Finding aid for the Carl Ernst Hinkefuss papers, 1903-1970, bulk 1912-1933

Finding aid prepared by Emmabeth Nanol
Descriptive Summary
Title: Carl Ernst Hinkefuss papers
Date (inclusive): 1903-1970 (bulk 1912-1933)
Number: 2010.M.63
Creator/Collector: Hinkefuss, Carl Ernst
Physical Description: 40.7 linear feet (27 boxes)
Repository:
The Getty Research Institute
Special Collections
1200 Getty Center Drive, Suite 1100
Los Angeles, California, 90049-1688
(310) 440-7390
Abstract: The papers of Carl Ernst Hinkefuss document the career of this graphic designer, as well as broader developments in German commercial graphic design in the early decades of the twentieth century. The archive is comprised primarily of original trademark and logo designs and related materials, some created independently by Hinkefuss, and some in collaboration with his business partner, Wilhelm Deffke, under the aegis of their company, Wilhelmwerk. Other items in the archive relate to the journal Qualität, the clearest expression of Hinkefuss's attempt to integrate the worlds of commerce and design, and to his children's book, Mein Vogelparadies.

Request Materials: To access physical materials on site, go to the library catalog record for this collection and click "Request an Item." Click here for access policy.
Language: Collection material is in German.

Biographical/Historical Note
Carl Ernst Hinkefuss (1881-1970) trained as a painter, graphic artist, and architect at the Königliche Kunstschule and the Kunstgewerbemuseum in Berlin at the turn of the century. While still a student, Hinkefuss became interested in the idea of artists collaborating with the business world, and after graduation he became a commercial graphic designer. From 1905 to early 1910, he worked in the advertising and publicity departments of several firms in Berlin and Dessau, and then later in 1910 set up as an independent publicist in Berlin.

The turning point in Hinkefuss's career came in 1912. While working for Otto Elsner Verlag, a printing company in Berlin, he met Wilhelm Deffke. The two artists collaborated on several advertising projects for Elsner, with Hinkefuss supplying the advertising concept and Deffke giving the concept artistic form. The collaboration of Hinkefuss and Deffke was so successful that in late 1915 they established their own company, Wilhelmwerk. The large, full service agency the partners had envisioned was, however, not to be. The war and the subsequent economic depression had their effect, and the firm survived primarily on the design of trademarks and logos. In early 1920, Deffke left the partnership to pursue other opportunities and Wilhelmwerk was dissolved.

At this point in his career, working independently once more, Hinkefuss established a new company in Berlin, Internatio GmbH Internationale Propaganda für Qualitätserzeugnisse. Again Hinkefuss concentrated chiefly on the creation of trademarks and logos. Yet, it is also through Internatio that he began to publish the richly illustrated design journal, Qualität (1920-1933) and the children's book, Das Vogelparadies (1929). During this period, Hinkefuss's work appears to be allied to that of the Bauhaus and he may have hoped to establish a formal relationship, but apart from publishing essays in Qualität by Walter Gropius, László Moholy-Nagy, and Hannes Meyer, he never worked in any official capacity for the Bauhaus.

An ardent opponent of the National Socialists, Hinkefuss discontinued Qualität and closed Internatio in 1933 lest he be forced to produce propaganda for them. For the next twelve years, he supported himself as a small farmer, growing fruit and vegetables in his backyard, supplemented by the occasional land sale. Living in East Berlin after the war, Hinkefuss tried to re-establish his business and develop a new customer base within the DDR, but he was not successful. Commercial advertising was not in great demand and Hinkefuss's established graphic style, made up of simple geometric forms, was very different from the favored social-realist style of the time. By 1951 his career had taken a new route. Having joined the Verband Bildender Künstler Deutschlands, he began painting landscapes, still-lifes and portraits, as well as teaching painting to the public. His later graphic design work was confined to a small number of political works and exhibition posters.

