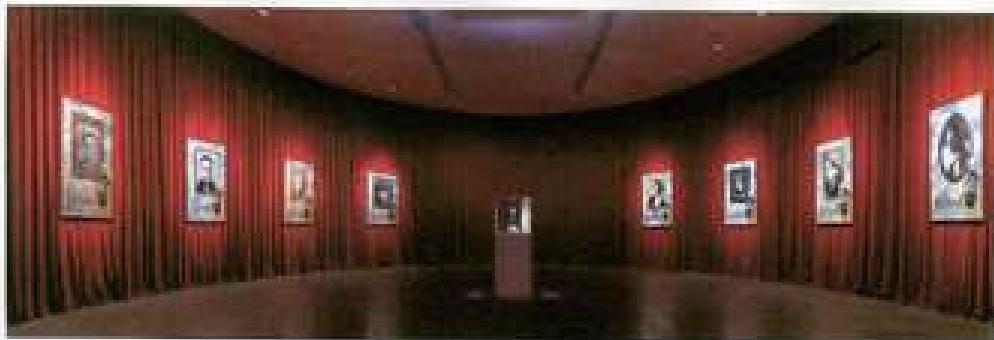
Working together in Zurich since 1996, this duo with twin names — respectively, Andres and Anders, which are, alas, each other's anagram — seem to make art in all sorts of media for the pleasure of freely playing around words (Lutz also forms with Gerhard Meister the art/comedy/performance "linguistic duo" *Geholten Stühle*), visual worlds and dystopia. They bring to mind a pile of possible literary references, from Ubu Roi and the experiments of Oulipo, to the brilliant mix of science fiction, hip-hop, spanglish, history, anime and

folklore in the 2008 Pulitzer prize winning novel *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* by Junot Diaz. At Monica De Cardenas, where Lutz & Guggisberg are showing for the third time (after the debut in 2006, and a solo show in Zuoz the following year), they display a more orderly catalogue of themes and traditional techniques, such as painting and sculpture. Each room opens up a *tête-à-tête* dialogue between two and three dimensions, since often the same shape appears as picture/image and object/sculpture, as if a *doppelgänger* — *Doppelhoppel* being the title of a bronze two-faced saddled "creature." *Bienenstock* (Beehive, 2009), one of the gray, minimalist, sexy sculptures of the series "Schlecksteine" (Lick Stones), resurfaces in the painting in front of it after growing a couple of light blue Mickey Mouse ears, surrounded by a busy crowd of alien life. As always, the title is telling: *Mimicry*.

Barbara Casarecchia

## FRANCESCO VEZZOLI

GAGOSIAN GALLERY - ROME



On the occasion of the presentation of *Great, A New Fragrance*, Francesco Vezzoli has conceived an advertising campaign worthy of a luxury multinational company, starting from its commercial. Shot by Roman Polanski, featuring Natalie Portman and Michelle Williams, it was projected on a black brocade-covered wall and placed at the entrance of the oval room of Gagosian Gallery, turned into a showroom adorned with red velvet-covered walls for the occasion.

Realized by a Tuscan master glazier, the

small bottle of perfume towers in the middle of the room, embellished by the artist's label that portrays Vezzoli's made-up face and recalls the renowned photograph of Marcel Duchamp, taken by Man Ray, of the artist disguised as Rose Sébiny. All around, just like in an old nineteenth-century paintings gallery, Vezzoli has hung his typical tapestries with the faces of nine exceptional testimonials for his latest piece: a gallery of stars, from Georgia O'Keeffe to Lee Miller, from Tina Modotti to Louise Nevelson, Frida Kahlo and

Eva Hesse. On each face, coming out from a Magritian background, the artist has embroidered oddly shaped tears, subtly hinting not only at the artworks of every woman in the gallery, but also at the ideal content of the fragrance, which reads "Eau de Larmes." This sophisticated and refined exhibition is conceived to have multiple readings, in a subtle play of cross-references between Dadaism and Surrealism, pop and conceptual, with an eye to the sociological dimension of the art system. Developed by an artist obsessed with details, who puts up a parody of power with the same melancholic awareness of Luchino Visconti (who was also capable of giving new life to the last splendors of a bloodless aristocracy in decline), we might define Vezzoli's work *Great* as a portrait of global capitalism in the moment preceding the fall of the star system, swept by a free-falling economy.

(Translated from Italian by Francesca Cogoli)

Ludovico Pratesi

FRANCESCO VEZZOLI, *Great, A New Fragrance*, 2009. Exhibition view of Gagosian Gallery, Rome 2009. Photo: Marco Pizzi.