

**Everyone's Furniture:
Werkraum Bregenzewald Design Initiative**

17th April 2002 – 28th June 2002

Curators: Roland Gnaiger and Adolph Stiller

Press tour: Tuesday, 16th April 2002, 10.30 am

Opening: Tuesday, 16th April 2002, 6.30 pm

Exhibition site

Wiener Städtische Allgemeine Versicherung AG
Ringturm Exhibition Centre
A-1010 Vienna Schottenring 30
Phone: [43-1] 531 39-1115 (Brigitta Fischer)
Fax: [43-1] 531 39-3178

Please note new opening hours:

Monday to Friday, 9.00 am – 6.00 pm; admission free

NEW: Thursdays until 7.30 pm

Enquiries

Birgit Reitbauer
Phone: [43-1] 531 39-1336
Fax: [43-1] 531 39-3134
e-mail: b.reitbauer@staedtsche.co.at

Photographic material available upon request

Between 17th April and 28th June 2002, as part of its ARCHITECTURE IN THE RINGTURM series, Wiener Städtische is presenting an exhibition of living and furnishing ideas from the Bregenzerwald. 39 newly conceived pieces of furniture, manufactured in the Vorarlberg to the highest standards of craftsmanship, will be on display in the exhibition “Everyone’s Furniture: Werkraum Bregenzerwald Design Initiative”. In the best Viennese tradition, that of Otto Wagner and Adolf Loos, architecture is understood here as a discipline which reaches beyond mere externals to include furniture and fittings as well.

Given that home design today is centred around industrially mass-produced goods, it is very difficult to find furniture appropriate to new, high-quality architecture among what is generally available. Here, changes in lifestyle and the economic and social structure have, over the last few decades, altered expectations concerning the way we live at home as well as the demands we make on furniture.

Everyone’s Furniture: The pieces in the exhibition aim to generate an interaction with the user. This is provoked by the changeability and specific usability of the items. For example, there are adaptable extending tables, a seat that becomes a guest bed, a stool that becomes a bench seat and chairs that permit a comfortable and casual sitting position.

This furniture gives rise to encounters and discussion in our real, everyday living environment. The objects are orientated towards daily/everyday usage and provide a stimulus to communication, as in the case of the portable table which dismantles and can be rapidly reassembled for use when guests arrive or the book tower set up in the middle of the room, which creates space for both conversation and activity.

In an allusion to the movement of the 1950s of the same name, the exhibition title “Everyone’s Furniture” embraces the notion of “social living culture”. Just as in homebuilding, careful consideration is given to social aspects and the practicality of the resulting structures, so too is an attempt made with the objects exhibited here to create quality of life in our immediate surroundings.

The term *social* also goes further, to include careful consideration of all-round ecological sustainability. Materials obtained wherever possible locally, relatively little transportation and the highest possible level of added value executed in the Bregenzerwald, shift what is today a hotly debated concept of regional development into a “social” context (e.g. workplace within the home environment).

The exhibition: On display are one-off pieces by craftsmen, architects and designers. In a new form of collaboration (open working sessions with designers, manufacturers, user representatives, workspace organisers and curators) several stages of development led on the one hand to the further development of existing items of furniture, and on the other to pieces of furniture conceived specially for the exhibition – from the hammock to the cooking stove, from the home office to the room divider. Curators Roland Gnaiger and Adolph Stiller followed the progress of these projects towards readiness for production over the course of last year.

These newly developed pieces have already resuscitated methods of production that had fallen into oblivion, e.g. carpentry joints such as ridge joints, dovetailing etc. At the same time, discreet new fittings and joints have also been designed from scratch. Out of the simplicity of design of these objects emerges the exceptional craftsman's skill of pre-industrial times (in the case of the "one-by-one table", for example). The reduction in weight without loss of stability that characterises many of these pieces benefits the lightness of their overall appearance as well as their mobility within the room.

Concentrating on fundamentals in this way allows a clarity to show through which renders the construction of these pieces comprehensible. This "regression" (A. Malraux) gives rise to a form of self-contained simplicity that can perhaps be seen as indicative of a movement towards the essential.

The design of many of these pieces of furniture reveals basic forms from a time that predates abundance. The "antique heaviness" of those forms is, however, absent in the objects on exhibition. There is a link with objects whose roots lie in the modest circumstances of the past.

