



**National College of Art & Design:
Faculty of Design
Department of Industrial Design**



**The Design of Domestic Products in the former German Democratic
Republic during the 1980s**

By

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Studies in candidacy for the degree of Bachelor of Design; 1993**

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Just as one does not judge an individual by what he thinks about himself, so one cannot judge such a period of transformation by its consciousness, but on the contrary, this consciousness must be explained from the contradictions of material life.

(Marx, 1859, in Ritzer, 1992, p. 69)

The first part of the report deals with the general situation in the country. It is a very interesting and informative study of the country's development. The author has done a great deal of research and has gathered a wealth of material. The report is well written and is easy to read. It is a valuable contribution to the study of the country's development.

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Introduction

This thesis sets out to examine Design in the former German Democratic Republic. The former GDR existed for only forty years in the mid twentieth century, the area has encompassed many historical and social ideals which were embodied in product design of the 1980s. The State was formed after World War II in 1949 and existed until 1989 as a Soviet controlled zone. Under Soviet rule the former GDR was forced to address the ideals of the Russian Communist Revolution; yet at the same time it owes its roots and culture to German history. In turn, the type of design produced in the GDR is quite different from that of Russia or that of the former Federal Republic of Germany.

When we think of Eastern European design and in particular design from the former German Democratic Republic we envisage a mass of improvised out-dated concepts and a set of completely alien products that we cannot identify with. The fact that East German design is so different to our experience of design in the West, we cannot therefore evaluate it on the same terms as we would products from the Western World.

This thesis sets out to examine the evolution and development of product design in the GDR but in particular it will focus on domestic products from the 1980s. Everyday domestic products may seem a mundane and uninteresting topic to discuss but each product designed in the GDR bears the same mark, the mark of socialism. To some degree or another each of the products to be discussed embody the political and social ideals of the State.

The products to be examined are all everyday products designed for, and used by, the people. Not much is known about any of these products, specific dates and designers are not mentioned (Possibly because the subject of patenting and copywriting is not important to a socialist State) in the GDR these things are superfluous to everyday living. Each product in its own way can portray something of the people of the GDR and the times they lived in.

1. The first part of the report deals with the general situation of the country and the position of the various groups of the population.

2. The second part of the report deals with the economic situation of the country and the position of the various groups of the population.

3. The third part of the report deals with the social situation of the country and the position of the various groups of the population.

4. The fourth part of the report deals with the cultural situation of the country and the position of the various groups of the population.

This thesis shall analyze these 1980s designs by first establishing the design origins and the design ethics on which they are based. From this the characteristics that make East German design appear so different and alien to us in the West can be ascertained.

Once the physical aspects of GDR design have been discussed the theory and thinking behind the design process can be examined. Certain questions arise from this for example, what sort of society were these products designed for and how do these products relate to the society they were aimed at. For instance in the West products are designed to suit a consumer society, whereas goods from the Socialist East Germany were not designed for the sole gratification of the consumer but for the common good of the State.

Both consumerism and the GDR emerged at the same time in history on separate sides of the Iron Curtain. This thesis aims to compare and contrast product design under the two systems. The products to be contrasted will illustrate that GDR design does embody important aims and ideals that have been lost to Capitalist society. These ideals will be defined and evaluated to establish the significance of design from this era.

This thesis does not set out to examine whether products designed in the GDR were any better or worse than those designed elsewhere in the West, but to establish the differences and similarities embodied in both. Due to the restrictions and contradictory historical values, goods designed in this particular State have a certain integrity and verity in their make-up that leads us to question the aims of the Capitalist society and the allure of the consumer culture that has emerged in its wake.

THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES

The history of the United States is a story of growth and change. From the first settlers to the present day, the nation has evolved through various stages of development. The early years were marked by exploration and settlement, followed by a period of rapid expansion and industrialization. The American Revolution was a pivotal moment in the nation's history, leading to the establishment of a new government and the declaration of independence. The Civil War was another major event, which resulted in the abolition of slavery and the preservation of the Union. The 20th century saw the United States emerge as a global superpower, with significant technological and cultural advancements. The nation's history is a testament to the resilience and ingenuity of its people.

The United States has a rich and diverse heritage, with many different cultures and traditions. The nation's history is a story of struggle and triumph, of challenges and achievements. It is a story that continues to shape the present and inspire the future. The American dream is a powerful ideal that has motivated generations of people to pursue their dreams and build a better life for themselves and their families. The history of the United States is a story of hope and possibility, of a nation that has the capacity to overcome any challenge and achieve greatness.

Chapter One

The Social and Historical Background to GDR Design

Under Soviet rule the state was governed by the SED (A merge between the Communist and Social Democratic Parties in 1946.) party who had been in power since their formation in 1946. The SED controlled all walks of life especially the creative forms, all medium from radio and television to newspapers and even art (Lippman,1992). All forms of life were strictly governed by the rules and regulations of the State. As a result of this, it is difficult to develop a true picture of what life was like under Socialism, as all underground forms of expression tend to be over belligerent and all the usual channels of communication were governed by the Party. However, in the field of industrial design it is possible to establish something of what life for the average person was like under these rules. All goods designed in the GDR were of course subject to the same restrictions as the communications media yet at the same time goods had to be used by the people. This meant that design had to somehow transcend the constraints imposed on it by socialist politics, to transform an ideal into a real product that fulfils a need and is used by thousands everyday.

Design aims and achievements were very closely monitored by the State. The aims of the state were enforced in areas of design and architecture. As a result a certain design history has grown encompassing the ideals but more often the realities of life under the realm Stalinism and later under perestroika. At the same time as the growth of the GDR's design culture, outside the Iron Curtain the consumer society was emerging from the ruins of a postwar world.

Design in the Early Years

In a few short years the GDR was converted from being a part of a large Capitalist country into being a small Socialist state under Soviet control. The shift from Capitalism to Socialism may well have been rather swift, but in the design world matters had been edging slowly towards Socialist ideas for many years. The Bauhaus school had addressed ideas such as mass housing and modernist aesthetics since its formation in 1918 and the fruition of Walter Gropius' ideas stood in the east German town of Dessau in the form of the Bauhaus buildings (Fig. 1)(Naylor, 1986, p.83).

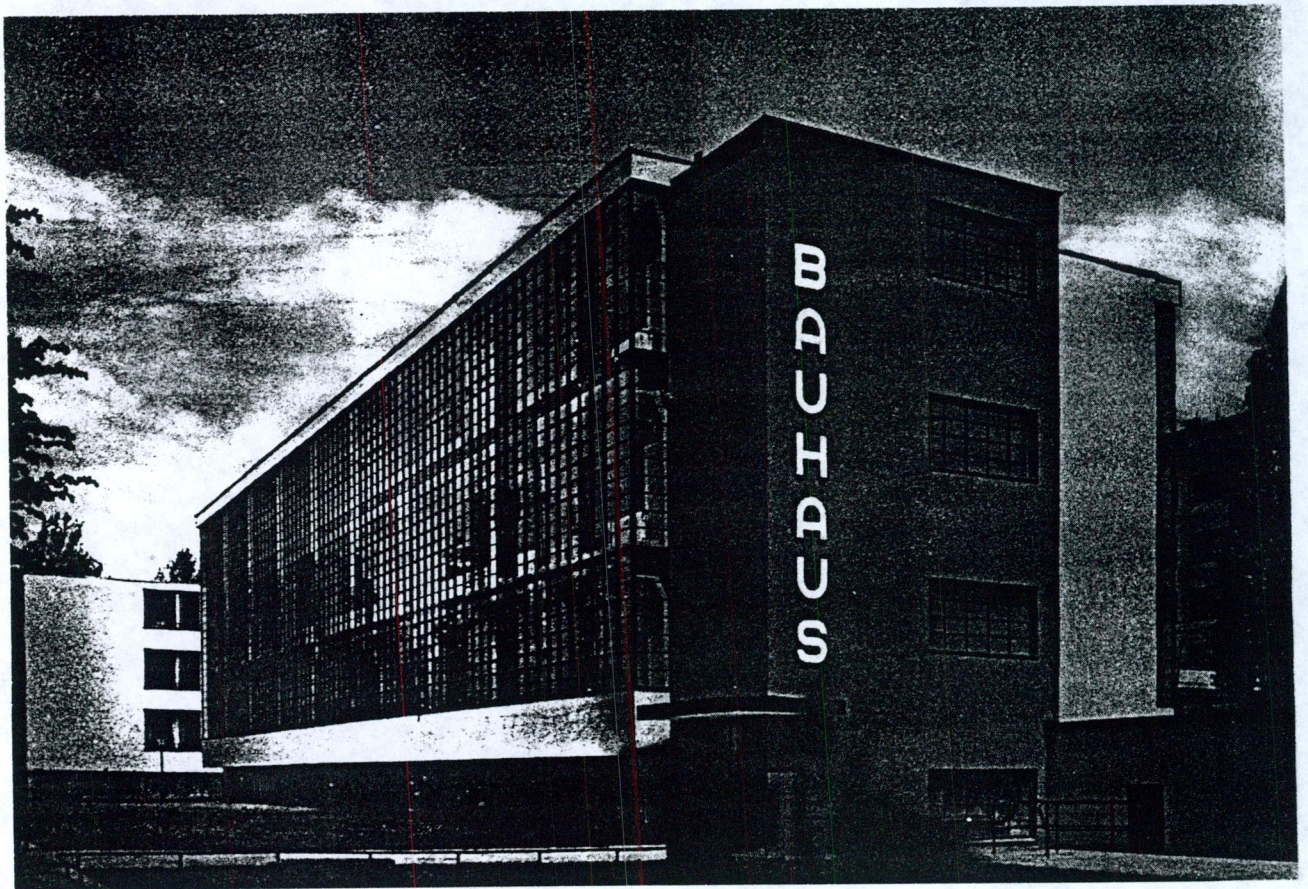


Fig. 1 The Bauhaus buildings in Dessau: The Roots of GDR Design Culture

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After the war many Germans disgusted by the effects of Fascism and Hitler's war mongering ethics, fled to Eastern Germany to escape the recent past. The reversion from Nationalist Socialism to the Russian ideal could possibly have had an effect on the design ethics of the individual at the time. For example during the Fascist reign many advancements were made in the field of architecture and design under the name of patriotism. The designers of the Fascist era were using eclecticism and allusion to ancient cultures to create a timeless quality that would supersede any other civilisation (Lindey, 1990, p.46). The designs of the Bauhaus were orientated toward mass production and a generic style. Later the designers and theorists of the GDR returned to these ideals either out of necessity or in direct opposition to the horror of Fascism. Some of the members of the Bauhaus who chose to stay in East Germany were involved in the planning of the State.

