Herbert Bayer Collection, circa 1923-1968

The Herbert Bayer Collection was donated to Rochester Institute of Technology in two accessions in March, 2008: an initial gift by Richard and Gwen Chanzit, and a second gift by R. Roger Remington.

The Wallace Center
Graphic Design Archives
Rochester Institute of Technology
Rochester, New York 14623-0887

Administrative Information

Creator: Bayer, Herbert, 1900-1985

Extent: 2 oversize boxes + 1 framed piece (2.59 linear feet)

Abstract: Collection of materials from graphic designer Herbert Bayer (1900-1985), mainly comprised of advertisements for Container Corporation of America, a few posters and exhibit brochures.

Processed by: Amy Vilz, April, 2011

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Preferred Citation: [Description and dates], Box/folder number, Herbert Bayer Collection, RIT Libraries: Graphic Design Archives, Rochester Institute of Technology.

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Arrangement

Series I. Bibliographic records, circa 1923-1968
Series II. Clients, circa 1923-1968
    Subseries A. Container Corporation of America, circa 1939-1966
    Subseries B. Other clients, circa 1923-1968
Biographical Note

Noted Bauhaus artist and visual communication pioneer Herbert Bayer was born April 5, 1900 in Haag, Austria. Enrolling at the Bauhaus at age 21, he studied there for two years under Wassily Kandinsky and Laszlo Moholy-Nagy. Bayer left the Bauhaus to travel in Italy, but returned as “Master of Typography” in the department of Typographie und Werbsachengestaltung (typography and advertising design). It was during this time that he created the Universal alphabet of only lower-case letters.

He left the school in 1928 to pursue his design career, first in Berlin, and then in the United States. In 1946, he moved to Aspen, Colorado to work as design consultant, and eventually Chairman of the Department of Design, for packaging firm Container Corporation of America (CCA) and visionary executive Walter Paepcke. Bayer’s ads for CCA were known for their spare text and emphasis on visuals. Bayer explained:

These advertisements differed insofar from the usual copy-packed concept, as a limit of fifteen words was set for the text, thereby making the design the common denominator and the dominant element.1

Influenced by the Aspen Institute of Humanistic Studies, Paepcke, with Bayer as Art Director, created Great Ideas of Western Man, a series of CCA advertisements featuring Western philosophical quotations illustrated by renowned artists such as Rene Magritte, Ben Shahn, and Man Ray. What set these ads apart was that aside from the corporation’s name, there is no mention of its products in the ads.

Later, Bayer would work for the Atlantic Richfield Oil Company, and as a printmaker, sculptor, and painter. In 1970, he was awarded the prestigious American Institute of Graphic Arts medal for exceptional contribution to design and visual communication. In 2008, artist and gallery director Hugo Anderson wrote:

Of all the artists associated with the Bauhaus during its brief 15 years, it is Herbert Bayer who actually devoted a lifetime to a career which incorporated the ideal of total integration of the arts, in design, advertising, architecture, public sculpture and painting.2

Herbert Bayer died in 1985 at his home in Montecito, California at age 85.

1 Great Ideas; Container Corporation of America. Edited by John Massey. Chicago: Container Corporation of America. Introduction by Herbert Bayer, pp.xi.
Scope and Content

Mainly consisting of print samples, this collection is noteworthy for its emphasis on Bayer’s work for CCA, in particular, the Great Ideas of Western Man series. A small number of World War II era advertisements and examples from the United States series are also present. This latter series featured illustrations representing each state by native state artists.

There is some representation of Bayer’s work in Germany. These include eine, zwei, and zehn million mark banknotes created for the Weimar Republic’s State Bank of Thuringia (1923) and a framed print of the book cover: Staatliches Bauhaus in Weimar 1919-1923 designed by Bayer and Laszlo Moholy-Nagy (1923). There is one copy of Bayer’s 1936 brochure: Deutschland Ausstellung, an exhibition for tourists of the Berlin Olympic Games. The brochure includes text and imagery of German history, the Third Reich, and Hitler.

Other items of interest include a poster and brochures of retrospective exhibitions at Denver Art Museum’s Herbert Bayer Archive; a poster designed for Fortune magazine (1941): “Freedom of the Seas is in Your Backyard;” and “Libres,” a poster created for the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (1942).

Container List

Scope and content: Contains brochures and poster of Bayer exhibitions; photocopy image of Bayer. A “+” sign indicates oversize material.

