

# Animal Instinct

Confrontation between animals and society has been the concept behind Belgian artist Ruben Bellinkx's works over the years

*The Trophy* is the headlining installation in Bellinkx's new exhibition



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THE first reaction that Belgian artist Ruben Bellinkx's video installation at Colaba's Gallery Maskara evokes is that of surprise. This unconventional artist plays with basic household items that "people usually take for granted", and often couples them with animals to create films. *The Trophy* is his first solo exhibition in Mumbai and India. It showcases four films comprising seven projections. Shot between 1999 and 2010, the films will run simultaneously on loop. Five out of these seven projections are on 16mm film, an unusual medium in India.

Playing with domestic values like stability and security through these nondescript items like tables and chairs, Bellinkx's films question society and culture. *The Musical Chair*,

for example, centres around our notion of domesticity. The chair, a symbol of domestic life, is destroyed by three dogs - animals that are generally seen as pets. This confrontation between animals and society has been the concept behind a number of his works. "It is interesting to work with animals and observe their behaviour," says the artist, "People think they aren't a part of us, but I find them very interesting."

*The Trophy*, after which he has titled the exhibition is a 12 minute-long 2010 film with two static projections. The first projection shows the head of a reindeer, apparently hanging on a wall like a trophy. In the second projection, placed behind the first, we see the rest of the body of the animal with the neck seeming to disappear into the wall. "The viewer must not

see the two together," Bellinkx explains. "This is about perception. When you watch it, you wonder whether the animal is alive or stuffed."

*Stream*, a three minute-long film, yields the hypnotic image of a steady stream of water, instead of light, pouring out of a lamp suspended above a table. It breaks away from the use of animals in all his other films.

Ask the 36-year-old artist where he gets the ideas for these films, and quips, "They are definitely not coming from my head. They come from deep here," he says, pointing towards his stomach. His aim in making films like these is to "confront the viewer with an unfamiliar situation, because in society, things are not as sure as we think they are." (*The Trophy* at Gallery Maskara till March 13)

