

Text for press release

Richard Woods

21 November 2008 – 7 February 2009

Opening hours:  
Friday and Saturday 14:00 – 18:00  
and by prior arrangement

**Grieder Contemporary has invited Richard Woods to hold his first ever solo exhibition in Switzerland. This British artist is known for architectural interventions which capture the imagination with their ironic interplay of appearance and actuality. November 2008 finds him presenting wooden wall installations and sculptures and subjecting the gallery premises to his unique approach.**

Richard Woods, born in Winchester in 1966, needs more than one gallery. The British artist not only likes filling interiors with sculptures and pictures – he is also given to transforming large swathes of exterior facades. Entire buildings are to Woods what a canvas is to a (conventional) painter: He clads outside walls with cartoonesque patterns and decorates floors with artificial wood grain effects. No doubt he would get away with the illusion – were it not for the disproportionately large formats he works in, all high gloss and smooth plastic. The motifs on the surface vary from the simplistic to the decoratively floral, ironically reminiscent of historical styles and art movements going back in history, particularly to Tudor and Baroque times.

Woods works with simple media including plywood and ordinary household paint. His approach, though, is not just one he inherited from his Do-It-Yourself Dad – it also bears relation to the English Arts and Crafts movement founded by William Morris at the end of the 19th century. This sought to create new content using explicitly ancient means, and regarded the craftsman as an artist. By establishing a society devoted to the craft-manufacture of household and other articles of daily use, the movement's adherents wanted to counter the tide of mass production. Richard Woods adopts a similar position with his bricolage, which sees him questioning his function as an artist: where exactly is the line between the craftsman and the artist? Accordingly, he calls all his large-format floor installations "Logo" followed by a sequentially incrementing number, and he reduces his plywood inlay works to information about the materials used, e.g. "Offcut inlay picture".

The works move back and forth between art, architecture and interior design. Alongside exhibitions in galleries and museums, the artist accepts commissions from private individuals looking to have their premises given the Woods treatment – fashion designer Paul Smith, for instance, had Woods design his flagship store in New York. His oeuvre is an interrogation of the correlation between function and decoration. He focuses on individual, negligible details of no great import in the grand scheme of things – simple brick walls, for instance – magnifies them, then uses them to clad surfaces wholesale. He uses these covered elements to engage with the aura of a given building, and deliberately interferes with settings we thought we knew. We suddenly find ourselves in a garbled world with no hard and fast line between appearance and actuality.

The exhibition features new sculptures and wood inlays by Richard Woods (\*1966, lives and works in London) together with two architectural interventions on and in the premises of Grieder Contemporary.