Mart Stam a visiting lecturer at the Bauhaus during the Berlin phase was a confirmed communist and devoted himself to design and design teaching in the GDR. Stam advocated Functionalist ideas such as mass housing schemes and design for the masses, these ideas of course were very valid solutions for post war East Germany where a large percentage of industry had been dismantled and whole cities had been decimated. Eastern Germany had been particularly damaged by both the Allied forces and the Russians; major cities such as Berlin and Dresden needed to be rebuilt if the country was to make a substantial recovery. So Stam's ideas and those of the Bauhaus were used in the early years of the state. Many buildings were built from the cheaper modern materials such as concrete and steel. By the late fifties much progress had been made and many of the former industries were up and running again and large reparations had been paid to Russia.

Once this had been achieved the energies of the people could be used for the creation of the new state. The State Institute for Applied Art assembled 160 designers from industry to educate them on the new objectives of the state and

'Guide them down the right path and to encourage an appreciation of national traditions'

(Bertsch, 1990, page 21)

The Search for a National Form

The Party wanted designers to conform to the 'New German Style' which would embody the ideas of Socialism and at the same time reject Americanism and the evils of Capitalism. The work of designers and architects was closely monitored by State officials and work which included ideas such as elitism and individuality would be considered as subversive and thus banned from the new system. Design work under the new system should not allow the user to apply his or her own creativity, any work which allowed for imagination or individuality would result in divergence from the ultimate communist ideology of mass living. The following article written in the German design magazine 'Form' by Gerhard Gillnhagen in 1955 shows the fear that individuality would endanger the underlying socialist message, the quote refers to the 'evils' of modular furniture.

If the user is free to do what he wants with them, free to arrange the constituent parts as he pleases, the proportions of the assembled pieces will change in an uncontrollable and artistically unacceptable manner and the underlying intellectual idea will become unclear and elude social control.

(Gerhard Gillnhagen, in Bertsch, 1990, p21)

1. The first part of the report deals with the general situation of the country and the progress of the work during the year.

2. The second part of the report deals with the results of the work during the year.

3. The third part of the report deals with the financial statement of the year.

4. The fourth part of the report deals with the general remarks of the year.

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8. The eighth part of the report deals with the general remarks of the year.

So, not only should this 'New German Style' convey a Nationalist style and contain underlying Socialist messages but it must be presented in a clear and well defined manner. As a result products were designed to have simple functions if possible singular function products and economy of materials was essential.

Former Ideals and Their Bearing on Design of the 1980s

The thermos flask (fig.2) from the 1980s embodies some of the former ideals in its functional aspects. Firstly, this flask is designed solely to hold liquid for transportation purposes. The physical features tell us a lot about what the user must do in order to transport his beverage. The flask is comprised of three main pieces:

1. The container to hold the liquid
2. The push on lid to seal the liquid in
3. A black plastic carrying handle

These three pieces each say something to us and to the user. For example, the fact that it is sealed only by a push on lid means that the flask can only be carried in an upright position. Immediately by the manner in which it is designed the flask is narrowing the user's freedom. He or she must carry this flask only in this single position; the individuality of the user is curtailed. The plastic carrying handle supports the same stratagem, the user is forced to carry the object using this handle, again the user is being dictated to, he or she must carry the flask in an upright position using the handle provided; the scale, form and finish of the exterior ensures that the flask cannot be carried in any other way.

Subliminally, the message says that the individual is still powerless against the might of the State, the individual must arrange his life in accordance with the

socialist doctrine. In the same way that physically the individual must plan his journey so that the flask will remain upright at all times and that he will have one hand free to carry the flask when the need arises. Conversely, any conventional Western Thermos flask will have a screw top and a seal which enables the user to return to his own affairs confident that it will not spill whatever way it is stored. This is the divergence between design under Communism and that under Capitalism: where Communism leads the people in a singular direction Capitalism forces the individual to make his own choices but only if permitted by the design of the product.

The National Form Discarded

(The State Design and its influence on 1980s design)

The 'New German Style' used in the GDR was a success in the early years: it achieved all it had set out to achieve. It was functional, it conveyed the Socialist message and it was economic in materials. This design however would only be suitable for the GDR and was not appropriate for the export market. The export market was essential to the GDR for economic reasons. A shift away from the 'New German Style' was important if the GDR was to produce goods appealing to other countries in the Soviet block and outside (Bertsch, 1990, p.25).



Fig. 2 Thermos Flask from the German Democratic Republic in the 1980s

In order to make products appealing the theorists admitted that the national form would have to be discarded and that designers would have to adopt a more general approach taking in traditional industrial design ideas. At this point, the course of industrial design in the GDR had been set. It signified just how the State's intervention had destroyed the natural path that German design was taking. Design was being bullied for the cause of Communism and this led to doubt among intellectuals of the time. What actually transpired was that originally designers were forced to design products that represented socialism and anti-imperial war mongering, now they were being directed to follow ideals that were manifested in the pre-war Germany of the Bauhaus and Deutsche Werkbund. The Party had just illustrated how unstable and fickle they could be.

Under new instruction designers began to design more aesthetically pleasing products to supplement the export market. East German designers could not obviously keep up with the opinions of the Party policies and soon it became evident that a gap was emerging between design quality and the aims of the government. Designers were working to please the Party and in doing so were forced to ignore the needs of the consumer product industry and the needs of the people.

The bath thermometer (fig.3) opposite shows signs of where the designer tried to introduce some variety and decorative form into the design. The blue plastic fish shape, would appear kitsch to western opinion. The fish shape displayed here conjures up images of cheap fish and chip shops rather than a sensitive instrument for measuring temperature. To the GDR designer however it is a modest move away from formalism and a small step on the long road to creative freedom.

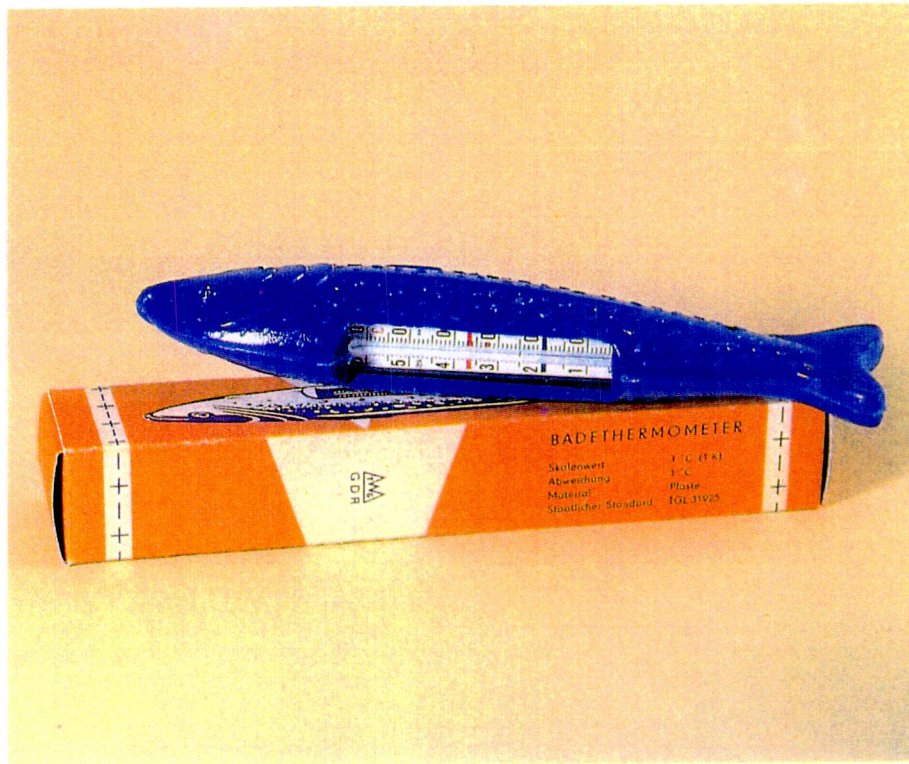


Fig.3 *Blue Bath Thermometer from the GDR an attempt to introduce variety into design*

Chapter 2

The Characteristics of 1980s GDR Design

The politics of the Party played a very dominant part in shaping the characteristics of industrial design. The attributes that are associated with East German design such as aesthetics, form and function were all very much commanded by the Party members. There are areas in the field of industrial design that are beyond the control of politics. One such attribute is the user aspect of design. No matter how much the socialists wanted to control the area of design the essence of product design is that it is designed for the user to fulfil a physical task or need.

But, politics controlled the material sanctions in so far as the capital available for manufacturing, materials and equipment and such. It is how the designers dealt with the restrictions imposed by the Party that is apparent in the physical features of design under such a system. By classifying these physical features an impression of the true skill and talents of the individual designers can be conceived.

