Open letter against the closure of the GDR Design Archive

Jessica Jenkins

The committee of the [German] Society for Design History (GfDG) is protesting by way of open letter to the Foundation "House of History" of the Federal Republic of Germany in Bonn, at the plans to close public access to the Collection of Industrial Design in Berlin.

We would be pleased if you would add your name to the letter by sending a short mail of support to the GfDG info@gfdg.org and by further distributing this letter amongst your academic community. Thank you.

Open letter concerning the future of the Industrial Design Collection, Berlin, to the Foundation "Haus der Geschichte" of the Federal Republic of Germany, Bonn

The Society for Design History is highly concerned about the future of the Industrial Design Collection in Berlin. The Collection, which has been built up over more than 60 years, has been under the patronage of the Foundation "Haus der Geschichte" of the Federal Republic of Germany since 2005.

As early as 1950, staff at the Research Institute of the Art School Berlin Weissensee, under the guidance of Mart Stam, began to collect exemplary design. The collection continued to grow, under the auspices of the (East German) Office of Industrial Form Design, up until 1990. At the time of the closure of the Institute in 1990, the collection contained around 160 000 documents and design objects, a library, and a photographic library. Between 1993 and 1995, the Collection staged exhibitions on design and consumer culture in the GDR, in the Kulturbrauerei in Berlin Prenzlauerberg, as well as in other cities. Design from the everyday as well as bequests from East German designers have enriched the collection.

In spite of support from the German government and from the Foundation for Industrial and Everyday Culture, the existence of this collection has been under threat many times in the last two decades. The Foundation "Haus der Geschichte", patron of the Collection since 2005, has now taken on the responsibility of the museological care of the Collection. However, according to the information provided by the Foundation, the design collection will not be made accessible to the general public; instead, just a few objects will be selected for a planned historical exhibition "Everyday Life in the SED Dictatorship".

We call on the Foundation "Haus der Geschichte" to make the Industrial Design Collection publicly accessible as a design collection. The Society for Design History proposes the establishment of a centre for education, memory, controversy and new research initiatives, to serve designers, eye witnesses, researchers and representatives of the media, by means of themed presentations.

Gesellschaft für Designgeschichte e. V., im Juni 2012
<info@gfdg.org>
Vorstand: Prof. Dr. Siegfried Gronert, Dr. Wolfgang Schepers, Prof. Dr. Petra Eisele

Reference:

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