

Mies Meets Marx: mmm

An Installation by Michael Marriott

26 September 2002 – 19 January 2003

Mies Meets Marx: mmm is an installation by furniture designer Michael Marriott created for the Design gallery at the Geffrye Museum. The Geffrye, which specialises in the study and representation of the urban domestic interior, and is active in the support and promotion of contemporary design in East London, invited Michael to create an installation which draws on his design philosophy to respond to the notion of the domestic interior. What has emerged is a very personal installation which reflects Michael's views on contemporary design, design history and the representation of the domestic interior. According to Michael, the installation is an opportunity 'to make an inviting and comfortable exhibition which deals with serious design issues, but in an accessible, informative and engaging way.' The exhibition opens on the same day as 100% Design and Designers Block events.

Mies Meets Marx: mmm is a representation of the domestic living room, furnished with items from Marriott's own personal spaces, home and studio, complemented by additional objects borrowed and gathered from other sources, and quite a few designed by Marriott himself. The title comes from a found photograph showing Groucho Marx sitting on a chair designed by Mies van der Rohe. For Marriott, the attraction of this 'slightly odd photograph' was in the meeting of these two iconic modern masters of their respective trades and what they represent, both separately and together. In Marriott's words 'Hollywood meets Bauhaus, two schools which are kind of polar opposites, ie deceit versus honesty and glittery-ness versus purity.' For him 'the juxtaposition of the two ... illustrates the dual and combined wonders of rational thought, the warmth of the human spirit and how the two can animate each other'. The image represents 'a kind of proof of the potential wonder of modernism.'

The installation also takes as its starting point the existing series of period rooms showing 400 years of urban domestic interiors in the Geffrye's permanent displays. Like these, *mmm* is an urban domestic interior, but with a crucial twist: it is not time-specific and rather than being a 'snap shot' of style and domestic social history, it represents one individual's very personal view of design and the world. The space is divided into two main areas: a 'lounge' area, with sofa, coffee table and TV, and dining area with dining table and chairs. Each object will be accompanied by an anecdote by Michael relating it to 'the nature of the design and production of things and their place amongst people and in the world.'

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The installation aims to reflect Michael's approach to design, which is to transform ubiquitous objects and forms into something new and, in so doing, challenge their meaning and use as well as their aesthetic values and our understanding of their form and production. In this way, Michael coaxes out and encourages new meanings, often making the viewer think and question the object at hand: did that lampshade really start life as a bucket? Michael taps into everyday experience to create witty and original work that presents simple and charming design solutions.

Marriott trained at the London College of Furniture, and then at the Royal College of Art, graduating in 1993. He has lived and worked in East London since 1982, and is an active member of the local design community. He set up his own design studio in 1993. He was awarded the first Jerwood Prize for Furniture in 1999, and has worked with a wide range of clients including contemporary furniture pioneer SCP, Habitat and Trico. He is considered by many to be one of the UK's leading designers.

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Michael Marriott - Biographical details

Born London 1963

Education

1993 MA Furniture Design (Distinction), Royal College of Art
1985 BTEC, Higher diploma, Furniture, London College of Furniture

Awards

1999 Jerwood Furniture Prize
1994 Crafts Council Award

Selected Exhibitions

Great Expectations, New York, October 2001
Global Tools, Vienna, July 2001
Industry of One, London, March 2001
Home Sweet Home, Stockholm, February 2001
Advantage, International Design Centre, Nagoya, January 2001
Childsply, 20/21, London/Berlin, 1999-2000
Stealing Beauty, ICA, April 1999
Powerhouse UK, London, March 1998
Objects of our time, Crafts Council, December 1996
Design of the times, 100 years of the RCA, London, February 1996

Public Collections

British Council
Crafts Council

Lecturing Posts

RCA – Design Products MA
Taught and lectured at various institutions in Britain and abroad

Notes To Editors

- 1) For further details or transparencies, please contact Nancy Loader, Press and PR Officer, on 020 7739 9893 or nloader@geffrye-museum.org.uk

- 2) 100% Design – 26 to 29 September

100% Design, held at Earl's Court Exhibition Centre, is the UK's leading contemporary interior exhibition, internationally recognised as one of the world's most influential design events alongside Milan, Cologne and New York. For further information visit www.100percentdesign.co.uk.

Designers Block – 26 to 29 September

Over 50 cutting-edge designers present new work in two venues: Shoreditch Stables, 134 Kingsland Road E2 (adjacent to the Geffrye Museum) and The Bargehouse, Bargehouse Street, Oxo Tower Wharf, SE1. For further information visit www.designersblock.org.uk.

- 3) Geffrye Design Centre

The Design Centre is an exhibition gallery within the Geffrye Museum dedicated to promoting the best in contemporary design and craft, with a particular emphasis on designers and makers in East London. It provides a valuable one-stop resource for architects, interior designers, retail buyers and others looking for innovation and quality in current design. Additional information, including contact and product details of over 100 design studios in East London and beyond, can be accessed via the Hidden Art web site www.hiddenart.com

- 4) The Geffrye Museum presents the quintessential style of English urban middle-class interiors from 1600 to the present day through a chronological sequence of period rooms. It is set in the former almshouses of the Ironmongers' Company, elegant 18th century buildings surrounded by tranquil gardens, in Shoreditch, East London.

- 5) The Geffrye Museum is an independent charitable trust, grant-aided by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. The Trust actively seeks to attract donations and corporate sponsorship to support the museum's services and development plans.

- 6) Admission: FREE
Address: Kingsland Road, Shoreditch, London E2
Tel No: 020 7739 9893/Recorded Info: 020 7739 8543
Email Address: info@geffrye-museum.org.uk
Web Address: www.geffrye-museum.org.uk
Opening Hours: Tue-Sat 10am-5pm, Sun and Bank Hol Mon 12-5pm
Travel: Buses: 149, 242, 243 or 67
Tube: Liverpool St, then bus 149 or 242
Old St (exit 2), then bus 243