The physical features displayed in the range of GDR consumer products in so far as the materials used and the way in which the materials are applied to the product is very different to the Western approach and is perhaps the essence of product design in the country.

Use of Materials in Product Design

In the same way that in the West it is common to evaluate design on the concept or functions of the particular piece, it is possible to evaluate the quality of design from the East by the use and employment of materials in a particular piece. In some ways it is the use of materials that gives design from the GDR its distinct identity. There is a trend running through many seemingly unrelated products from the GDR. That is, firstly, in the selection of materials and secondly, in the treatment and detailing aspects of the chosen materials.

GDR and Plastic Materials

The most popular material in the GDR is plastic, the GDR was responsible in the past for supplying much of the Soviet zone with plastic goods. Almost all of the electronic and optical goods produced in the country had plastic casings and many contained plastic components. The GDR's obvious affinity to use of plastics is however not one of choice but again politics, this time the decision was by the Soviet Union.

In the Chemistry Conference of 1958, it was decided that the GDR should use refined Soviet oil to produce plastic goods which should be distributed to all the other Soviet Bloc States and the Soviet Union its self. (Bertsch,1990,p.25)

Plastic has very interesting properties compared to traditional manufacturable materials the main feature being that it can take up any shape if moulded correctly, also any texture can be applied to the surface and similarly any colour can be applied to the substance. These properties meant that designers had enormous scope in so far as controlling the physical attributes such as form, texture and colour.

The choice however was not to rest with the designer.

The physical properties of plastic were extremely important to the new socialist state as a whole . For example the fact that surface finish could be applied to plastic meant that it could be used to imitate a large amount of sought after expensive materials. Plastic in effect could be incorporated into the Socialist doctrines and used to produce formerly expensive materials cheaply. Placing them within the reach of the masses. But, by the 1980's the treatment of plastic was still in its most basic form.

An example of just how basically the properties of plastic were used is unmistakable in the following products. These products though used for a range of functions all bear similar traits in terms of detailing and aesthetics. The colour of dye used in the plastics are all of rather brightly coloured hues which in effect bear little relation to the task or function of the product. The cerise bathroom scales (fig.4) for example, the colour does not signify anything about the use or quality of the scale. The same is true for the pastel blue hairdryers (fig.5), the orange and red telephone sets (fig.6), or the Bierette pocket cameras (fig.7). If you can't pick your brand of camera you can at least pick the colour.

The Role of Colour in the East and the West.

In the Western world colour is a very important aspect of product design and also the politics of colour are very complex and restricting. For example in the West the colour red emits very definite messages to people: as a result designers in the West are bound to use the colour red in a very diplomatic manner. Designers in the East however have fewer restrictions and perceived repercussions related to the application of colour.

The significance of colour in the same products as does not appear to be very clear. In the instance of the cameras or hairdryers it can be deduced that the use of colour is to create an impression of choice for the consumer without of course stepping outside the Socialist principle. In a sense the application of colour was a very liberal convention.



Fig.4 *Cerise Bathroom Scales from VEB (State run design project) in Dresden*



Fig. 5 *Pastel and Black coloured Hairdryers from East Germany*



Fig. 6 *Orange and Red Telephone Sets from GDR*

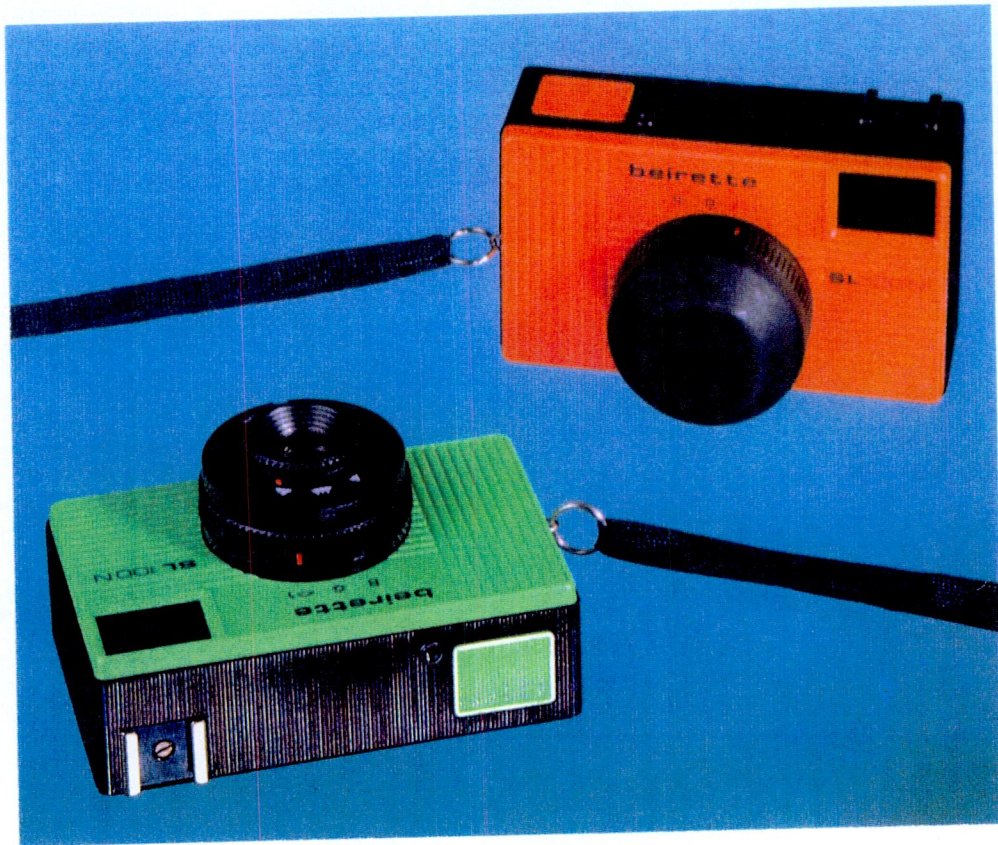


Fig. 7 *Beirette Pocket Cameras from GDR, a choice of colours same product*

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Conversely in western approximations the application of colour is a closely guarded set of rules and conventions which denote particular classifications of goods or specific brands or companies. Computer and office equipment (fig.8) are predominantly beige to grey pastel tones, camera equipment (fig.9) is usually black and grey and dark tones for example and so the rules go. Similarly in product branding the same rules apply for example worldwide, red symbolises Coca-Cola (fig.10) and so on.

In East Germany however, colour can be applied to any product regardless of classification or branding and as can be seen colour was used in great profusion. It is interesting that in the bathroom scales, hairdryers, cameras and telephones black is used to contrast to the bright colours used. The use of black may be an attempt to divert the eye in sight of such bright colours for example the black strip in the centre of the bathroom scales directs the eye towards the scale and the display, whereas in the hairdryers it is used to signify the handle. The use of black rather than any other colour is unusual it may in fact be a semantic warning that these goods have been subject to the restrictions and regulations of Communist law.

It can be deduced that colour is not an object of restraint in the GDR as it is in the West. Designers in the East used the application of colour to cheer up the prevailing political atmosphere as well as to give the impression of choice to the consumer.



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Fig. 8 Example of colour coding in the West, an advertisement for Epson computer equipment in West Germany, 1989

Die Nikon F4. Sie hat alles, was eine Profikamera heute haben muß: Einen Autofokus, der bis EV -1 arbeitet, 3 Belichtungsmeßmethoden, 5 Belichtungsprogramme, einen Motordrive mit 5,7 Bildern/sec., einen Verschlusszeitenbereich von 30 bis 1/8000 sec., und das alles mit allen heute technisch machbaren und professionell sinnvollen Optionen. Von der vorausberechneten Scharfeinstellung über die Silent-Betriebschaltung bis zur automatischen Umstellung des Belichtungssystems auf Hochformat.

Das zeigt, was dazugehört, um das zu werden, was die F4 ist: Nikons neue Nr. 1.

Unverbindliche Preisempfehlung:
DM 4.000,-
F4S mit AF-Nikkor 50 mm f/1.4



Die Nikon RF2. Unsere kleinste und preiswerteste Autofokussucherkamera. Sie macht ganz einfach gute Bilder – vollautomatisch, auf Knopfdruck. Sie stellt selbst die richtige Belichtung ein. Und die Schärfe – durch Autofokus. Bis zu 65 cm im Nahbereich. Sie blitzt automatisch – auch bei Gegenlicht.

Und sie hat einen Schärfespeicher, der ganz nach Wunsch die eingestellte Schärfe 30 sec. lang festhält.