The question of "what is inside?" or "what is behind?", that arises in conjunction with any work (of architecture), is answered by the 39 concrete objects in this exhibition and elucidated in a series of short texts. There are objects suitable for every age group (e.g. from baby bed to double bed) and every function that takes place in the home (lying down, sitting, eating, reading etc.). *All the pieces can be tried out by visitors to the exhibition and ordered for purchase, using the order form provided, from the workshop that made them.*

Materials: The objects have been manufactured primarily from the region's predominant and traditional material, wood, as well as from metals and textiles worked to a very high standard. Thanks to altitudes of at least 1,000 metres, woods such as maple, spruce and beech display a steady growth pattern, whose slowness and evenness pay dividends in the stability of the carpentry joints. Due to their closed stands and careful management, the wood of the silver fir tree is also uniquely available. The interplay of these raw materials with the quality of design and skilful craftsmanship result in something unique that immediately attracts our attention: due to its density and grain, this carefully chosen material is once more to be felt and understood for what it is, and the same is true for the metal and textiles used.

Design initiative "Werkraum Bregenzerwald": The tradition of craftsmanship in the Bregenzerwald was given a new lease on life in 1999 when a group of modern and technology-orientated firms – of which roughly a third were carpentry workshops – formed the "Werkraum Bregenzerwald" (Workshop Bregenzerwald) association. This institution offers its members, who have now grown to 100, formal support in the areas of marketing, product and design innovation, training and further training. In all of this, building culture represents an umbrella term for engagement in questions of regional development. As a partner, the association has helped make the "Everyone's Furniture" exhibition possible.

The internationally recognised architecture of the Vorarlberg region acts as a stimulus to local craftsmanship and vice versa. Examination of furniture as objects and the question of mobility are gradually being added to interior design's list of traditional responsibilities. As a consequence of the

new everyday aesthetic, different demands, requiring clear positioning, are also being made of the craftsman. In addition to the careful and user-conscious fabrication of objects, there are conceptive and creative considerations which now extend to the creator and designer as well as the architect.

The first signs of a new direction became apparent during the 1991 exhibition *handwerk + form*, (craftsmanship + form) organised by Handwerkerverein Andelsbuch (the Andelsbuch Craftsmen's Association), in which the submitted work was judged by a national jury according to fixed criteria. The regular and reflective continuation of *handwerk + form* as a competition is today one of Workshop Bregenzerwald's main activities. The objects entered for *handwerk + form 2000* and judged according to the criteria of form, choice of materials, functionality and suitability to everyday life form the basis of this exhibition.

The designers: Georg Bechter (rocking recliner); Martin Bereuter (children's furniture); Anton Devich (clogs); Helmut Dietrich (room divider); Hugo Dworzak (light screen); Robert Fabach + Heike Schlauch (drawer cabinet); Irmgard Frank (drum furniture); Helmut Galler (ladies' desk), Karl-Heinz Gasser (guest bed); Roland Gnaiger (shelving system, everyday table); Reinold Knapp (portable table, stool); Kaufmann Holz AG (Quickport); Rita Meusburger (slippers); Johannes Mohr (bench, felt cushion and carry-cot, lounge); Marga Persson (carpets); Bruno Reichlin / Gabriele Geronzi (chair); Wolfgang Ritsch (cupboard); Ferdinand Rüb (metal cupboard); Rüscher GmbH/Christian Rüscher (home office); Markus Schatzmann (school desk with seat); Hubert Schuller (chair); Christian Steiner (easy chair, metal table); Adolph Stiller (bed); Rüscher GmbH/Siegfried Türtscher (wooden wash-stand); Ewald Voppichler (cylindrical stove, cooking stove)

The manufacturers: F. Bereuter, Devich KG, R. Dür, J. Eberle, P. Figer, Holz Werkstatt M. Faißt, M. Kaufmann, J. Köss, F. Mätzler GmbH, Mellau-Teppich Lotteraner Wüstner GmbH, B. Meusburger, Tischlerei Meusburger, A. Mohr, Mohr Polster, Rüscher GmbH, school modul, Tischlerei Schmidinger, Ofenbau E. Voppichler

The catalogue: The comprehensively illustrated exhibition catalogue "Everyone's Furniture: Werkraum Bregenzerwald Design Initiative" offers a discussion by expert authors of topics such as the relative suitability of furniture for everyday life, social living culture and use of space and materials. It provides full-page photographs of the 39 objects, along with design plans and descriptions of materials and methods of use. The subjects examined include the architectonic background in the Vorarlberg, the cultural-historical context, the genesis of the project, design in general and issues of usability and suitability for everyday use as well as other themes relating to the relationship between architecture and furniture.

Contributors include Florian Aicher, Roland Gnaiger, Otto Kapfinger, Herbert Muck, Georg Schöllhammer, Adolph Stiller, Gerlind Weber; approx. 130 pages, mainly colour illustrations; published by Verlag Anton Pustet, Salzburg, price € 36.

Press releases and photographs relating to ARCHITECTURE IN THE RINGTURM can be found at <http://www.wienerstaedtische.at> in the "Art and Culture" section.