Further documentation relating to the careers of Hinkefuss and Wilhelm Deffke can be found in the repository's research file.
Access
Open for use by qualified researchers.

Publication Rights
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Preferred Citation
http://hdl.handle.net/10020/cifa2010m63

Acquisition Information
Acquired in 2010.

Processing History
Emmabeth Nanol processed and cataloged the collection under the supervision of Ann Harrison in 2010-2011.

Separated Materials
Several publications were transferred to the library's Special Collections and can be found in the library catalog with a Provenance search on "Carl Ernst Hinkefuss Collection."

Scope and Content of Collection
The modern, reductive trademark and logo emerged in Germany in the early years of the twentieth century. Working both independently and with his business partner Wilhelm Deffke in the firm Wilhelmwerk, Carl Ernst Hinkefuss was among the early commercial graphic designers in the field of advertising, who specialized in trademark and logo design. Linked philosophically and aesthetically to the ideas of the German Werkbund and subsequently the Bauhaus, Hinkefuss developed a very simple style that sought to integrate the worlds of commerce and design. Hinkefuss and Deffke did not draw or paint their designs, but created images in the form of figurative, abstract, or typological cut-outs in colored paper mounted on a background sheet. These images were so visually powerful that they could either be reduced to a small logo or enlarged to a full-page brochure. Using these defining images, Hinkefuss created what we now call "brand identities," designing not only the stationery for businesses, but also the invoices, envelopes, packaging, and advertising.

Materials relating to Hinkefuss's professional career comprise Series I of the archive. Examples of his graphic design work form the majority of the material and include assembled sample portfolios, hundreds of loose original designs, and letterpress print blocks. Aside from his commercial brand identity work, Hinkefuss also produced two significant publications for the world of graphic arts. He published and edited Qualität, a journal promoting industrial and graphic design, which became more and more modern, especially after Hinkefuss began working with a printing house in Dessau, shortly after the Bauhaus had moved to that city as well. Das Vogelparadies (1929), a modern children's book showing birds rendered in simple but bright, colorful forms on a black background, is often incorrectly associated with the Bauhaus. The archive includes a photocopy of the complete run of Qualität, supplementing the repository's more limited original copies, as well as ephemera and proofs relating to this and other publications to which Hinkefuss contributed. Of particular interest are two wooden Bauhaus-style toys, reproductions of the pelican from Mein Vogelparadies, which served as exemplars and promotional items for the book. A small selection of professional correspondence, photographs of Hinkefuss's studio and displays of his work, and miscellaneous materials round out the series.

A limited quantity of photographs and other personal material forms Series II. Of particular interest in this series is the documentation of Hinkefuss's trip to the United States in 1913. In part a vacation, the trip's professional research component is shown by the extensive series of postcards documenting the facilities of the Curtis Publishing Company of Philadelphia.

Arrangement

Subjects - Topics
Art and industry--Germany--20th century
Commercial art--Germany--20th century
Graphic arts--Germany--20th century
Logos (Symbols)--Germany--20th century
Trademarks--Germany--20th century

Genres and Forms of Material
Advertisements--Germany--20th century
Series I. **Professional papers, 1912-1969, undated**

**Physical Description:** 37.9 linear feet (23 boxes)

**Scope and Content Note**

Materials relating to Hinkefuss's professional career comprise Series I of the archive. The bulk of the material is examples of his graphic design work: assembled sample portfolios, hundreds of loose original designs, and letterpress print blocks. Also included here are materials related to Hinkefuss's publications, especially *Qualität* and *Mein Vogelparadies*. A small selection of professional correspondence, photographs of Hinkefuss's studio and displays of his work, and miscellaneous materials follows.

**Arrangement note**

The series is arranged in five groups: graphic design work, publications, correspondence, photographs and miscellaneous papers.

