

## ***Ceci n'est pas un casino***

by Regine

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Hermine Bougadier, *Les turfistes*, 2003

The title of the exhibition, *Ceci n'est pas un Casino* (This is not a Casino), refers to a sentence that the people working at [Casino Luxembourg - Forum d'art contemporain](#) have repeated over and over again. The Casino is an art center, not a gambling establishment. You're not there to play!

No matter loud and clear the warning was, it is rather confusing to enter the (non-)casino building and find yourself in front of video consoles, a trampoline, a pin-ball machine, games of dart, a billiard table, a playground, loads of balls, etc. Yet, the works are playing with you rather than the opposite. You instantly loose every single game of Mortal Kombat, the ceiling of the room where a huge trampoline has been installed is far too low for you to even stand on your feet, the hula hoop is monopolized by a big cactus, the mohair basketball net is 130 m long, fences deny any access to the playground, etc.

The artworks selected for *Ceci n'est pas un Casino* amplify the vexation experienced by visitors when enter the space thinking that they will enjoy games of chance. The exhibition is tantalizing, baffling, frustrating but it's also light, fun and sometimes thought-provoking. Just what games should be!

*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.*