

Press release

Frankfurt am Main, 22 November 2017

**The Frankfurt Kitchen
In the presentation “Elementary Parts: From the Collections”
from 23 November 2017**

Opening: 22 November 2017, 7 pm

It changed the concept of home living and is considered a prototype of the modern fitted kitchen: the “Frankfurt Kitchen”, designed by Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky. Following careful restoration measures, an example of the legendary kitchen has now made its way into *Elementary Parts: From the Collections*, a permanent exhibition of Frankfurt’s Museum Angewandte Kunst.

Over the years, the role played by Frankfurt and the surrounding region in modern design has been an ongoing focus at the Museum Angewandte Kunst. In 2015, the museum was presented with the opportunity to make a new addition to its holdings: a complete and largely unchanged historical “Frankfurt Kitchen” from the Bornheimer Hang housing estate in Wittelsbacher Allee. The kitchen’s owner, the ABG Frankfurt Holding, placed the kitchen on permanent loan to the museum. The museum’s conservator Christian Dressen supervised the complicated task of removing it from its original site in its entirety. The restoration work that followed took him two years. Rather than merely retouching the furnishings’ exteriors, he decided to expose the original painted surfaces by removing later coats of paint, but also to leave signs of wear and tear visible.

In the exhibition, the kitchen’s various elements are arranged according to the original floor plan. The end wall of the kitchen opposite the doorway, which once featured a window overlooking the garden, has been omitted, permitting views of the gallery space beyond. And when standing outside the kitchen at that end, the museum visitor moreover gains insights into its construction. The installation even includes the original floor and wall tiles, which make for a very authentic overall impression of Schütte-Lihotzky’s outstanding design achievement.

Prof Dr Klaus Klemp oversaw the project in the role of curator, with the extensive scholarly assistance and advice of Dr Christos-N. Vittoratos. The restoration was made possible by generous financial support from the Hessischer Museumsverband (Hessian museum association).

The “Frankfurt Kitchen”

The “Frankfurt Kitchen” was an important conceptual element of the overall “New Frankfurt” design project. The Viennese architect Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky (1897-2000) – the first Austrian woman to complete the study of architecture – was appointed to the “standardization” (Typisierung) department of the Frankfurt civil engineering office as a specialist for the kitchens in the new housing estates. More than 10,000 kitchens were built and installed according to her efficiency-oriented design. There are approximately thirty variations of the “Frankfurt Kitchen”, none larger than about seven square metres. They represented a fundamental factor in the spatial programme of Frankfurt’s new, affordable reform housing, in which the living room replaced the large-scale proletarian kitchen as the hub of family life. The kitchen was now much reduced in size to shift the focus to other spaces inside and outside the flat or house.

The kitchen was based on the principle of short distances and reaches. Its width was calculated in such a way that, to go from the cabinet and washing-up side to the stove side, one need only turn around. An extensive organization system was a further means of making kitchen work more efficient. Schütte-Lihotzky envisaged a kind of kitchen laboratory, as is reflected in the many drawer-containers, glazed cabinets and high work stool.

At the time, many exponents of modern design advocated the theory that if something was functional it was beautiful merely by virtue of its functionality. Schütte-Lihotzky emphatically rejected this viewpoint, and firmly regarded the kitchen as an aesthetic work of design. Colour played a major role in the kitchen, as it did throughout the “New Frankfurt” project. The first kitchens made extensive use of blue; later models adopted other subdued colours as well as white. The kitchen floor generally consisted of brownish Solnhofen limestone tiles whose natural grain contrasted with the monochrome painted cabinets. The standard fittings of the municipal civil engineering office were integrated in the design, and the drawers consisted of prismatic wooden blocks with recessed grips that further reinforced the kitchen’s geometric, cubic aesthetic. Within the framework of the research carried out by the museum, plans turned up showing that the shops designed for the “New Frankfurt” housing estates were also to use elements of the “Frankfurt Kitchen”. The kitchen’s modules, in other words, were also intended for use in public settings.

Press release

Frankfurt am Main, 22 November 2017

The Frankfurt Kitchen.

In the presentation "Elementary Parts: From the Collections"
from 23 November 2018

Director

Matthias Wagner K

Curator

Dr Klaus Klemp

Location

Museum Angewandte Kunst
Schaumainkai 17
60594 Frankfurt am Main

Information

T +49 69 212 31286
F +49 69 212 30703
www.museumangewandtekunst.de

Opening hours

Tue, Thu–Sun 10 am – 6 pm, Wed 10 am – 8 pm

Admission

12 EUR, reduced 6 EUR

Press contact

Dorothee Maas, Julia Ditsch and Julia Annika Kunt
T +49 69 212 32828/ 75339/ 73243
F +49 69 212 30703
presse.angewandte-kunst@stadt-frankfurt.de

Press downloads

www.museumangewandtekunst.de

Press and Publicity

T + 49 69 212 32828
F + 49 69 212 30703
presse.angewandte-kunst@stadt-frankfurt.de