**Graphic design work, 1912-1959, undated**

**Reference portfolios, 1912-1931, undated**

**Scope and Content Note**

The contents of two custom-made cloth boxes with the Hinkefuss logo. This set of reference portfolios is comprised of mounted samples and proofs of printed graphic art work by Deffke, by the Hinkefuss-Deffke partnership, Wilhelmwerk, and by the subsequent Hinkefuss studio, Internatio. Included are a broad range of commercial graphic design projects, from letterhead to advertisements, catalogs and promotional flyers to package design, as well as sample pages of Deffke and Hinkefuss publications.

**Trademarks and logos, 1920-1926, undated**

**Scope and Content Note**

Many designs are signed and numbered, and some bear an Internatio stamp; some designs are represented in alternate versions.

**Various commercial graphic design, undated**

**General**

**Oversize**
Box 16, Folder 3  
**Later graphic artwork, circa 1950s**  
Scope and Content Note  
Photographic reproductions of works, including propaganda posters of figures such as Karl Marx and Maxim Gorky, showing Hinkefuss's shift from his earlier abstract style to a much more realistic style, presumably more acceptable in the DDR at the time.

Box 22*, Folder 3  
**Publications, 1914-1933**  
**Werbedrucke, 1914**  
Scope and Content Note  
Bound set of partial proofs(?).

**Qualität, 1920-1933**  
Scope and Content Note  
Photocopy of the complete run of the journal.

Box 19, Folder 1-6  
**Volume 1, 1920-1921**  
**Volume 2, 1921-1922**  
**Volume 3, 1922-1923**  
**Volume 4, 1925**  
**Volume 5, 1927**  
**Volume 6, 1928**  
**Volume 7, 1929**  
**Volume 8, 1930**  
**Volume 9, 1931**  
**Volume 10, 1932**  
**Volume 11, 1933**  
**Ephemera, 1920-1933**  
**General**  
**Oversize**  
**Mein Vogelparadies, 1929**  
**Unbound leaves**  
**Wooden toys**  
**Photographs of designs for a sequel volume**  
**Neusilber-Bestecke, 1920s**  
Scope and Content Note  
Proofs of cover illustration.

Box 16, Folder 7  
**Correspondence, 1930-1967**  
Scope and Content Note  
Includes correspondence documenting Hinkefuss's failed attempts to restart his career within the DDR after World War II.

Box 16, Folder 8  
**Photographs of various Hinkefuss ateliers and displays, undated**  
Scope and Content Note  
Also includes a small number of photographs of designs.
Series I. Professional papers, 1912-1969, undated

Box 16, Folder 9-12

**Miscellaneous professional papers, 1951-1969, undated**

**Scope and Content Note**
Includes curriculum vitae, Verband Bildender Künstler Deutschlands membership materials, typescript compilation of reviews, and miscellaneous newspaper clippings.

Series II. Personal papers, 1903-1970, undated

**Physical Description:** 2.8 linear feet (4 boxes)

**Scope and Content Note**
A small quantity of personal papers, primarily visual material, forms Series II. Portraits of Hinkefuss, images of his studio, his friends and family, and various trips, as well as numerous picture postcards, comprise the majority of the series.

**Arrangement note**
The series is arranged in four groups: a eulogy, documents relating to Hinkefuss's political activity, photographs and postcards.

Box 24, Folder 1

**Eulogy delivered at Hinkefuss's funeral, 1970**

Box 24, Folder 2

**Political activity, 1944-1946, undated**

**Scope and Content Note**
Materials documenting Hinkefuss's political beliefs and activities, ranging from writings repudiating the Nazis to a later DDR political pamphlet.

Box 25-26

**Personal photographs, 1903-1957, undated**

**Albums, 1910-1925, undated**

**Scope and Content Note**
Many photographs removed.

Box 24, Folder 3-5

**Loose photographs, 1903-1957, undated**

**Scope and Content Note**
Some photographs were probably removed from the albums.

Box 27

**Postcards, 1912-1944, undated**

**Scope and Content Note**
Picture postcards sent to Hinkefuss, as well as souvenirs from Hinkefuss's travels, especially his trip to the United States in 1913.