

## Highland Institute for Contemporary Art

### Richard Roth *Richard Roth* Vernacular Modernism

1 May – 5 June 2011

Vernacular Modernism, an exhibition by the American artist Richard Roth, will open at the Highland Institute for Contemporary Art on 1 May, 2011, 2-5pm.

Roth's practice combines Minimalist abstract painting with the curating and installation of collections of contemporary artifacts. For HICA, Roth will present a substantial installation of pieces from his collections.

Expanding on Minimalist ideology, these collections extend Roth's sense of reverence for ordinary objects and everyday culture. His focus in this he terms 'vernacular Modernism': the objects develop the often blunt and vulgar language of things, a language constructed by narratives around objects that are in continual flux. Though Roth asserts this language may also be "magical, poetic, vital, and sensual."

His collections investigate curatorial methodologies in contemporary art, where displayed objects may become artworks in their own right. Images from newspapers displaying grief, eye-shadow compacts, house-paint colour charts, paper targets for rifles and pistols, eight-inch by ten-inch business forms; each collection becomes an examination of cultural values, and while they are presented as neutrally as possible, Roth's exhibiting them suggests his choices and inclusions as both self-portrait and reflection of his own cultural landscape. Artists are then, he maintains, necessarily curators of their own unique museums of oddities and ephemera: considering what catches their eye, questioning the values this attention reveals.

His presenting these works at HICA prompts dialogue between geographical areas and local understandings, between the US and the UK. In the context of a now globalised contemporary art it aligns this vernacular 'language of things' with the universal language desired by Modernism, allowing space to reflect on the difference between these, and insight into both local and global value.

Roth is the co-editor of *Beauty is Nowhere: Ethical Issues in Art and Design* (G&B Arts International, 1998) and co-author, with Stephen Pentak, of *Color Basics* (Wadsworth, 2004).

His exhibitions include: Rocket Gallery, London; Penine Hart Gallery, Bess Cutler Gallery, Trans Hudson Gallery, New York; the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts; Shillam + Smith, London; UCR/California Museum of Photography; the Museum of Modern Art, Saitama, Japan; Feigen, Inc., Chicago; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; The Suburban, Oak Park, IL; and Reynolds Gallery, Richmond, VA.. He was the Director of Solvent Space in Richmond, Virginia, from 2005 – 2009.

He has taught at Ohio State University, New York University, The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and the University of California-Berkeley. He has been a visiting artist at Glasgow School of Art, and at the University of Central England, and is currently Professor in the Painting and Printmaking Department at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Vernacular Modernism has been supported by the Henry Moore Foundation. It runs from 1 May – 5 June, and is open on Sundays 2 - 5pm, or by appointment.

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