Noch ein Punkt, der die Wahl ganz einfach macht: der Preis. Unverbindliche Preisempfehlung:

DM 280,-

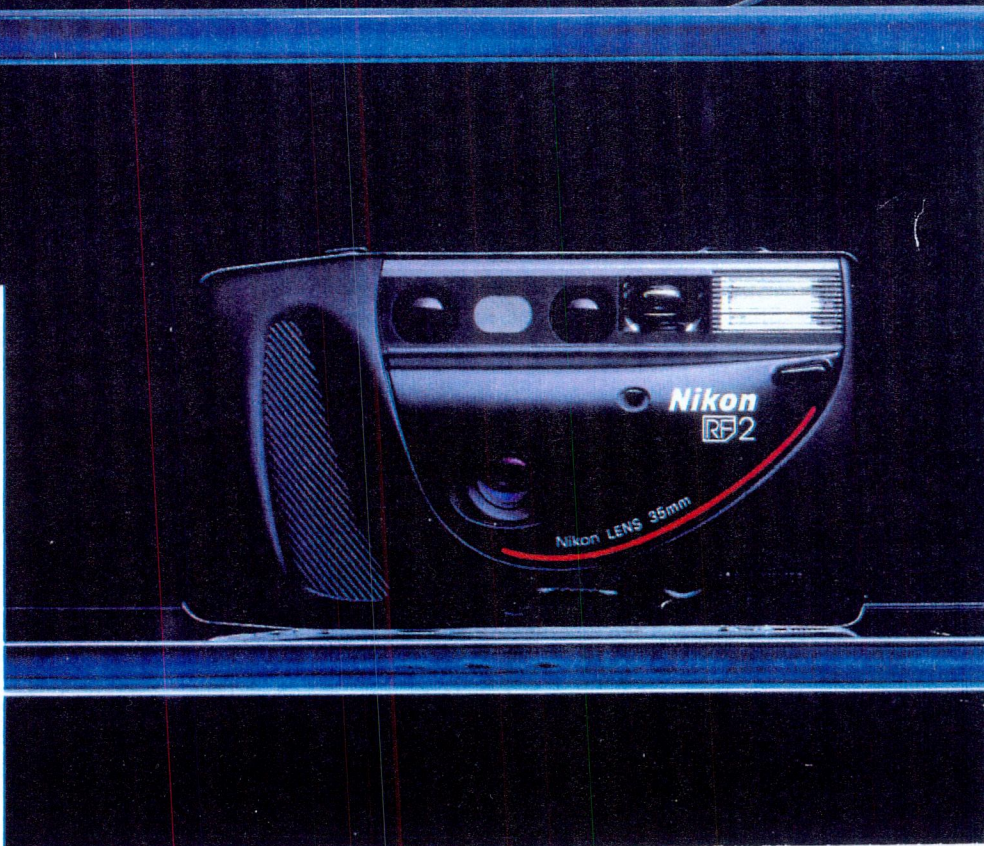


Fig. 9 The Dark colours used in Western Camera equipment, advertisement for Nikon cameras from West German magazine in Feb. 1989



Fig. 10 *The Coca-Cola colours as symbolised World-wide,
'Pleasant People, 1983'*

Use of Surface Texture

Surface texture and use of texture in form are used to tie products together. Colour as discussed before is not the only similarity between these products however, the treatment of texture in the detailing of the plastic is analogous. The technique of adding ridge like corrugations to flat planes is displayed in all of these products in some way. It is most obvious on the Bathroom scales (fig.4) where the corrugations are vertically displayed on the top plane of the scales. This feature is largely informative in so far as it dictates where the weigher is to stand. In this case the technique is useful, but looking at the other products in the set it appears again and again in varying degrees. On the slide film projector (fig.11) it is used in a softer manner where the outer edges of the corrugations are curved. In the Bierette camera (fig.6) it is used in a finer bore and in two directions both horizontally and vertically.

What this style of ornamentation is telling us is how the actual design is conceived. It is clear that the product has been visualised two dimensionally rather than in three dimensions.

This form of design is characteristic of the GDR and Communist block countries. Referring again to the list of products shown before, each one can be broken down into fundamental geometric shapes. The use of these simplistic forms indicates the level of equipment at the designers disposal is significantly lower than that of the Western world.

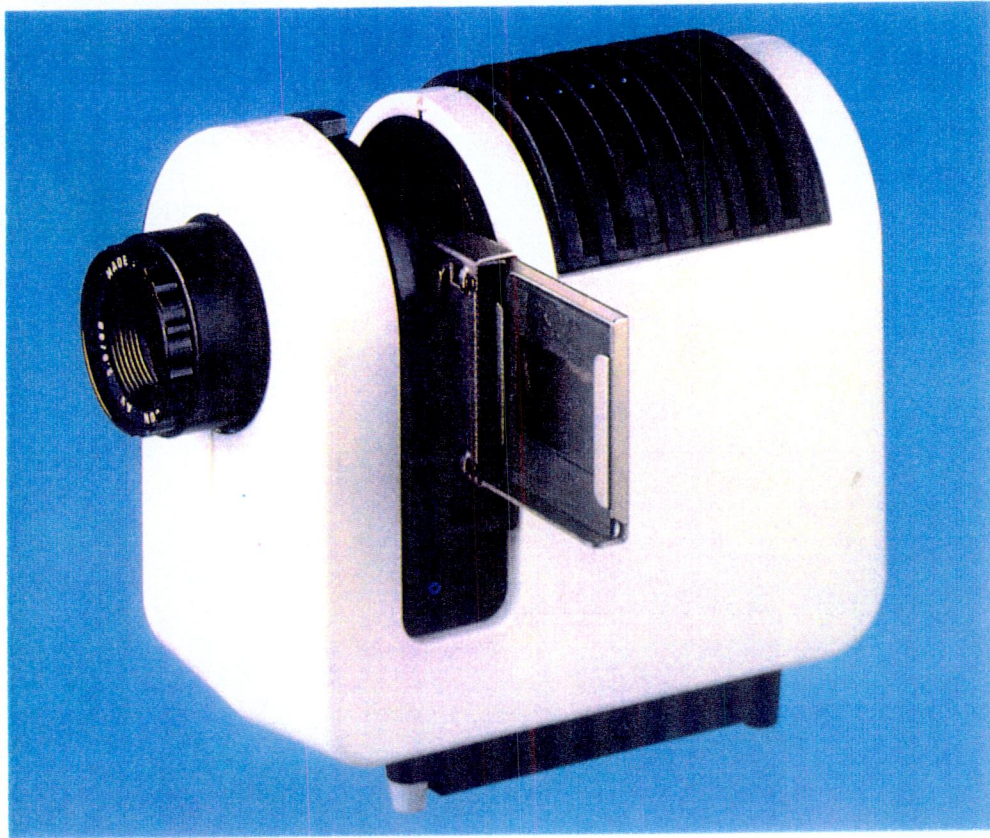


Fig. 11 *Slide film projector from GDR*

The Choice and Application of Materials

The choice of material in a design can tell the examiner so much about the attitudes of the designers and also the state of the economy. If the economy is prosperous materials tend to be more expensive and luxurious; likewise if the state of the economy is not thriving the decision is often taken to reduce the quality and specification of the material.

Cheap lightweight metals such as aluminium and tinfoil were very popular design materials in the former GDR. For example the 'ost mark' and 'pfennig pieces' were comprised of these metals in alloy form. Aluminium in particular is

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favourable for its cheap, malleable and unreactive properties. Aluminium parts were used in a range of domestic products from toasters (fig.12) to curlers (fig.13) to razors (fig.14). Looking at the diagrams opposite it can be seen that the material is applied in a most basic manner. The most daring treatment of the metal is in primitive texturing such as embossing and other pressure/pressing techniques.

Texturing was a significant part of the GDR design aesthetics. Texturing was a way around many of the problems that faced GDR designers such as lack of quality materials and lack of aesthetic freedom. Texturing was a good means to give the impression of decoration and pleasantness to otherwise painfully compromised designs.

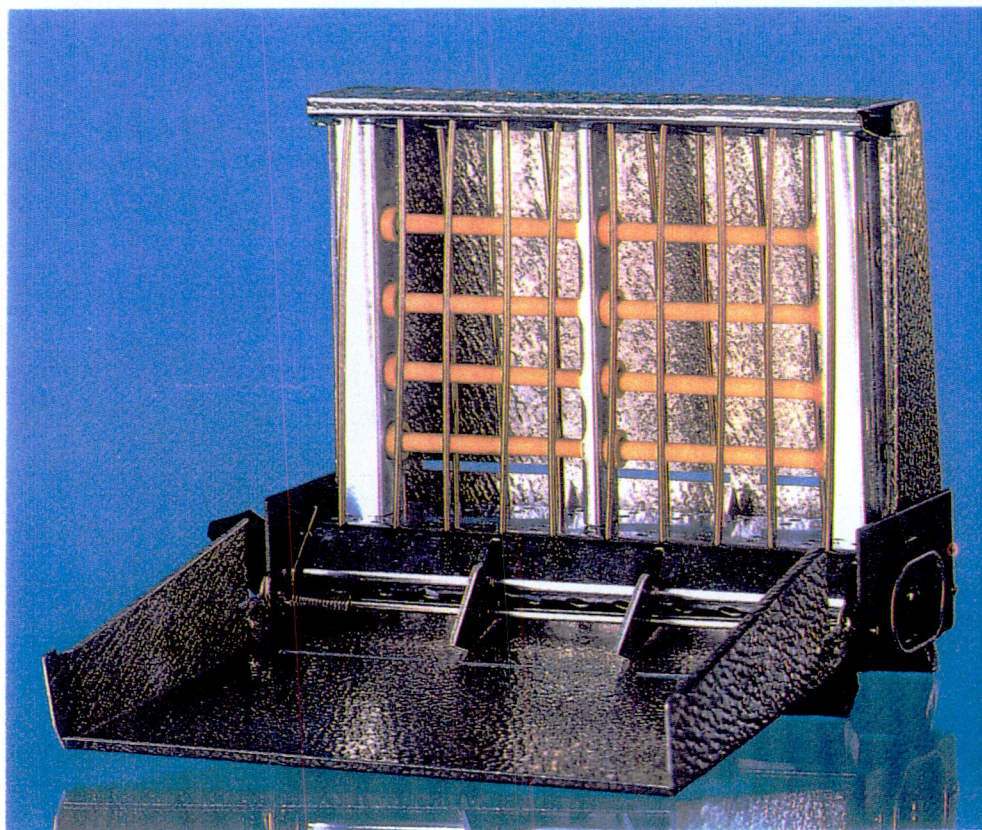
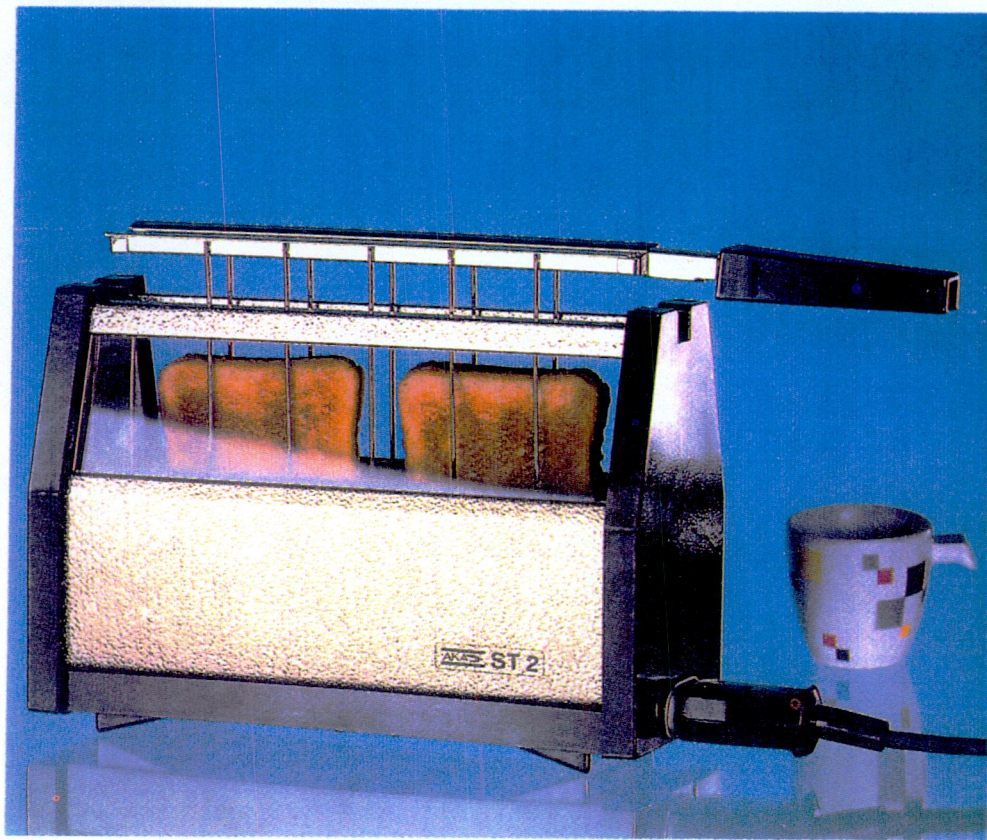


