

STOP! STOP! STOP!,
Kunsthalle Basel, Basel (09/04–21/05/2006)

Kate Davis was born in 1977 in New Zealand and lives and works in Glasgow.

Her exhibition in the first two rooms of the ground floor of the Kunsthalle is entitled “STOP! STOP! STOP!” and is her first solo exhibition in Continental Europe.

The works of Kate Davis include drawings, collages, different print techniques and sculptural objects, which are combined in the context of exhibitions to form installations. In her works Davis often takes up the artistic language of Ready-Mades or more specifically ‘assisted’ Ready-Mades, in which everyday objects and subjects are altered and transferred into more abstract forms. In her exquisite drawings the artist transposes motifs borrowed from the works of avant-garde artists, which are incorporated in her works with techniques such as collage, montage and frottage, as used in Cubism or Surrealism. In this way Davis refers to artists such as Kurt Schwitters, Georges Braque or Sonia Delaunay.

The poster design that was specially made for the exhibition shows drawings of cherries in bowls, which the artist developed by blind drawing. The delicate drawings contrast with the rigid repetition of the classic font “STOP! STOP! STOP!”. The title of the exhibition is linked to the artist’s current preoccupation with street signage systems and the aesthetics of information structures in the public space. For Room 1 on the ground floor of the Kunsthalle, Davis has developed a three-stage, architectural structure, which on one side hints at the pedestrian crossing in public spaces, and on the other reacts to the architectural character of the exhibition room itself. The spatial extension of the installation and the resulting division and rhythm of the long hall, provide a new experience in respect of time and the distances across the room - and also in respect of its three former partitions (before the renovation in 2004). This work by Davis investigates the space between the body and the object, but also mediates the insertion of a controlled movement that directs the visitor through the room. Collages on the walls complete the path through the hall: they show still lives with the motif of an egg, in which Davis refers to the collage-technique of the Cubists and in which she uses as well the technique of photomontage. The scaled layers flowing into each other and the fragmentation of the motif which, image by image, slowly completes a whole, demand, like passages in a two-dimensional image, another ‘visual’ movement of the visitors. At the same time the use of yellow, brown, black and white picks up the colours that we often come across in the public traffic system. Similarly other works by Davis — the re-built street sign made out of polished wood, that has lost its function and meaning, as well as the lithographs, which show vases and glasses printed on the Yellow Pages for Basel — subtly mix references to the street and public information media with references to avant-garde artists and their technique. In this way Davis manages to create a room that is linked to the history of art and the art institution itself, and at the same time plays with signage systems that we encounter in our daily lives, which are now transferred to the exhibition space, where they result in a new interpretation of the room.