

## GELATIN

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In "Möbelsalon Käsekrainer" (Käsekrainer Furniture Showroom) the Austrian quartet Gelatin again presented a scenario rich in detail and references: The exhibition greeted us with a monster light sculpture, nearly fifteen feet tall, titled *Cock Juice Joe*

## REVIEWS

(all works 2004), located directly next to Franz West's ceiling lamp, which has lit every exhibition here since the gallery opened and only now faced its first obvious competition. Making one's way between the pink fake fur of the light sculpture and the *Rokoko Ecke* (Rococo Lounge), one moved among other furnishings to a voluminous wooden construction entirely sealed off but for a narrow open corridor. A forked path led to a fully functional toilet, *Locus Focus*, with a complicated mirror construction enabling the detailed observation of one's own functions. Then, in the "showroom," a see-through bathtub, *Rialto*, hung from the ceiling like an oil lamp; one could see directly into it from the comfy living-room landscape below. At the end waited *Sauna*, a window display cobbled together from garbage cans and humidified by a pot of water on hot plates.

As for the exhibition's title, "Käsekrainer" is a kind of specialty sausage and a play on the gallery's name, while "Furniture Showroom" refers to the gallerist's previous career as a dealer in Jugendstil design. An underlying pun concerns the double meaning of the German word *Installationen*, denoting not only "installations" but also sanitary fixtures—"facilities," one might say. The mixing of these associations follows a general method that applies to the objects as well: Things and expectations are recombined and redefined. The water in the bathroom sink, for instance, pours out through the form of a naked butt mooning the user. Here a trip to the toilet becomes an experience; use-value becomes experience-value.

In the context of recent performative installation work—like that of John Bock, Christoph Büchel, and others—Gelatin take the most extreme position, for their performative worlds lead the visitor into extreme situations: *The Hugbox*, 1999, invites one to get squashed between two mattresses; *Weltwunder* (Wonder of the World), 2000, at Hanover's Expo 2000 promised an "undreamt-of experience" if the visitor jumped into a seventeen-foot-deep hole filled with water and dove to the bottom. In the Schirn Kunsthalle in Frankfurt, Gelatin lured the visitor across a narrow ceiling-high bridge to face a daredevil climbing experience; in the Milan gallery Massimo de Carlo they installed a terrifically fast roller coaster for visitors' use; and in Vienna they opened a semipublic bathhouse.

An event is an outward manifestation, but an experience can only take place within the subject. Experiences are psychophysical constructions—and the basis of Gelatin's exhibitions. One visitor at the opening enjoyed the hot bath, and many

others took up the offer of the sauna. This was a humorous and playful exhibition that appealed to the senses, a reality acted out by mock-ups. Of course one could see the objects as fascinating sculptures, but the point was really to enjoy their experience-value by using the facilities. In any case, one thing is certain: Matters of experience are indubitable, and herein lies the great success of these performative installations.

—Sabine B. Vogel

Translated from German by Sara Ogger.



Gelatin, *Cock Juice Joe*, 2004, mixed-media light sculpture, 177 1/8 x 110 1/4 x 70 1/4".