

## Collections

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### Collecting Contemporary History

The Foundation's museums in Bonn and Leipzig systematically enlarged their collections of contemporary historical exhibits in the report period. The total of items (objects, photos, documents and media including books and periodicals) housed in the two museums now stands at about 350,000, of which about 17,000 were acquired in the last two years. The cuts in acquisition budgets were partly offset by the aid of sponsors and by gifts, including (to name only one of these), the complete works of Klaus Pielert, a collection of over 10,000 drawings. The work of this renowned cartoonist reflects 50 years of contemporary German history. Proposals for new acquisitions come from the curators in Bonn and Leipzig and are coordinated by the relevant departments via the "Integrated Museum Management System" (IMS). This IT networking system ensures the development of a uniform collection. The aim of the joint collecting work done at the Foundation's two venues is to build up a unique contemporary historical collection in keeping with substantive historical criteria. Four modern collecting methods are consistently applied for this purpose: systematic collecting by genre-specific concepts or categories; collecting for specific exhibitions; collecting that follows the "off the road and into the museum" strategy; and collecting with an eye to the historical-object market.

### Systematic Collecting by Category

Examples from the art collection sector serve to illustrate this method. Two frescoes, "Dancing Women and a Man" ("Tanzende Frauen und ein Mann") by Manfred Böttcher, and "Pan" ("Der Pan") by Horst Zickelbein, were painted in 1957 for a celebration put on by the members of a master-class for their teachers. They painted the motifs on a cellar-wall of the Academy of the Arts in East Berlin. The paintings are of special artistic interest because – in contrast to the painting style preferred by the political regime of the GDR – they clearly show the influence of Chagall and Picasso.

The 15 large-format photos that make up the ensemble "First Social-Liberal Cabinet" ("Erstes sozialliberales Kabinett)" by Charles Wilp stand for a new and contemporary portraiture of politicians. The collage shows the Cabinet members of the time with symbolic touches. With this work, Wilp deliberately turned away from the classic school of photographing politicians.

## **Collecting and Displaying**

Over half of the objects shown in temporary exhibitions come from our own museum collections. To supplement these, the exhibition teams conduct research specifically according to targets and guidelines on exhibition content.

Project team-workers assigned to the "Lili Marleen" exhibition found, for example, a 1942 photograph by Hannes Kilian illustrating with sensitivity the Lili Marleen motif: a soldier is saying goodbye to his girlfriend in front of a barracks in Stuttgart.

In a small sketchbook, a German prisoner of war also draws this familiar scene – impressive evidence of the importance of this song in the POW camps.

The themes of the permanent exhibition combine to make up the other guideline for object research. An example is "In the Reichstag Cupola" ("In der Reichstagskuppel") by Ursula Schwirzer. Completed in 1999 and then presented in the permanent exhibition, this painting is one of the first major artistic ventures addressing the subject of the redesigned Reichstag building.

### **"Off the Road and Into the Museum"**

Curators and exhibition teams watch current events and trends and develop collection guidelines with an eye to the future. One of them is to act quickly to acquire and preserve ephemeral objects so as to prevent their destruction or disappearance, and to be able to use them later for museum purposes. A case in point is the transition from the deutschmark to the euro. During the run-up to the currency conversion, a project team had already thought about which objects to preserve: starter kits issued in all euro-bloc countries, euro shipping crates, euro instruction kits, banks' currency-exchange signs, posters on the "sleeper"-coins being held back – all this and a lot more is available for museum presentation. Outstanding in this category are the objects presented to the Museum of Contemporary History by Finance Minister Hans Eichel: the original die of the obverse and reverse of the 1-deutschmark coin, used to make all dies of the five German mints; the ten dies themselves; and Hans Eichel's last deutschmark.

Supplementing these collections is the 2-meter-high "government euro" made by the artist Uwe Bremer and Berlin children and signed by Chancellor Gerhard Schröder and the members of his Cabinet. This "government euro" is one of 1,000 "giant euros" designed by well-known artists for the project "Euro World – Europe Draws for Child Victims of Cancer". Generous financial assistance by the Bonn Sparkasse (city savings bank) made it possible for the Museum of Contemporary History to integrate this object into its permanent exhibition.

A second example of this systematic form of collecting is the documenting of the 2002 parliamentary election campaign. As in the case of all national and regional parliamentary elections, the Museum of Contemporary History collected the major promotional materials of the political parties. Current posters are added in this way to the Foundation's overall collection of political posters, which has become one of the most important of its kind in Germany. Particularly noteworthy are the one-of-a-kind objects stemming from the first TV debate between Federal Chancellor Gerhard Schröder and his challenger, Bavarian Prime Minister Edmund Stoiber. The participating networks ARD, RTL, SAT 1 and ZDF presented to the museum the lecterns and other eye-catching parts of the studio sets, meaning that this historic political and media event is preserved for museum presentation.

## The Auction Market

The museum curators study the international market of historical objects. Contacts to special collectors and to auction houses are cultivated, in order to be able to acquire important objects and to keep up with market developments. During the report period, the museum took part in 90 national and international auctions and acquired about 260 objects.

