

Press Release

# Ceci n'est pas un Casino

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**1 May – 5 September 2010 / Opening on Friday 30 April 2010 from 7 p.m. to midnight**

When referring to Casino Luxembourg – Forum d'art contemporain, perhaps no phrase has been uttered more often than, "This is not a casino!" After all, the name of the centre can fool almost anyone into mistaking the purpose of the building. The current exhibition sets the tone by adopting this title, further adding to the confusion by exhibiting works that, in fact, evoke the idea of gaming! Indeed, each piece in the show appears to be an invitation to play—whether video console, merry-go-round, playing field, or other games. And yet the reality remains unchanged—no gaming goes on here.

The exhibition therefore reproduces the frustration experienced by visitors who come here thinking they will find games of chance. This theme could have easily resulted in yet another show on the relationship between art and playfulness. But what is underscored here is the double twist and frustration associated with gaming. Art and game-playing—which have often been compared in recent art criticism—are in fact similar practices: both call for (indeed, embody) a free spirit on one hand, and a precise set of rules on the other hand. Both tend to set up binary oppositions that give rise to meanings, symbols and related emotions—like a goal that has either been scored or not scored, once and for all, a status that inherently generates intense, wide-ranging reactions from everyone involved (players, referees, spectators, commentators, TV viewers). This relationship between binary status and analogue reaction is specific to games yet is mirrored in the artistic techniques employed in these works.

A participatory element is also present in this show. The beholder becomes a player, spontaneously drawn into the exhibition with all its subversions and frustrations—visitors may even feel they're being toyed with. Sixteen artists present their own approaches, chosen according to the rules of this non-casino. Several artists produced site-specific works specially for this show.

Taking ambiguity to its logical limit, the 15th anniversary of the Casino Luxembourg's transformation into an exhibition venue is, and isn't, the inspiration behind *Ceci n'est pas un Casino*. There is nothing retrospective about this show, and the only historical allusion is the thematic reference. However, the retrospective notion is openly expressed in the catalogue, which, in addition to an introduction by curators Kevin Muhlen and Jo Kox, features essays on the Casino and its various functions down through history by Marc Jeck, Paul Reiles, and Didier Damiani, not to mention a discussion of playfulness and gaming by a psychiatrist, Dr. Paul Rauchs, and a historical analysis of ludic approaches to art by art historian Bettina Steinbrügge. (ISBN 978-2-919893-83-1)

**Curators: Kevin Muhlen, Jo Kox**

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