

Just a few streets away from the Frank Elbaz Gallery Susan Collis spotted an old café undergoing renovation. Through the window she glimpsed broken bits of wood, shattered glass and gutted shelving. Fascinated by all this debris, she recreated what she had seen for her solo exhibition *I Don't Love You Anymore*. The title can easily be imagined as coming straight from a pop song or a movie script, but in fact it references our constant need to throw out, reacquire, remake and renovate the things that surround us: "I'm interested," she says, "in this endless obsession with renewing things, with the way the old always has to be replaced by the new. I'm very drawn to the planned obsolescence of our spaces, both interior and exterior."

Collis made identical copies of the remains of the café – smashed wood, peeling paint, rusty nails and screws – right down to the last detail, but using far more precious materials to imitate the rough edges, the stains, the splatterings and the signs of wear. To reproduce the different colours she employed veneers of all sorts of exotic woods – rosewood, holly, ebony, cherry, mahogany, iroko – which were assembled like a puzzle to produce a consummate illusion of even the tiniest unevenness. This is craftsmanship reminiscent of the marquetry and stringed instrument-making of old. The screws and metal stems are covered with silver, gold, bronze and platinum leaf, while the chips in the paint and the drilled holes have been made good with black diamonds, pearls and lapis lazuli. Collis has also included a piece of fabric meticulously embroidered with false splashes of paint.

This camouflage specialist works laboriously at things that could be done spontaneously, rapidly and in a completely arbitrary manner. Setting special store by the cultural significance of her materials, she delights in transforming their use value in a marriage of complex techniques and conceptual references that stands the standard artistic hierarchies on their heads. The Collis oeuvre embodies a strange encounter between a pared-down Minimalist aesthetics and the most traditional craft forms, in a frank rejection of contemporary art's taboos regarding beauty, technical prowess and sheer hard work.

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