Fig. 12 *Pair of Toasters from GDR manufactured from lightweight metals*



Fig. 13 *Aluminium curlers from the GDR*

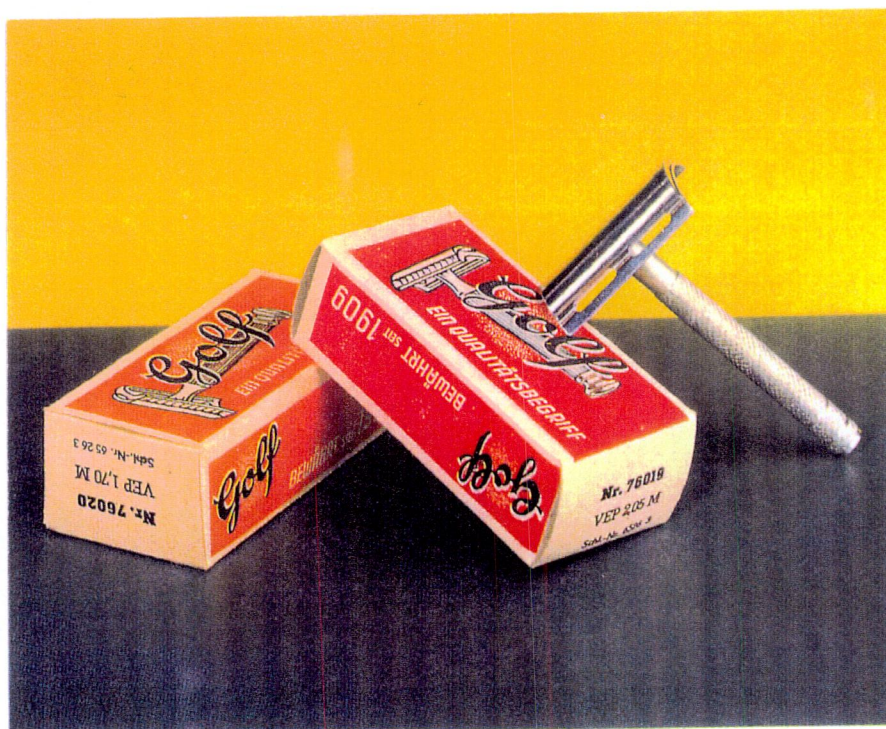


Fig. 14 Aluminium Razors from the GDR

Glass as a Design Material

Glass is another material that used texture in a most basic manner to disguise the plain socialist ruled design world. Glass was used almost universally for packaging of foodstuffs, cosmetics and liquid products. This area of product packaging shows how little emphasis the East Germans put on product identification and product branding. The bottles on the opposite page show a range of contents from cleaning fluids (fig.14), cosmetics (fig.15) to sauces and food (fig.16) yet there is no identifiable features about any of them. Apart from the labelling there is no way that one could tell the engine oil from say cooking oil or any other product.

It was most probably manufacturing constraints that influenced this thinking yet it does seem rather unusual that bottles had very little variation in either shape or proportion. The bottle for 'Tuff' aftershave (fig.18) is however the exception, this bottle is square in shape with angular patterns on the two opposite plains. The strong angular relief pattern on these two plains, appropriate for the discerning male user. Yes, but even though this bottle design attempts to appeal to the masculinity of the user, it still cannot escape completely from the constraints of socialism. For example we see that the applied decoration is applied to two plains only. It appears to have been visualised in two dimensions rather than three dimensionally.



Fig. 15 Bottles from the GDR containing (from left to right) Polish, Washing-up Liquid and Car Washing Liquid.



Fig. 16 Hair oils and Conditioners from the GDR



Fig. 17 Tomato Ketchup and other Sauce Bottles from the GDR



Fig. 18 *The 'Tuff' aftershave bottle from the GDR*

Generally, most of the glass forms from the GDR display only the most basic ornamentation, and this being mainly two dimensional. If one looks at the 'Brisant' cola bottle (fig.19), one can see distinct similarities between that and the 'Coca-cola' bottle (fig.20) of the Capitalist world. One would imagine that under Communism, the ideal of 'Coca-cola' would be considered anti-socialist but it does look like a subtle effort to imitate the curvy appeal of the world famous Coke bottle. If the 'Brisant' bottle is a well disguised coke bottle, it would seem that designers in the GDR in the eighties were quite a lot more intelligent and talented than their political system allowed them to show. In the GDR the use of glass is generally confined to packaging consumer items and other materials were used for more technical items.

