



# Studio Job

Bavaria



Gallery of Art and Design

## Bavaria

A Suite of five marquetry furnishings in Indian Rosewood, featuring intricate and fine multi-coloured laser-cut inlays in a farm motif. Seventeen different brilliantly-coloured dyes are used in creating the inlays, which are made from a variety of wood types, including Tulipwood, Ash, Pama, Madrona Burl, Bird's Eye Maple, Birch, and Red Gum, depending on the grains desired for each inlaid 'icon'.

The collection is offered in a limited edition of six pieces per model, exclusive to Moss.

Studio Job's first marquetry collection, *Perished*, introduced in 2006, employed 2-color imagery depicting various skeletons presumed to be those of extinct animals, birds, and sea creatures, which densely populated the surfaces of the furnishings as if inhabiting a sort of post-mortem Peaceable Kingdom.

Bavaria, with its brightly-coloured symmetrical, 'book-matched' inlays, depicts bountiful scenes of farm-life, including red barns and silos, horse corrals and dog houses, sunflowers, shafts of wheat, vegetables and luscious fruit-bearing trees which give shade to county-fair-worthy cows, pigs, chickens, ducks, geese, and sheep, and the occasional mouse and blackbird. Moving across the flat, super-dense surfaces are the tools which keep such an active farm flourishing: tractors and oil drums and wheel barrows and spades and shovels and brooms and saws and horseshoes. Above the tumult, bluebirds fly in a Rosewood sky.

Inspired by 17th and 18th century Bavarian hand-painted furniture, as seen in the collections of the Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, Munich, and the Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg, Studio Job playfully switch mediums and methods, using marquetry, a traditional craft of the 'applied arts', to impersonate the 'fine art' of painting. In the process, they wantonly dismiss the historic distinctions between the fine, the graphic, and the applied arts, declaring, "In marquetry you are free as a painter; the veneers are like paint and the furniture piece functions as the canvas".

The furnishings, while in style antiquated, rural and mysteriously regional, are so finely, so preciously conceived and executed that they seem surely more destined for Queen Marie Antoinette's 'Pleasure Dairy' at Rambouillet than for the everyday wear and tear of the common man's farm house.

In Studio Job's 'Bavaria', we return to Eden – or at least an animated, naively happy, story-book rendition of Paradise, where man's innocent, simple toil, applied to nature's bounty, reaps a peaceful and prosperous harvest.

## Studio Job

by Jane Withers, London, 2008

*'You forget that the fruits belong to all and that the land belongs to no one.'*

*Jean Jacques Rousseau*

Studio Job – the collaboration between designers Job Smeets (1970) and Nynke Tynagel (1977) established in 2000 – present their work in collections that they consider as chapters in an evolving narrative. Bavaria (2008), the latest instalment, was inspired by the tradition of hand-painted furniture in the Southern German province. As with their previous collections the five pieces – a bench, a table, a mirror, a cabinet and a screen – together make up an imaginary interior and provide a sequence of clues around which the viewer is left to weave their own storyline. The simple and sturdy forms reflect vernacular furniture making traditions, as does the way the large flat planes serve as a canvas for decorative painting, but here they depart from tradition. A quaintly child-like visual lexicon of goats and cows, tractors, diggers, spotty hounds, super-sized leeks and carrots, unnaturally clean pigs, and fractious geese is arranged in artful heraldic patterns on the quasi-monumental forms, while people are notable for their absence.

On the surface, the rustic iconography and exuberant colours are reminiscent of storybook illustrations yet in the context of current environmental fears seem closer to the genetically engineered faux naivety of MacDonald's than the ruddy innocence of Old MacDonald and his farm, and inspire in this viewer at least a queasy sense of apprehension.