Arrangement: Chronological


1.2+ 1963 International Design Conference in Aspen, undated; photocopy image of Bayer with scientist Heinz von Forster at conference. [Photographer: R. Roger Remington]

2.3+ the herbert bayer archive inaugural exhibition, 1980; poster for exhibit at Denver Art Museum, November 1, 1980 to February 1, 1981.

1.3+ Denver Art Museum, 1990-1991; includes exhibit brochures: herbert bayer: the california years; herbert bayer: the aspen years; herbert bayer: the berlin & new york years.
Series II. Clients, circa 1923-1968
Scope and content: Mainly consists of Container Corporation of America advertisements; prints and posters; exhibition brochure. A “+” sign indicates oversize material.

Arrangement: Chronological.

Subseries A. Container Corporation of America, circa 1939-1967
Scope and content: Contains advertisement tear sheets.

Arrangement: Alphabetical by subject.


1.10+ Great Ideas of Western Man VI, 1956-1957; includes artists: Walter Allner, Seymour Mednick and Don Madden, Saul Bass, Honore Sharrer, Robert Andrew Parker, Anton Refregier, Robert Cato, Martin Rosenzweig, Mary Faulconer, Byron Goto, Gene Federico.

1.12+ Great Ideas of Western Man VIII, 1958-1959; includes artists: Leonard Baskin, Lee Mullican, Jacob Lawrence, Joseph Cornell, Guen Inokuma, Gyorgy Kepes, Ralph Eckerstrom, Carl Regehr, Erberto Carboni, Wynn Bullock.


1.15+ Great Ideas of Western Man XI, 1963; includes artists: David Aronson, Morris Broderson, Art Kane, John Massey, Clark Richert, Jean Helion, David Walsh, Jose Cuevas.

1.16+ Great Ideas of Western Man XII, 1964; includes artists: Robert Vickrey, Nicholas Ghika, Reginald Pollack, Herbert Bayer, Pedro Friedeberg, Hans Laabs, Pauline Boty, Alain Jacquet.

1.17+ Great Ideas of Western Man XIII, 1965; includes artists: Viktor natali-Morosow, George Ortman, James Davis, John Paul Jones, Miguel Garcia Vivancos, Jan Stussy, Harry Lieberman, Chryssa, Ben Sakoguchi.

1.18+ Great Ideas of Western Man IX, 1966; includes artists: Ernest Trova, W. Lee Savage, James Rosenquist, Norman La Liberte, Robert Cremean, Shiro Ikegawa, Miguel Vivancos, James Gill, John Massey, Edgard Pillet.

1.19-1.20+ Great Ideas of Western Man X, 1967, undated; includes artists: Charmion Von Weigand, Bernard Berenson, Johannes Itten, Herbert Bayer, Roy De Forest, Sandro Somare, Jerry N. Uelsmann, John Massey; promotional folder.

1.21+ United Nations series, 1946; includes Reg Massie [Chile].

**Subseries B. Other clients, circa 1923-1968**

*Scope and content:* Contains framed prints, brochure.

*Arrangement:* Alphabetical by client.

1.23+  Deutschland Ausstellung, 1936; brochure for Berlin exhibit, July 18 to August 16, 1936. [mounted on board]

1.24+  *Fortune*, 1941; poster: “Freedom of the Seas is in Your Backyard.”

Tag  Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs, 1942; poster: *Libres*. [framed: 24 ¾ L x 19 W]

2.2+  Staatliches Bauhaus, 1923; print of *Staatliches Bauhaus in Weimar 1919-1923* book cover design by Bayer and Laszlo Moholy-Nagy. [framed: 12 ¾ L x 12 W]

1.25+  State Bank of Thuringia, 1923; eine million mark banknote from Weimar Republic.

2.1+  State Bank of Thuringia, 1923; set of 6 banknotes from Weimar Republic: eine million, zwei million, zehn million. [framed: 21 ¾ L x 9 ½ W]

2.4+  Wurttembergischer Kunstverein Stuttgart, 1968; *50 Jahre Bauhaus* exhibition poster, May 5 to July 28, 1968. [23 1/4 L x 16 ½ W]

**Search Terms**

**Authors**
600 Bayer, Herbert, 1900-1985

**Subject terms**
600 Bayer, Herbert, 1900-1985—Exhibitions
610 Container Corporation of America
650 Commercial artists—United States—History—20th century
650 Designers—United States—History—20th century
650 Graphic Arts—United States—History—20th century
650 Graphic Artists—United States—History—20th century
Genre terms
655 advertisements
655 brochures
655 posters
655 tear sheets

Related Materials

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