

## Exhibition Guide

**Caro Niederer *Living with Art***

**9 April – 30 May 2005**

**First Floor Galleries**

This is the first solo exhibition in the UK by Swiss artist Caro Niederer. Born in 1963 in Zurich, where she still lives, she creates a wide range of work including paintings, photographs and sculptural pieces.

Niederer's oil paintings reflect a broad range of interests, taking inspiration from a variety of sources - including television programmes, Old Master paintings, postcards, family photographs and landscapes - which in turn are human interpretations of real life. Early paintings are full of colour and later ones monochromatic, in subtle sepia tones, as if to suggest a nostalgic feeling, a greater distance in time between the painting and the event it represents.

On the other hand, Niederer's paintings are at the beginning of a journey, extending beyond her studio. She is interested in following her work as it enters the environments of her collectors. This is documented through her ongoing photographic series, *Interieurs*, depicting her paintings acquired by others and displayed in their new domestic or office settings. These spaces are significantly different to museum and gallery interiors, because they reflect how people live everyday with art. For example, we see the work in children's playrooms, in the company of toy dinosaurs and Lego, or propped up in a kitchen alongside a variety of family souvenirs. In the photograph *Interieur – Villa Wesendonck* (2002), we see the painting *Villa Wesendonck* (2000) in a bedroom. The proximity of the painting to the bed is particularly telling as a sign of sentimental attachment.

These photographs are not exactly staged, but if closely observed, we notice that beds have been made, tables have been cleared, floors have been swept, and so we are not distracted by details of disorder. Thus we have the strong impression that this is not just what we see, it is the way the collector wants it to look. These are the interiors of homes belonging to people who are house-proud and for whom Niederer's paintings are a pleasure to live with. They are people familiar with the art

world, revealing a sophistication through their casual smartness and understated arrangement of furniture, objects, works of art and so on. They are the kind of people who Niederer tends to meet in her personal and professional life.

Niederer's photographs are concerned with 're-presentation', but they are much more than 'art about art'. Not only do they reflect the choices of images and situations the artist herself is drawn to, they are also responses to a more general interest in human behaviour. Niederer is concerned with consumption within a broader cultural context, and this is exemplified by her sculptural work, *Memory and Value* (2003). It resembles a piece of minimalist sculpture, but reveals itself to be an exquisite shelving unit, full of pullovers. These garments are embroidered with words that have sentimental value for the artist. She suggests that we might wear them, make them ours, in a world where things are being constantly picked up and passed on.

This exhibition is organised in collaboration with Kunstmuseum St Gallen, Switzerland.