

KITCHEN VOICES, STILL LIVES

An Exhibition of Photography by Robert Teed

Thursday 23 September 2004 to Sunday 16 January 2005



Graffiti Wall



Tintin Tray



Maddie

We are all nosy, however much we pretend we aren't. We all want to know how our fellow human beings live. The media plays on this curiosity, with magazines and TV shows dedicated to showing us other people's houses, usually 'styled' and commodified as objects of so much worth to buy or sell or aspire towards owning.

Kitchen Voices, Still Lives is an exhibition of specially-commissioned photographs by London-based photojournalist Robert Teed which taps into our curiosity about how other people live. This time, however, there is no styling, no commodification: the homes depicted are not to be bought or sold, but are simply the spaces that ordinary people inhabit. Here are the urban middle classes uncovered; this is how some of us really live now.

The Geffrye Museum has always been interested in the way individuals express their values, identities and interests through constructed domestic spaces: the period rooms at the museum provide visitors with a compelling 'walk through time' which illuminates the decorative trends and lifestyles of generic, rather than known, Londoners over 400 years. *Kitchen Voices* continues this theme, bringing the story right up to date.

Concentrating on the kitchen and the room beyond/surrounding it, Teed presents a series of 'photographic interventions' taken in eight neighbouring houses. These include the photographer's own house, part of what he describes as a 'typical Victorian terrace in south London'. This exhibition has an ambitious agenda, attempting to tease out the architectural, cultural, social and domestic similarities and differences in the spaces it encounters.

Teed is fascinated by the kitchen as 'a space of mythical significance... the archetypal nurturing zone'. He set out on this project 'to explore whether in our kitchens we are enacting an urban equivalent of the pastoral myth/ideal of the kitchen as the heart/hearth of the home'.

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These photographs depict similarity and uniqueness in equal measure. They show us that within the architecturally repetitive structure of a terrace, many things are familiar - the positioning of windows, sinks and stoves, for instance. They show us too, a certain universality of clutter - whether on worktops, tables or notice boards. But beyond the broad motifs of urban terraced living, beyond the stainless steel pans, the olive oil and wine bottles, individuality asserts itself in the imagery of every household.

Teed is keen to stress the lack of artifice in the images: 'my aim was to act as impartially as an agent of record as I could: not to touch the spaces, but to regard their contents purely as *objets trouvés*'. Access was gained at short notice, and occupants were specifically asked *not* to tidy up (although some surfaces appear suspiciously clean - including those in the photographer's own house). But Teed is also alive to the fact that by 'intervening' as a photographer, with all the paraphernalia of medium format camera and tripod, and by the act of *framing* the images, he imposes an inevitable aesthetic on the spaces that are captured on film.

The exhibition explores this tension between the documentary and aesthetic functions of photography to great effect. And while there are plenty of interesting details here about the way we live to satisfy our innate nosiness, it will be the artistic quality of the images - their lyrical, at times elegiac, beauty - that lingers in the memory long after the visitor has left the museum.

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. For further information or images, please contact Nancy Loader, Press Officer, on 020 7739 9893 or nloader@geffrye-museum.org.uk.
2. Robert Teed was born in 1966 in Yorkshire. He bought his first camera (a Praktica) when he was 10 and has been taking photographs ever since. He studied English at Cambridge and for six years taught English and Drama at schools in Nottingham and Hammersmith, before leaving to spend more time with his camera. He has worked professionally for two years, specialising in still life and interior photography. Previous clients include the potter Edmund de Waal, and his editorial work has appeared in the Guardian Weekend magazine. He lives with his partner and two children in a South London Terrace.
3. *Kitchen Voices* follows several recent acclaimed photography shows at the Geffrye, including *Gutted* by Etienne Clement, *The Garden Photographer's Exhibition 2003*, and *From Warehouse to My House* by David Secombe.
4. Admission: FREE
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Web Address: www.geffrye-museum.org.uk Email: info@geffrye-museum.org.uk
Opening Hours: Tue - Sat 10am - 5pm, Sun and Bank Holiday Mons 12 - 5pm
Travel: Buses: 149, 242, 243, 67 or 394
Tube: Liverpool St, then bus 149 or 242/Old St (exit 2), then bus 243

28 June 2004