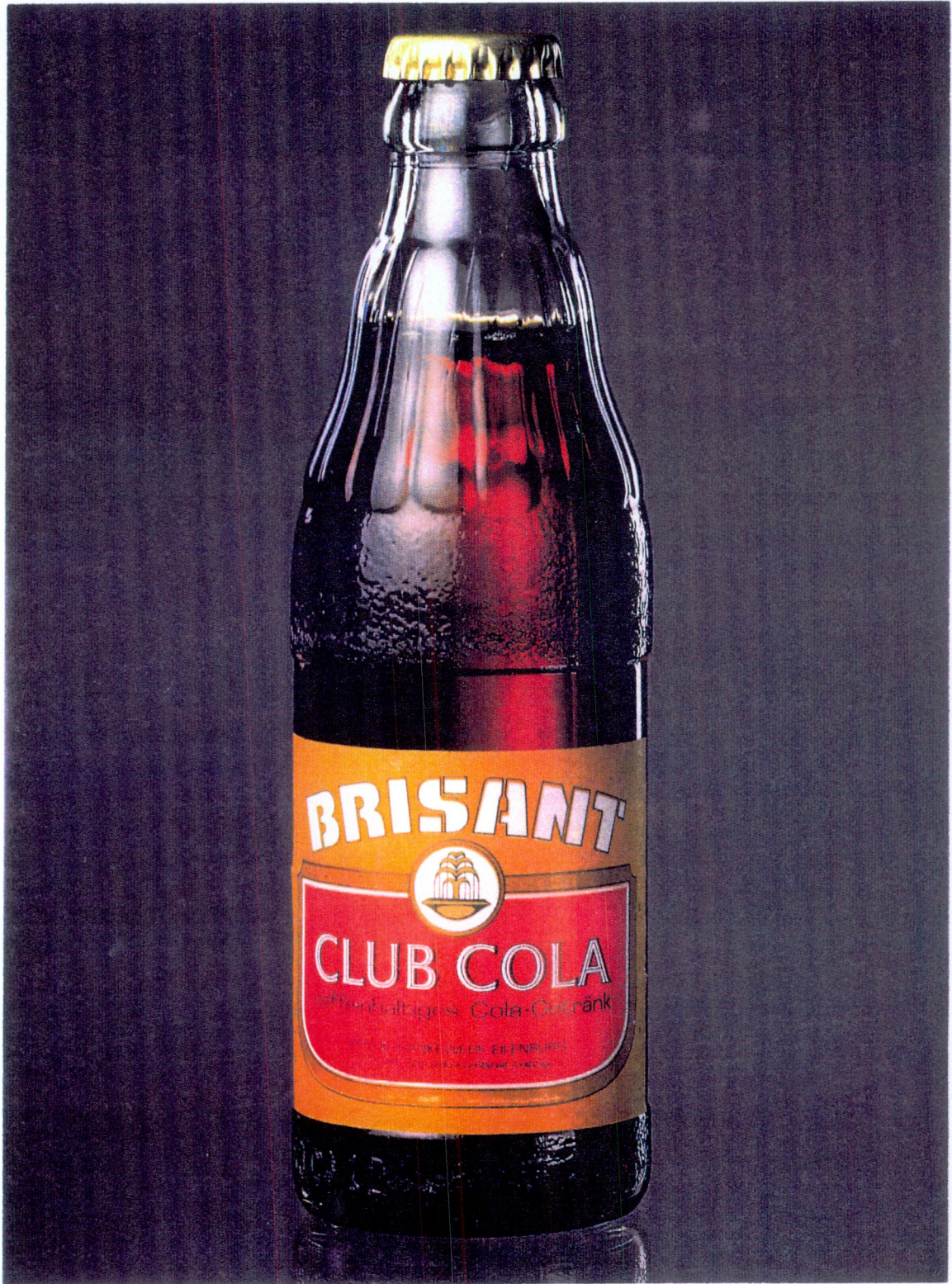


Fig. 19 The 'Brisant' cola bottle from the GDR



Fig. 20 *The 'Coca-Cola' bottle a design classic*

Dealing with Combinations of Materials

Another feature of GDR design that gives it its distinct identity is the process in which combinations of materials were dealt with. For example where the separate materials converge in the one product and the fashion in which this is achieved is different in the GDR to the conventional methods used in the West.



Fig. 21 *Portable Immersion Heater with Cup from the GDR*

An example of this is the toaster in (fig.12) with its metal and plastic casing. The difference in material selection is emphasised rather than concealed. This can also be seen in the portable immersion heater (fig.21) shown with its metal and plastic cup. It is obvious that the handle was applied afterwards rather than designed into the concept. The concept of the cup was obviously to conduct heat through the water being boiled yet once the water is boiled the cup is too hot to hold so a plastic handle was provided. In terms of function the handle is justifiable, yet aesthetically it is not pleasing.

In East Germany however, the plastic handle applied afterward was probably, number one, the cheapest solution and secondly the most simple means of adding a handle to the vessel. This was completely acceptable within this system.

For a design to be acceptable it must first fulfil a number of requirements as regards form, aesthetics, function and ergonomics. If a design fulfils all of these to some degree it shall be acceptable. The cup belonging to the immersion heater did not fulfil these functions sufficiently but some of the designs from the GDR did fulfil the requirements of acceptability while conforming to the constraints of the Socialist state.

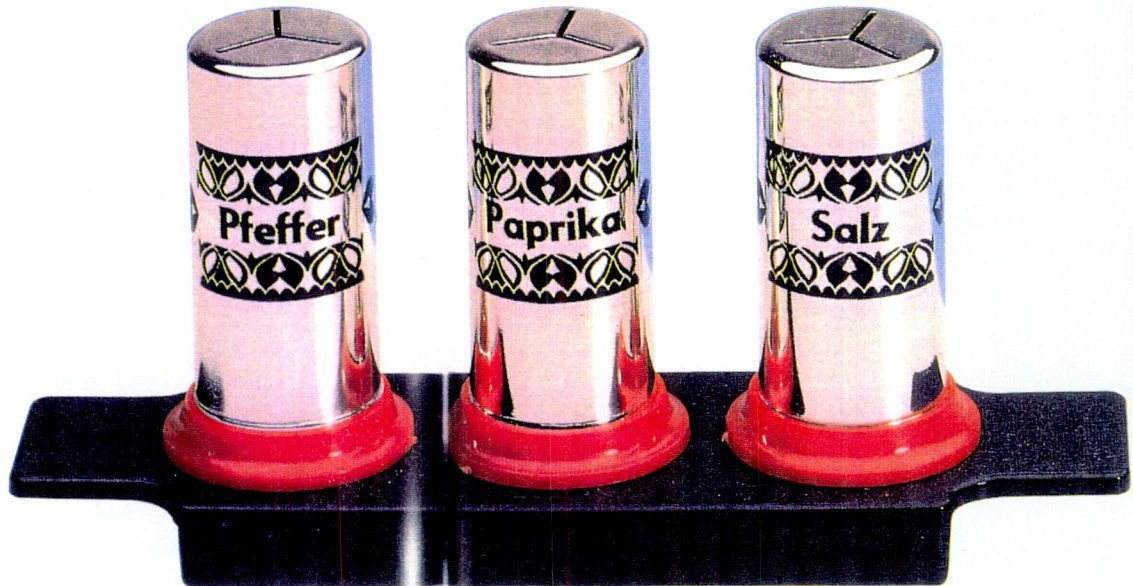


Fig. 22 *Salt and Pepper Shakers from the GDR*

In the salt and pepper shakers in (fig.22) combinations of materials have been used acceptably. In the shakers there are three stages in the material application. Firstly there is the metal body of the shaker, then the plastic seal that provides an individual base for each shaker and finally the textured plastic stand that all the shakers are placed on. In the West streamlining and fluid forms have long been the battle call yet in the GDR there was no need to hide behind soft corners and fashion statements. GDR design demonstrates a certain blatancy, a design anarchy. When we consider this we perhaps are led to question the need for deception and cosmetic jobs.

This design anarchy is only valid if justified within the policy that it is subjected to. For example the design of the salt and pepper shakers is justified within the constraints of Socialism in the 1980s. It is no longer valid after 1989, when GDR turned toward Capitalism. The salt and pepper shakers do not conform to Capitalist aesthetics and the fact that they do still contain elements of balance in shape and form makes them anarchic in concept. On the other hand, the metal cup with plastic handle does not contain any elements of balance either aesthetically or functionally.

1. The first part of the document is a letter from the President of the United States to the Congress, dated January 3, 1862. It is a very important document, as it contains the President's message to Congress, and is one of the most important documents in the history of the United States.

2

The clash of material, finish and form only makes for chaos in this instance. The form does not lend its self to ease of use or aesthetic appeal. It is of course a hasty afterthought in an attempt to solve the problem of lifting a hot vessel. Only the well planned anarchic design can speak in favour of Socialism or the designers who worked under that system as exemplified in the Salt and Pepper case.

The first part of the report discusses the general situation of the country and the progress of the work. It also mentions the results of the various investigations and the conclusions drawn from them. The second part of the report deals with the specific details of the work, including the methods used, the results obtained, and the conclusions reached. The third part of the report is a summary of the work and a statement of the conclusions reached.

The results of the various investigations are as follows: The first investigation was conducted by Mr. A. B. C. and the results are given in the table on page 10. The second investigation was conducted by Mr. D. E. F. and the results are given in the table on page 11. The third investigation was conducted by Mr. G. H. I. and the results are given in the table on page 12. The fourth investigation was conducted by Mr. J. K. L. and the results are given in the table on page 13. The fifth investigation was conducted by Mr. M. N. O. and the results are given in the table on page 14.

The conclusions reached from the various investigations are as follows: The first conclusion is that the results of the various investigations are in general agreement. The second conclusion is that the methods used in the various investigations are satisfactory. The third conclusion is that the results of the various investigations are of great value. The fourth conclusion is that the work has been carried out in a most efficient manner. The fifth conclusion is that the work has been completed in a most satisfactory manner.

Chapter Three

Product Design from the Two Systems

The type of Communism that existed in the former GDR was in some ways a diluted form of the Soviet ideal. At the same time GDR designers had their historical values stemming from Pre-war Germany and Modernism. To examine the value of design from this viewpoint it is useful to compare it to the opposite western type of design. By comparing and contrasting the two systems and the product of both we shall be able to see some interesting similarities and stark differences. It is most relevant to compare simple everyday domestic goods for a number of reasons:

In order to show any significant contrast, it is necessary to pick two similar objects that, though similar in essence are incorporated in two totally different environments. Firstly, if one were to compare high technology or advanced consumer goods, the political system in the Western world places western designers in an advantaged position over those in the east. Western designers because of the consumer culture, have access to advances in technology and production equipment, that designers in the East have been deprived of.

This thesis is examining design and the ideals inbred in the design so technical advancement and scientific gain are not relevant to the argument at present. To illustrate the values and ideologies embodied in East German design a simple everyday product that has existed for hundreds of years can say more than many of the 'top of the range' modern appliances. A domestic kettle for example, is an item used in many households all over the world, its sole function is to hold water for the purpose of boiling. There are many kettle designs found in every corner of the globe yet each design embodies a different range of ideologies and restrictions that place similar objects poles apart.

These differing ideologies can be illustrated by the following examples:

- * The Alessi Singing Kettle (Fig.23) designed by an American architect Micheal Graves.
- * The Whistling Kettle (Fig.24) designed anonymously in East Germany and produced by the State run firm AF.

The Alessi kettle could be described as the antithesis of East German ideals in all aspects. In form, the artistic endeavours of the Postmodernist movement, eclecticism and architectural thinking oppose the functionalism of the East.

Physical Features

System of Operation

Both of the aforementioned kettles do nothing other than hold the water to be boiled: they do not provide any means of heating the water or contain any electrical workings. However, when each kettle is held over a heat source and the water boils, the kettle whistles to indicate that the water is boiled. The system works on the steam generated by the boiling water.

In the AF (East German) kettle the steam pushes its way through the spout of the kettle and the air flow through the Aluminium spout lid creates a whistling noise. The system is in effect functional, the user knows when the kettle is boiled.



