

Press Release

Typology: An Ongoing Study of Everyday Items

07.12.2019 – 24.01.2021, Vitra Design Museum Gallery

Not all objects are designed by professional designers. Many authorless everyday objects have continuously evolved in their form, function and materiality over the centuries. Some changed only in detail, others underwent rapid modifications triggered by social, political or technological upheavals. Fascinated by the processes that shape and change everyday objects, the French design collective »Collections Typologie« explores the history, production, and formal language of objects such as wine bottles, cork stoppers, or the metal balls used in boules or pétanque. The exhibition »Typology: An Ongoing Study of Everyday Items« at the Vitra Design Museum Gallery presents the results of their research, including their newest work on wooden crates. The collective's unique perspective invites us to take a fresh look at previously ignored parts of our object culture and encourages us to question our relationship to everyday objects – especially in the light of current debates on resource consumption and lifestyle choices.

The faces behind Collections Typologie are the four French product designers Raphaël Daufresne, Thélonious Goupil, Guillaume Bloget, and Guillaume Jandin. Since 2016, they have meticulously researched one particular type of object at a time, presenting their results in well-designed publications and exhibitions. The four designers focus on minute details of objects whose origins and development are often overlooked and have gone largely undocumented. Collections Typologie were initially motivated by the realization that in contrast to the much-discussed author-designed objects of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, simple everyday objects hardly ever feature in a museum context, even though they often look back on a long and complex history.

Collections Typologie begin their working process by collecting variant samples of an object type and documenting their design. Then, in collaboration with experts from various fields, they reconstruct and discuss the typology's history, which often yields surprising insights and raises new questions. The shape of the wine bottle, for example, has hardly changed over the centuries, despite new technical possibilities. Was this object perfect right from the start, or does our awareness of tradition in relation to wine tolerate only the tiniest deviations in its form of presentation? Technically there are many possible replacements for the cork in a wine bottle, too, but a good wine would hardly be conceivable without a »real« cork. Today, pétanque balls or boules are an industrial mass product, but they began their development as wooden balls which were later partially studded with nails to lend them weight. Generations of players tested and perfected the object. Was this a more careful, sustainable form of product development than today's design methods? The predecessors of the vegetable crate, in turn, consisted of handmade, non-standardized basketwork until they suddenly and rapidly mutated into disposable objects produced by the million. How did increased specialization in the vegetable trade, lengthening transport routes, and the possibilities of industrial production converge? Why is this object invariably made of poplar plywood? And what role do plastic crates take?

The exhibition uniquely brings out the close interdependence between developments in material culture and processes such as industrialization and globalization, as well as local resource availability. Focused on the four object types so far examined by Collections Typologie, it presents items from the groups' own collection alongside loans from private and institutional collections. The related publications will also be on display, including the most recent edition of Collections Typologie's journal, which marks the opening of the exhibition.

»Our goal is to broaden common perceptions of familiar things by encouraging people to see them anew. Each volume of our journal is devoted to one object and explores its secrets by documenting its manufacture and detailing its history with the help of industrialists, historians, designers, and end users.« Thelonious Goupil, co-founder of Collections Typologie

General information

Title:	Typology: An Ongoing Study of Everyday Items
Curator:	Viviane Stappmanns
Exhibition concept and design:	Collections Typologie
Publications:	The wooden crate / La cagette en peuplier, 2019 The wine bottle / La bouteille de vin, 2019 The cork stopper / Le bouchon en liège, 2019 The petanque boule / La boule de pétanque, 2017
	Available at the Vitra Design Museum shops
Duration:	7 December 2019 to 24 January 2021
Location:	Vitra Design Museum Gallery Charles-Eames-Strasse 2 79576 Weil am Rhein Germany
Hashtag:	#CollectionsTypologie #vitradesignmuseum #VDMGallery
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