An absolute rarity is the poster announcing the opening of the "Star-Club" in Hamburg and the premiere of the Beatles, heralding the beginnings of pop culture in Germany.

## Object Management

As soon as the objects are in the museum, they are registered, photographed, their condition examined and any necessary restoration work performed; then they are stored under proper conditions in one of the depots.

Organisation, logistics and documentation are in the hands of the registrars. Together with their teams they are responsible for some 350,000 museum objects and for objects on loan. In the report period they handled some 300 loan transactions covering 1,152 loaned objects for seven major exhibitions in Bonn alone. Added to this is the care – including organisation and licensing rights – of 860 photos shown in the exhibitions. For exhibition preparations and object acquisition, over 500 shipments had to be arranged, some with courier-escorts.

The depot managers help the registrars to organise the moving of objects. Taking objects out of store for exhibitions, loan transactions, repro jobs, and depot reorganisation entailed 15,000 separate operations. The registrars and object managers are also responsible for seeing to it that all required objects are available on time for display in the exhibitions. During exhibition preparations, the registrars send database printouts of all important object information to the exhibition project team.

The processing of loan and repro inquiries – for example, from Yad Vashem of Israel and the Mémorial in Caen – is also part of the work of the registrars. Their experience flows into the optimisation of the "Integrated Museum Management System" (IMS). On regular *jours fixes*, the fields of work of the registrars in Bonn and Leipzig are interlinked.

## Documentation

The basis for efficient searching in the IMS object database is the precise documentary registration of all objects stored in Bonn and Leipzig. Besides the work of classic stock description, the object documentation section stored data on exhibition management and object management and made sure that the registration of incoming objects included digital photos. This means that after documentary registration, comprehensive information on the given object is available to all Foundation staff. In Bonn alone, documentation staff created some 15,000 data records in the report period. With help from outside, the total of object-indexed digital photos was increased by about 48,000. All newly registered objects have photos attached. In 2001 and 2002, 34,000 existing records were provided with photos.

## **Object Maintenance**

The conservation workshop is responsible for the restoration and conservation of the objects in the Museum of Contemporary History; it aids in setting up the exhibitions and it advises the exhibition teams in matters of conservation and presentation. The chief conservator undertakes a coordinating function between Bonn and Leipzig.

In the report period, the conservation workshop drew up reports describing the condition of objects displayed in 22 exhibitions and presentations: 4,700 objects from the museum's collections or on loan were prepared for exhibitions, 400 objects were prepared to be loaned out. 600 objects had to be given conservation treatment, some of them by outside experts. Two tasks may serve here as examples: first, the complicated installation of a sail-shaped solar collector used in space – it was mounted over the final section of the permanent exhibition – was a special challenge of technical presentation, since the fabric is extremely easy to tear and since the "space sail" had to be mounted at a great height. Second, what is probably the only model of a makeshift church dating from 1947 had been painted over, and the distorting overlay had to be completely removed so as to restore the model to something like its original condition for the temporary exhibition "On the Seventh Day. The History of Sunday".

## **Photo Studio**

For the temporary exhibitions and the various publications of the Foundation, the photo studio produces illustrative photos and repro photos or models. For the abundantly illustrated books on single exhibitions, an average of about 200 of best-quality repro photos are prepared, and a comparable number of repro photos for the temporary exhibitions. Inquiries for photos of museum objects and exhibits are handled by the registrars in coordination with the photo studio. Preparations to revamp the studio for digital photography and archiving are underway.

## **Projects**

### **Collections on the Internet**

The aim of this project, started in 1999, is to provide illustrative glimpses, using selected items, of the Foundation's extensive collection categories. The data records are edited according to user-focused aspects: they are accessible via an easy-to-use search engine, and provide the latest information on the objects. Over 5,000 data records are now available on the Internet; 3,000 of these were created in the report period.

### **Network of Multimedia Resource Centres**

In September 2001 the Museum of Contemporary History took over the management of the "Network of Multimedia Resource Centres". The German National Broadcasting Archives (Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv) and the Foundation Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland were the initiators of this multimedia network, which was formed in November 2000 by archives, libraries, document centres, research facilities and museums of supra-regional

importance. At present, 30 institutions belong to the network. The paramount aim is to secure, preserve, and develop audio-visual sources and material as important cultural resources and make them available to the interested public – in particular for education, instruction and scholarship. For this purpose, a bilingual Internet presence was developed in February 2002, which went online under “[www.netzwerk-mediatheken.de](http://www.netzwerk-mediatheken.de)”. The Internet presentation gives information on the participating multimedia institutions and on their audio-visual collections and makes it easier to find non-centrally archived resources.

### **Path of Democracy**

The project team engaged in “Tracking Down the History of the Capital City” developed an extensive plan for utilising both the contemporary historical and the sightseeing potential of the Government Quarter of Bonn where the various branches of the Federal Government were once located. The “Path of Democracy” – a joint project undertaken by the city of Bonn and the Museum of Contemporary History – consists of three components: circular route, Internet presentation, and information material. The circular route (plans call for illustrated signs in German and English) takes the visitors past the major sites in the former Government Quarter, where contemporary history was made. They highlight the special role played by Bonn in Germany’s democracy.