Fig. 23 *The Alessi 'Singing Kettle' designed 1985, by architect Micheal Graves*



Fig. 24 *The 'AF' Whistling Kettle from the GDR*

The first part of the report deals with the general situation of the country. It is a very interesting and informative study of the country's development. The second part of the report deals with the specific details of the country's development. It is a very detailed and thorough study of the country's development.

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Sound

The Alessi kettle works using the same system but there is a subtle difference: the name for example is the 'Singing' kettle as opposed to the whistling kettle. On the spout of the Alessi kettle sits a red plastic bird. When the kettle boils a whistling sound is created, in effect the bird 'sings.' It is as if there is something more sophisticated about Singing as opposed to whistling. The sound of singing alludes to a certain quality and sweetness whereas the wolf-whistle comes to mind in the former context. This subtlety exists in the design by the American architect and the use of semantics strengthens the imagery invoked in the name.

Colour

Physically the Alessi kettle aspires to preserve this subtle quality throughout the design. For example the handle is a sculpted cloud in blue polyamide, blue of course signifying coolness and safety contrasted with the red bird signifying heat and danger.

Manufacturing, Engineering and Costs: the Great Divide

Each separate part is designed to fit expertly into the kettle, joints are precisely engineered and the kettle is commercially successful. For a small fortune you too can own one! The Alessi kettle is a perfectly ingenious design, quirky and well made. In 1986, the kettle won several design awards. Yet what is the price we must pay for such quality? We must involve architects (at high cost) to apply architectural thinking to a piece of industrial design. Has industrial design in the West run its course that now we must use architecture to create aesthetic quality. The Alessi kettle is a product of Capitalism. It is designed not as a piece of industrial design but as a monument to the middle classes. This kettle is not for the people but for the patrons. Not everyone can enjoy the little singing bird.

1. The first part of the report deals with the general situation of the country and the progress of the work during the year. It is a summary of the work done and the results achieved. It is a general statement of the work done and the results achieved. It is a general statement of the work done and the results achieved.

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In East Germany the AF kettle was available to everyone at a cost of 3.50 ost marks (East German marks were worth a quarter of a west German mark), the price of the kettle conforms to the Socialist ideal that goods should be available and within reach of everyone. This kettle would by no means break the bank. On the other hand this kettle never won any international awards. In perspective, this kettle does everything that the Alessi kettle does at less than one hundredth the cost. The AF kettle relies on aluminium for its construction making the kettle lightweight in comparison to the stainless steel used in the Alessi kettle. The handle is applied to the body using basic rivets and all the manufacturing processes are simple and basic. Very little work would have to be done to produce new tooling for manufacture, unlike the Alessi kettle.

Elitism versus the Masses, their embodiment in Design

When we judge a design in the West often the primary considerations are those of aesthetics and style with functionalism and economic considerations coming afterwards. Looking for a moment at the Alessi kettle, this in effect is a object aimed a the class society, it exists as a symbolic expression of the individuals place in society and its success praises both the Alessi company and the work of Micheal Graves. Functionally it does no more or less than the AF kettle. The AF kettle on the other hand is an expression of the collective efforts of the people it does not praise any one designer or manufacturer, it simply exists to provide a service. This way the kettle assumes its natural place in the lives of the user. That of a mere kitchen utensil, it blends into the background. The kettle is not a talking point or even a noticeable part of the kitchen environment. In its own way it is a symbol of freedom. The user is free from the confines of the consumer culture he does not have to ponder, or chose one kettle over another. On the same note his kettle does not say any thing about him or his lifestyle. This product is his ally, it performs its function without seeking attention and will not betray anything about his personality.

1. The first part of the report deals with the general situation of the country and the position of the various groups of the population. It is a very interesting and informative study of the social and economic conditions of the country.

2. The second part of the report deals with the political situation and the activities of the various political parties. It is a very interesting and informative study of the political situation of the country.

3. The third part of the report deals with the economic situation and the activities of the various economic groups. It is a very interesting and informative study of the economic situation of the country.

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Each Kettle and its Influence on Society

The AF kettle stands as a symbol of the advancement of socialism in 1980's GDR, it serves rather than is served. In the consumer society of the west, the object is the all powerful symbol. Design in the consumer society has glorified objects so much so that it is the object that is desired rather than, a product to fulfil a need or perform a task. Products have become so incredibly important that the phrase 'object love' has been coined; objects are beginning to become substitutes for humans. Recently there was an article in The Sunday Times (Feilding,1992,p.8-9) about a case of extreme 'object love' which was referred to the British Institute of Psychiatry. It involved a twenty year old student who fell in love with an Austin Metro (Fig.25) and searched for moments when he could be alone with the car, he also fantasised about it to the extent that he had an erotic affair with the car.



Fig. 25 *Austin Metro: Obscure Object of Desire*

The East German kettle does not seek to gain the love of its user / it remains an object with a specific function. It serves the people in its functional aspect yet its production serves to provide employment to the worker. In the West the worker is obsolete as every year passes more machines take over the work of the human. Manufacturing processes are an integral part of design in the Western world, machines speed up the process and save on labour costs leaving more funds to finance the myth makers. In the West society is increasingly becoming orientated towards creating new needs. Industrial design solved all the old problems and in doing so it created a new process. Armies of researchers, advertisers, artists and marketing people all exist to convince us that our lives are not happy and shall not be happy until we invest in the latest products they have to offer. Designers are there to invent new products that the world needs. We have dozens of kettles

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we can chose from we have electric kettles, gas kettles, whistling kettles, jug kettles and designer kettles and so on. All these kettles can do however is boil water and the water still boils at 100 degrees celsius. The East German kettle is in effect telling us something about ourselves and our needs. The consumer society is cheating us telling us we need new things all the time, in order to survive capitalist society relies on the principle of built in obsolescence. Yet the Eastern German society proved that society can still survive even when things are designed to last. After all, Eastern Germany was one of the wealthiest states in the Soviet block and all its people enjoyed a good standard of living.

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Chapter Four

Design Theory in the GDR, The Ideals and Realities

Design in the GDR was under tight State control, and the State Party the SED very much controlled how things were going to develop in the design world. In some ways this may have been detrimental to the natural path along which design would have progressed. However, where the Party imposed constraints the designers were forced to fight their way out of the stifling situation until design had developed to what you have seen so far of 1930s design. What was produced was in effect the product of the system not the product of free thinking individuals. Yet where the East Germany had an advantage was in its ideals.

These ideals embodied in GDR design are in effect a sort of compromise between Capitalism and Communism. The people of the GDR come from a unique background in that they come from modern German origin yet their late history embraces Communism. The people under this system had lived through both systems and could see the evils of both. During the 1980s the old Bauhaus building in Dessau was restored and was used regularly for seminars on design and the role of design under Communism. The political climate was conducive to openness and some of the old Bauhaus spirit may well have influenced the classless young designers emerging growing from the social system. Due to the relaxing of the regime designers were for the first time exposed to some degree to the international design scene and the design work from this era is to some extent a combination of both systems.

The first part of the report discusses the current state of the world's oceans and the impact of climate change on marine ecosystems. It highlights the need for international cooperation to address these challenges.

The second part of the report focuses on the role of the United Nations in promoting sustainable development and the protection of the environment. It outlines the various initiatives and programs that have been implemented over the years.

The third part of the report discusses the importance of education and research in understanding the complex interactions between the environment and human society. It emphasizes the need for a holistic approach that takes into account both natural and social sciences.

The fourth part of the report provides a summary of the key findings and recommendations of the study. It calls for a renewed commitment to sustainable development and the protection of the environment for the benefit of future generations.

The report concludes by expressing the hope that the findings and recommendations will be used to guide policy-making and action at the national and international levels. It also expresses the hope that the world will be able to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by the year 2030.

The Influence of Tradition on 1980s Design

Design in the early years of the state strove to unite three very contrasting elements. These elements became diluted throughout the years as the social and political factors diversified. The original design aims were:

- i) To revert to the Pre-war design traditions of the Deutsche Werkbund and the Bauhaus.
- ii) To fulfil the physical needs of the people.
- iii) To incorporate the political objectives of the emerging State.

The manner in which each of these ideals were manifested is the essence of GDR design. In all the designs discussed to date these ideals are incorporated to some degree or another. It is this combination that separates GDR design from design under the Capitalist system and from Russian design ethics.

Traditions and Attitude To Aesthetics

By adhering to early German design traditions GDR product design managed to represent something of the Bauhaus ideals for example the socialist ideas put forward by Mart Stam and Hannes Meyer were an influential underlying principle. The idea of standardisation, producing standard goods that cater for the needs of the user.

Products were designed to do a job, the aesthetics of the piece arose from the functionalist aspect and the application of materials rather than the aspects of style or the form. Take for example the Wartburg car (fig.26) common on the streets of Dresden 1992, it is comparable in aesthetic appearance to the BMW 503 (Fig.27). There have been several BMW designs since that time whereas the single Wartburg design persists.



Fig. 29 *The Wartburg car common on the Streets of Dresden in 1992*



Fig. 30 *The BMW 503, not unlike the Wartburg above, at Goertz exhibition in Hamburg, June 1992*

Where America and the Western world succumbed to streamlining and stylistic experiments the GDR stayed true to the Functionalist ideal. The tradition followed by the designers lent itself to the needs of the population as a whole. Therefore design was conceived with the needs of the masses to the fore from conceptualisation to production. Indeed, in order to fulfil these requirements,

choice of materials, cost of production and functionalism all were of importance to both the individual and the State. A product that pandered to the needs of the individual would not necessarily also suit the needs of the population as a whole.

Socialism and the Role of Style in the Socialist Society

East Germany's answer to the problem of style in a socialist society was the production of a generic style, or non-style so to speak. Generic products do not serve to alienate any one sector of society. What is good for the housewife is good for the surgeon and the industrial labourer and so on. In the west the opposite is true/goods are designed for the niches- the executive, the young person, the man on the street and so on.

