

## ALMINE RECH GALLERY

### The New York Times, 'Not Vital', by Ken Johnson, 16 April 2004

The Swiss artist Not Vital's first New York exhibition since 1999 shows a trend away from the neoSurrealism for which he became known in the 1980's and toward a poetically charged Minimalism. Three sculptures in the main gallery might be read together as a post-9/11 elegy. A 12-foot-long marble beam lying askew on a steel pedestal has the phrase "3000 Tears" penciled on it ... and 3,000 small teardrop-shaped cavities carved into it. A wall bristling with 300 big knife blades reads as an image of terrorist insurgency. And a tall plywood pedestal bearing a stack of four silver boxes looks like a high-rise office building.

As it happens, each of those silver boxes is said to contain the dried remains of a different animal: a donkey, a dog, a cat and a rooster. It's a reference to a Grimm Brothers' tale, "The Bremen Town Musicians," which is, in essence, a story of men being terrified by what they don't understand. A related piece consists of 16 melon-size silver spheres in a row, each containing part of a dried camel. (All the beautifully handmade silverwork was produced by artisans in a remote African town where Mr. Vital lives part time.)

That you have to take the contents of the sealed boxes and spheres on faith is, in part, the point. Yet the question of what faith, truth and reality have to do with one another remains provocatively open.

- Ken Johnson