

MUSEUM LUDWIG

Kathryn Andrews.

Special Meat Occasional Drink

May 25–August 25, 2013

The conceptual sculptures of Kathryn Andrews (born in Mobile, Alabama in 1973) variously address issues relating to performance and presentation. The performance aspect is perhaps clearest in her birthday sculptures, which have the character of events as balloons are attached each year to their chrome-plated metal bars.

Other pieces by the artist incorporate rented movie props, so that the works are incomplete outside of the rental period. The previous history of the props invests them with a powerful symbolic charge. A T-shirt worn by Brad Pitt on a film set, for example, or a crash helmet used by one of the women in Charlie's Angels evoke secret longing for film stars who are basically untouchable. This narrative or temporal dimension generates a complexity that contrasts starkly with Andrews's very direct, ultimately Pop-derived visual vocabulary.

Galleries that the Museum Ludwig has placed at the artist's disposal for the exhibition Special Meat Occasional Drink include a room on the third floor known in the museum as the "aquarium." Dominated by a sequence of tall windows, this unusual exhibition space has always posed a constructive challenge to both artists and visitors. Playfully taking her cue from the faintly absurd character of the architecture, Andrews makes it the nucleus of her entire presentation: The exhibition's central installation features an outsized screen on which colorful marine imagery appears that brings to mind a SeaWorld theme park or the two TV series Finding Nemo and Flipper. Combined with the chrome-plated surfaces of her performative sculptures, the imagery generates dynamic optical distortions that threaten to dissolve physical reality. Staged only for the duration of the exhibition, this is a work that reflects the artist's interest in making time an integral part of her art. This theme is taken up in the two galleries outside the "aquarium." Here Andrews evokes the passage of time in a strikingly simple way in a wall piece featuring white candles against a black background.

In this exhibition Andrews engages with the Museum Ludwig on two levels. On the one hand, she intervenes in the museum's architecture, an intervention that can be seen both inside and outside the building. On the other, she addresses some artistic focuses of the permanent collection. In its compelling simplicity, her visual vocabulary recalls Pop Art and the stainless steel sculptures of Walter De Maria, while at the same time inhabiting a conceptual cosmos that frequently includes a narrative component. By emphatically pointing up such artistic relationships, the artist ultimately subverts the kind of art-historical classification that has appropriated the works.

Exhibition curator: Philipp Kaiser