The method in which this is achieved in the West is by use of colour and form. For example as already referred to, there are certain colours that signify certain categories of products (see figs.4-10 Chapter 2). The way in which the East German designers achieved an overall generic approach to style was by not applying any particular feature to any particular product. For example colour schemes are universal and similar surface textures used on a wide range of goods.

The generic nature of 1980s GDR design supercedes the need for advertising and offers no accommodation for the application of myths. In the West, design is used to create room for the myth-makers and advertisers. In reality design in the 1980s was used and sold as a commodity rather than a discipline. The existence of Postmodernism and eclecticism has shown that design as a saleable commodity is obsolete. Western design ethics for so long relied on the influence of style and fashion to drive the design, the 1980s East German mode of confidence disclaims

the western ethic and in doing so managed to create an aesthetic completely free from the constraints of time and style. The infamous GDR Trabant car (fig.28) is typical of this generic form of approach, the styling and engineering is archetypal of years gone by yet, it has features such as use of recycled materials that are characteristic of late eighties thinking.

This Eastern German aesthetic, also encompasses the early objectives of the GDR State, that is to produce pure goods that serve to educate the people in the Socialist paradigm. By the 1980s however, the objective of the State was still to provide for the people but the reality depended very much on economy. The new objectives were to design within the realm of what was available in the political climate of the time, this meant in the production and manufacture of products and also in the use of materials that were available.



Fig. 28 *The Infamous East German car 'The Trabant' still around in 1992*

The approach taken to materials in the East Germany is considered dated and simplistic in the West, but it has unearthed a few advantages over the approach taken in the West. For example the application of plastic in the West leaves a lot to be desired, plastics age poorly in the West because some of the chemicals used in their manufacture have not been tested for long enough periods. This is because the demand for new product development in the West does not allow sufficient time for testing.

In the West smooth clean looking products are popular. Take the modern jug-type kettle, kitchen appliances, computer hardware the list goes on. Each of these products look clean and bright in the first six to twelve months of their working existence but in as little as two years in this environment modern plastics become discoloured and brittle. The clean white plastics so desirable two years beforehand suddenly become obsolete and a nuisance to us, so we throw them away onto the toxic pile of last years throw away goods.

In the West's haste to produce these flawless goods in time for the season's style collection, they have introduced a surplus of obsolete plastic goods that though out of date and style do not actually decay or break down into workable materials for hundreds of years. In the East Germany plastic compounds such as bakelite were still produced for many purposes. The cable drums in (fig.29) designed in the GDR, look quite ugly next to a similar Western product, but bakelite has properties which lead the material to improve with age. In two years time when the modern plastic is discoloured and ugly the bakelite will have become smooth and polished. If a material such as bakelite can actually improve with age surely this must lead to research for similar properties in the modern plastics.

In a world where ecology and saving the earth are so in vogue, it is a little odd that principles such as modern plastics are still a reality. The ethics used in the east is in effect a solution of sorts to the an imposing world problem. Similarly the Trabant car (fig.28) produced in east Germany uses recycled plastics in the chassis and body parts. The use of recycled plastics was in this case a necessity because of the lack of materials and capital.

Where we in the west produced a throw away culture that exists on the principle of built in obsolescence, they in the East produced goods that fulfilled a need from materials that were cheap and available and that were free from the constraints of style and time. The goods existed for the user not the market existing for the goods, and as long as the goods produced were designed under these constraints it had a useful long lifespan.



Fig. 29 *Bakelite cable drums from the GDR*

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Conclusion

East German design has shown itself to be atypical of what we have in the Western World. This is unusual considering that the East German State shared much of its recent history with the Federal Republic. Yet, it was the political system the GDR was bound to that shaped the face of East German design. The Socialist system controlled so much in terms of design decisions that the designers cannot be accused of compromise or complacency for the designs they produced, but should be complimented for their ingenuity and invention when faced with the lack of resources they had to contend with.

After all, it was the State system that controlled aesthetic and moral decisions as well as physical restrictions such as materials and finance. From the beginning the Party leader set down a full set of regulations that designers and engineers were to follow. The main stipulation was that the objectives of the Socialist State and the needs of the people as a whole rather than the needs of the individual had to be taken into account.

Though all the products discussed from foodstuffs to cosmetics to electrical goods are designed to fulfil banal functions using basic technology, they are all designed to fulfil the needs not just of the individual as is the case in the West, but to fulfil many roles. Each product was designed to be produced at low cost enabling it to be attainable by all. Also, these products were designed to satisfy the needs of the State both morally and practically.

Morally, by conforming in an aesthetic and functional manner and practically by using low technology and simple manufacturing processes. The more basic the process the more work that can be done manually, providing employment for the maximum number of people. So, each product though restricted by the rules of the State actually existed for the common good.

In the West so called consumer freedom has developed in such a way that individuals are targeted by the mass advertisers and marketers. People have been categorised into market sectors, home-makers, executives, sportsmen, the young, the old even the baby market. What Capitalism is actually doing is trapping people and putting them into niches. The consumer is then forced into purchasing products he believes he needs from this specially tailored niche. In effect the person is bound to purchasing these superfluous products instead of being free as he believes he is. He is actually trapped in his own market segment.

East German products were designed in a completely different manner, products are designed to satisfy a need rather than create one. The product serves the user and so leaves him free to live his life above and beyond the lure of consumerism.

In reality we must ask ourselves whether the consumer society we live in as free and as open as we like to think it is. By being free to chose are we actually forced constantly to exercise this freedom by consuming the products that we are offered. We are forced to spend more and more to maintain the constant flow of new products and new styles, It is a vicious circle, in order to have a constant stream of new products there must be a consumer, but if the consumer was really free to chose whether he wanted these new products or not then reliability of the consumer would not exist and therefore these new products would not exist. In reality, the consumer must always consume to preserve his freedom. This freedom which in effect is not freedom at all.

Epilogue

In the twentieth century, technological and design development have progressed hand in hand. Over the years the pace of this development has hastened, by the 1980s, countries such as the United States, Japan and West Germany have established themselves as world leaders in the field of industrial design and manufacturing technology. In the scramble for world domination some important problems have been ignored. Such as, the environmental and social repercussions that use of modern materials have on the world both now and in the future.

As all this has been happening in the Western world, design developments have been much slower in the East. Time has been given to develop the chemical industry. Use of recycling materials and tried and tested materials in East Germany meant that though production was slower and less sophisticated it still produced enough to keep the economy in a profitable state. After the opening of the Iron Curtain, the pace of Western production outran the East in a matter of months. The West's attitude to East Germany was to decide their future for them and so the West in effect captured the Eastern ethics and forced them to conform to their way of thinking. This leads us to ask are we really free or are we being controlled by the pace of Capitalist advancement. Although the people under Soviet rule were forced to conform to the rules and regulations of the Socialist manifesto, perhaps they were in fact free to live their lives beyond this realm.

The lack of consumer choice in the GDR produced a pure design strategy, that is, the market was propelled by need rather than fashion. If a need existed for a kettle for example the user would purchase the AF kettle from his local store for a small price and thus the need would be fulfilled. The product itself is of little importance, it is the need that has to be fulfilled that is the nucleus of the situation. Design exists for designs' sake and for no other reason. It could be described as pure design.

1. The first part of the report deals with the general situation of the country and the position of the various groups.

2. The second part of the report deals with the economic situation and the position of the various groups.

3. The third part of the report deals with the social situation and the position of the various groups.

4. The fourth part of the report deals with the political situation and the position of the various groups.

5. The fifth part of the report deals with the cultural situation and the position of the various groups.

6. The sixth part of the report deals with the religious situation and the position of the various groups.

7. The seventh part of the report deals with the legal situation and the position of the various groups.

8. The eighth part of the report deals with the administrative situation and the position of the various groups.

9. The ninth part of the report deals with the military situation and the position of the various groups.

10. The tenth part of the report deals with the foreign relations and the position of the various groups.

11. The eleventh part of the report deals with the internal security and the position of the various groups.

12. The twelfth part of the report deals with the education and the position of the various groups.

13. The thirteenth part of the report deals with the health and the position of the various groups.

14. The fourteenth part of the report deals with the labor and the position of the various groups.

15. The fifteenth part of the report deals with the housing and the position of the various groups.

16. The sixteenth part of the report deals with the transportation and the position of the various groups.

17. The seventeenth part of the report deals with the communication and the position of the various groups.

18. The eighteenth part of the report deals with the energy and the position of the various groups.

19. The nineteenth part of the report deals with the environment and the position of the various groups.

20. The twentieth part of the report deals with the future and the position of the various groups.

During the 1980s in the Western world design was used in a completely different manner. It was used as a bait to entice the consumer. But, in the same vain this bait became confused in the glitter and gaiety of the myth selling market place and suddenly design was lost under a pile of advertisements, and discarded styles.

Multi-national corporations were buying design and giving it away free in the form of shoddy key-rings, key-fobs, and pens. The consumer is so dazzled by the conglomeration of company logos, image creators and free gifts, that the consumer interest is depleted. In the 1990s style has lost its appeal it has outrun itself so far that the consumer can no longer keep up with the trends and are searching for a timelessness that was conceived in the GDR years before.

Consumerism may have taken East Germany by surprise and the Eastern German consumer so unprepared for the superficial world of advertising in overwhelmed by this vast choice. But by smothering the innocent East German product market, the Western world has made a martyr of the Eastern design ideals. The overnight disappearance of East german design is only temporary and it will soon emerge again. When the dust settles on the late consumer culture Western designers may well look for inspiration to the former German Democratic Republic.

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