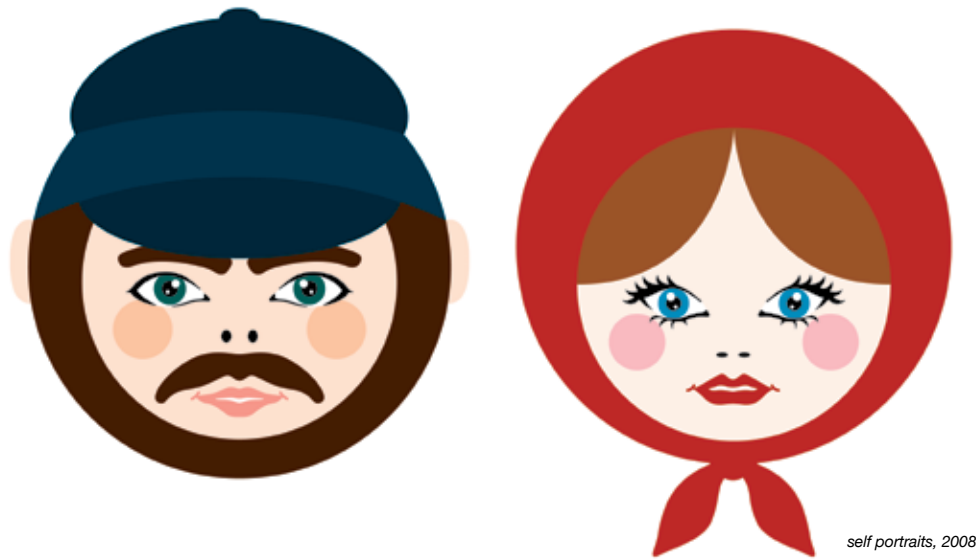
This glorified rusticism has significant historical precedents that should sound a warning bell. Notably Marie Antoinette's 'hameau de la reine', the model farm at the Petit Trianon where Louis XVI's Queen retreated from court life to play milkmaid with pails made by the royal porcelain manufactory at Sèvres and painted to imitate wood. No doubt we shouldn't ignore the contemporary relevance of Studio Job's decision to reference the faux-primitive idyll that caused the Queen (later nicknamed Madame Deficit) to be chastised for her profligate expenditure and legendary conspicuous consumption and was completed in 1783 in the run-up to the French Revolution and her death at the guillotine. Equally parallels can be drawn with idyllic depictions of religious and mythological subjects like the Garden of Eden and the Golden Age. In Lucas Cranach's *The Golden Age* (c1530), pairs of animals and blissfully naked lovers frolic in lush vegetation and trees heavy with fruit in the delightfully charmed atmosphere of a walled garden. This, of course, is before *The Fall*.

'Bavaria' continues the rural subject matter introduced in 'Farm' exhibited at the Milan furniture Fair earlier in 2008. An installation of 30 'humble' farm objects including a milk churn, work boots, a cap and a fork and spade, over-scaled and made in highly polished bronze. The timing seems prescient; ostensibly these iconic objects celebrate the designers' rural roots and a Rousseau-esque idealisation of the natural world but it also raises darker global concerns at a time of mounting environmental fear and crisis in food production and how we will nourish the world's rapidly growing population.

The sharp sense of social critique lurking beneath the glamorous surfaces and dancing around the blurry, distorted line between good and evil are constant themes in Studio Job's work as is the merging of historic imagery and antique techniques with contemporary fears. *Perished* (2006) is a contemporary take on another antiquarian technique, marquetry (inlaid wood) inspired by 17th century Flemish examples. But here the intricate graphic pattern is composed of the skeletons of extinct animal species raising ecological and environmental concerns and emanating a sense of apocalyptic terror. The surreal *Robber Baron* (2007) suite of cast bronze furnishings was conceived as an office for an apocryphal Robber Baron, a megalomaniacal plutocrat who might have been plucked from the Renaissance, 19th century America, today's fallen Masters of the Universe or the Russian oligarchy and subtitled 'a tale of power and corruption, art and industry in bronze'. The semi-functional pieces are deliberately absurdist, parodying the trappings of power with a surreal accumulation of iconic imagery: a desk top rests on clouds of pollution billowing out from a satanically darkened factory, while an ominous clown's head is mounted trophy-like on top of a 'Jewel Safe'. It manages to be ludicrous, romantic, and chilling at the same time, in the manner of Bond villains. Job describes their work as 'Orwellian' and remarks, "these things have a dangerous allure, and you know it's scary but you are fascinated."

The works are produced in highly skilled crafts workshops and characterised by the designers' fetishistic search for perfection. References to history and craft traditions or the work of masters such as the 18th century French cabinet maker and marquetry master André-Charles Boulle are rooted in extensive research, largely undertaken in 2003 when the designers received a grant from The Groninger Museum in The Netherlands to visit European collections from the Grünes Gewölbe or Green Vault in Dresden to London's Wallace Collection. 'Bavaria', for instance, was inspired by the designers' fascination with the collection of hand-painted furniture in the Germanisches National Museum in Nuremberg.

Studio Job have been positioned at the forefront of current interest in the language of the decorative arts and experimentation with fine craftsmanship, but in fact the designers have been working in this vein for some years and see their work as continuing a European tradition that was briefly interrupted by industrial design and mass production. Initially small editions offered an alternative to depending on manufacturers for commissions and an opportunity for freedom of expression. That Job should describe their work as 'trophies for the end of European Culture' reflects both how deeply they feel their historical roots and a profound pessimism about the future.



*self portraits, 2008*

## about Studio Job

Graduates of the renowned Design Academy Eindhoven, the Netherlands, Job Smeets (b.1970, Belgium) and Nynke Tynagel (b. 1977, the Netherlands), who both live as well as work together, form Studio Job. Having met in 1996 in Eindhoven - she beginning her studies in graphic design and he having just graduated in three-dimensional design – Mr. Smeets proceeded to open Studio Job in 1998 in Antwerp, joined by Ms. Tynagel in 2000, following her graduation.

