

ADVENTURES WITH OBJECTS





Ernst Gamperl, Vessel 212 / 2006 / 250 years, 2006, Oak wood
I met Ernst Gamperl through Issey Miyake, in whose Tokyo gallery he had exhibited his work. For me Gamperl, who has already run several workshops at Boisbuchet, is one of the best representatives of contemporary craftsmanship.

Adventures with Objects. The Alexander von Vegesack Collection

Alexander von Vegesack, cultural manager and founding director of the Vitra Design Museum in Weil am Rhein, is one of the most engaged personalities in today's international design community. While his collection forms a substantial picture of the history of modern furniture design, he has always stayed in close contact with contemporary production and keeps asking: what is important in design?

Since the 1960's, Alexander von Vegesack has been collecting commodities and related documents from all over the world. From early on, he uses these objects for his cultural projects: In the 1960s he sets up in Hamburg a gallery for uncommon used clothing and moves to a factory where he organizes a performance-, film- and concert-theatre with a restaurant and discotheque. In 1970 he begins to collect bentwood furniture and organizes an exhibition devoted to modern furniture design by the French artist's group Atelier A. He then develops an open air forum for the city of Hamburg, plans residential studios in former factories and department stores and mounts a tourist's programme on horseback in Andalusia, where he intensifies his search for bentwood furniture. In 1977 he moves to a farm in France where he sets up another equestrian tourism and restores his furniture collection.

From 1980 on, von Vegesack realizes various exhibitions and publications about bentwood and tubular steel furniture, including the set up of a Thonet museum in Boppard am Rhein, the exhibition Bentwood and Metal Furniture for the American Federation of Arts, and one of the opening exhibitions of the Musée d'Orsay in Paris. After alienating a part of his collection to the Museum für Angewandte Kunst in Vienna, he acquires the Domaine de Boisbuchet, a 19th century country estate in the Southwest of France. In this ensemble of historical buildings amidst a former landscape park he creates a workshop centre for design and architecture. Among the international partners of this institution are the Centre Georges Pompidou in Paris, universities from all over the world and first and foremost the Vitra Design Museum, which the company Vitra sets up together with him in 1989. For this museum's exhibitions and catalogues as well as for all other his projects, von Vegesack is inspired by and is using his own collectibles, and while his work constantly involves journeys and

change of residence, time and again new cultures come into play.

Curated by Mathias Schwartz-Clauss, who is working closely with Alexander von Vegesack since nearly 20 years, the exhibition at the Pinacoteca Agnelli portrays not only the collector's objects but equally his characteristic taste and notion which is as much formed by these object's aesthetic power as by a growing knowledge about their context which is acquired through adventurous projects and travelling. Neither is there an exclusive specialization in the furniture subject nor is there any attempt to complete the collection. Frugal drinking glasses, a colourful Kimono, an Andalusian saddle or Viennese coffeehouse chairs: Each of them tells about its own cultural history – in fact, von Vegesack's work becomes part of these cultures for he always uses his objects in order to demonstrate their context wherever he finds that relevant and exemplary. In such a way evolved an understanding of design that appreciates the creations of industry as much as the ones of art, craft or vernacular tradition.

Industrial furniture, however is the guiding line and leading actor through this exhibition. Following a three-dimensional biographical introduction, which shows the familial background, the 15 year old boy's first acquisitions on a bazaar in Cairo, and connections to Eastern Europe, for example, the exhibition evolves the collection along von Vegesack's life, work, travelling and interests. The approximately 20 different scenarios include highlights of 20th century's furniture history as well as surprising discoveries, often with pieces from the designer's direct surround. Films and photos as well as documents from one of the most important private libraries about furniture design are illustrating these objects in this very personal selection.



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Pictures from the Exhibition
at the Pinacoteca Giovanni e Marella Agnelli, Turin (IT)
20.3. – 6.7.2008

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Technical details

Exhibition floor space

700 m²

While it could easily fill 800 m² in a more generous presentation, a reduced version for a smaller space would be available as well.

Concept and objects

Curator: Mathias Schwartz-Clauss

Alexander von Vegesack's collection consists of some 2,000 objects and more than 20,000 books, sales publications, photos, patents and correspondence. The exhibition compiles a core selection of more than 300 objects:

Furniture 160, Lamps 27, Tableware 32 (sets count 1), Textiles 9, Vehicles and saddles 10, Architectural models 4, Toys, domestic and other objects 57 (sets count 1), Artworks, including the projection of an artistic film directed by Deidi von Schaewen 32.

These more than 300 objects as well as 200 books and catalogues are allocated to 21 groups, reflecting the most important motifs in Alexander von Vegesack's collection in regard to form, technology and content:

Souvenirs, Experiments, Japan, Mobility, Collapsibles, Bentwood, Steel Furniture, Zigzag, Architect's Furniture, Cubes, Insects, Mexico, Shapes, Eames/Nelson/Girard, Archaics, Perriand and Prouvé, Skids, Red, Plastics, Cranes, Networks

In addition to the usual technical data, the captions include short comments in which Alexander von Vegesack describes his relation to the respective exhibit.

Documentation includes 5 video terminals with interviews and a documentation of the Boisbuchet workshops as well as several frames with biographical material and a tabular biography.

Venues (planned schedule)

Available from summer 2012

Exhibition catalogue

The exhibition is accompanied by 240 page catalogues in English/Italian and French/German language (further editions are possible) with about 700 mostly coloured illustrations and texts by Deyan Sudjic, Rolf Fehlbaum, Mateo Kries, Christiane von Korff, Paul and Barbara Haigh and Mathias Schwartz-Clauss.

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