Print - Morris/Fruit, Rodchenko/Triple Peaks

Object: Print
Place of origin: London (made)
Date: 2006 (made)
Artist/Maker: Mabb, David, born 1959 (artist)
Materials and Techniques: Block printed wallpaper with collage of digital print, canvas on wooden stretcher
Credit Line: Purchased through the Julie and Robert Breckman Print Fund
Museum number: E.560-2007
Gallery location: In Storage

Public access description
For some years now, David Mabb has been engaged in a kind of posthumous collaboration with William Morris (1834-96), using Morris fabrics and wallpapers as sources of inspiration, and also using them as grounds for paintings or incorporating them into printed works, as here. Mabb’s interest in Morris focuses not only on the design of his patterns but also the inherent contradictions between Morris’s political beliefs – he was a campaigning Socialist – and his practice as a designer and business-man – he made his living creating luxury goods that were affordable only by the upper middle-classes.

In this collage print (and others from the series) Mabb contrasts the political philosophies and design practices of two artists who held Socialist views and produced designs intended to enhance the lives of the labouring classes. Each used pattern design as a medium to promote a different form of socialism and utopian enterprise. Morris’s designs were hand-printed (and thus labour-intensive and costly), and his patterns were invariably flower and foliage designs suggestive of a nostalgia for rural life; Alexander Rodchenko, a member of the Russian Constructivist group of artists, promoted a radical socialism and produced a number of textile designs which were to be machine-printed (and therefore cheap), with patterns based on commonplace objects – such as beer bottles and 10 kopeck coins. Mabb unites the craft aesthetic of Morris with the machine aesthetic of Rodchenko, figuratively, but also literally since these prints use pieces of modern hand-blocked Morris papers overlaid with digitally printed reproductions of Rodchenko’s patterns.

Descriptive line

Physical description
A piece of reproduction Morris wallpaper in ‘Fruit’ pattern, laid down on canvas and with a collage of digitally printed beer bottles pasted on to the wallpaper.

Dimensions
Height: 55.5 cm, Width: 55 cm, Depth: 3.5 cm

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URL
http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O135338/morrisfruit-rodchenkotriple-peaks-print-mabb-david/