From the beginning, their collaboration resulted in highly expressive, usually one-off or limited-edition artesian works, often cast in bronze or, later, finely constructed in laser-cut inlaid woods. Employing iconographic, pan-historic imagery which can be in the same moment both heraldic as well as cartoon-like, the results are consistently monumental and yet somehow primitive, and generally read neo-baroque, clearly fantasist, and certainly more mannerist than modernist. Projecting a strong narrative quality, suggesting often a heroic battle between good and evil, their gorgeous collections seem born more from a medieval, guild-like process than an industrial approach.

Moss has collaborated with Studio Job on several major collections and exhibitions, including ‘Perished’ (2006), Graphic Paper (2007), ‘Homework’ (2007), ‘Robber Baron’ (2007), ‘Golden Still Life’ (2007), and ‘Golden Biscuit’ (2007), and ‘Bavaria’ (2008). In addition to its New York and Los Angeles galleries, Moss has presented Studio Job in Milan, Italy, during the Salone del Mobile, and at Design Miami/Basel and Design Miami/Miami.

Although, by definition, their work has primarily been geared to collectors and museums, Studio Job has collaborated successfully with various like-minded industrial manufactories, including Swarovski, Austria, and Koninklijke Tichelaar Makkum and Moooi, the Netherlands. Their work has been shown internationally in numerous museums, including the Museum of Modern Art, New York, the Victoria & Albert Museum, London, the Centraal Museum, Utrecht, the Dutch Textile Museum, Tilburg, and the Groninger Museum, Groningen.





### Cupboard

ground in natural Indian Rosewood; iconographic marquetry in multi-colored dyed African Koto, Pama, Tulipwood, Ash, Bird's Eye Maple, Aningeria, Madrona Burl, Birch and Red Gum  
19.75" x 47.25", height: 70.75" / offered in a limited edition of six pieces



**Cupboard (open)**

ground in natural Indian Rosewood; iconographic marquetrie in multi-colored dyed African Koto, Pama, Tulipwood, Ash, Bird's Eye Maple, Aningeria, Madrona Burl, Birch and Red Gum  
19.75" x 47.25", height: 70.75" / offered in a limited edition of six pieces





### Bench

ground in natural Indian Rosewood; iconographic marquetry in multi-colored dyed African Koto, Pama, Tulipwood, Ash, Bird's Eye Maple, Aningeria, Madrona Burl, Birch and Red Gum  
18.5" x 70.75", height: 78.75" / offered in a limited edition of six pieces





# Screen

ground in natural Indian Rosewood; iconographic marquetrie in multi-colored dyed African Koto, Pama, Tulipwood, Ash, Bird's Eye Maple, Aningeria, Madrona Burl, Birch and Red Gum  
width: 86.5", height: 72.75" / offered in a limited edition of six pieces



**Table**

ground in natural Indian Rosewood; iconographic marquetry in multi-colored dyed African Koto, Pama, Tulipwood, Ash, Bird's Eye Maple, Aningeria, Madrona Burl, Birch and Red Gum  
94.5" x 35.5", height: 30" / offered in a limited edition of six pieces





**Triptych Mirror (closed)**

ground in natural Indian Rosewood; iconographic marquetry in multi-colored dyed African Koto, Pama, Tulipwood, Ash, Bird's Eye Maple, Anigeria, Madrona Burl, Birch and Red Gum  
6" deep x 31.5", height: 49.25" / offered in a limited edition of six pieces



**Triptych Mirror (open)**

ground in natural Indian Rosewood; iconographic marquetry in multi-colored dyed African Koto, Pama, Tulipwood, Ash, Bird's Eye Maple, Aningeria, Madrona Burl, Birch and Red Gum  
6" deep x 63", height: 49.25" / offered in a limited edition of six pieces



**Moss represents the following works by Studio Job:**

Bavaria, 2008  
Pyramids of Makkum, 2008  
Graphic Paper, 2007  
Robber Baron, 2006  
Homework, 2006  
Perished, 2006  
Biscuit and Golden Biscuit, 2006-07  
Still Life and Golden Still Life, 2003-06

**Moss represents unique or limited-edition work  
by the following designers, artists, and studios:**

Studio Job, the Netherlands  
Maarten Baas, the Netherlands  
Hella Jongerius, the Netherlands  
Fernando & Humberto Campana, Brazil  
Gaetano Pesce, USA  
Tom Dixon, UK  
Tord Boontje, France  
Marcel Wanders, the Netherlands  
Arik Levy, France  
Claudy Jongstra, the Netherlands  
Studio Libertiny, the Netherlands  
Andrea Salvetti, Italy  
Constantin & Laurene Boym, USA  
Patrick Jouin, France



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