

Objects from the
I.L.E.A. / Camberwell
Collection exhibition
at CHELSEA space

A Good Design?

Daisy McMullan, Chelsea Arts Club Trust Research Fellow, Chelsea Space.

The forthcoming Chelsea Space exhibition A Good Design? will feature a selection of objects from the Inner London Education Authority (I.L.E.A.)/Camberwell Collection alongside related archival material, including photographs from the 1950s from the Brighton University Design Archives. The exhibition will be an opportunity to see objects from this unusual collection, including examples of industrial design, studio ceramics, glass, folk art and toys.

Following the success of the Festival of Britain in 1951, the Council of Design set up the I.L.E.A. (Inner London Education Authority) handling collection in 1952, with the idea that it would circulate to London schools to teach school children how to recognise good design, and create discerning consumers of the future. The collection was later acquired by Camberwell College of Arts following the disbanding of the I.L.E.A. (later the Greater London Council).

A Good Design? is the second time I have encountered this collection. In 2012, whilst studying MA Curating at Chelsea, a small selection of the I.L.E.A./Camberwell Collection was shown at the Prospectus exhibition in the Triangle Space, as part of a cross-course MA exhibition project that explored the history of art school education and pedagogies, led by Professor Neil Cummings.

Now, as Chelsea Arts Club Research Fellow at Chelsea Space, I have been lucky enough to work with this collection and Maria Georgaki, the curator of the exhibition, again. Maria has selected a range of objects for the show, encompassing the everyday through to unique studio ceramics by practitioners including Lucie Rie and Bryan Newman.

Industrial design is represented by objects such as this 1960s melamine teacup and saucer by Melaware; a 1950s stainless steel coffee pot by Old Hall, of a design by Robert Welch; and a 1960s Danish designed teak and steel salt shaker. These mass-produced, high quality, objects were collected in multiples, alongside high craft studio ceramics such as this vessel by Lucie Rie and mid-century studio ceramic piece (maker unknown). A proportion of the collection is formed of glassware, including that by manufacturers such as Waterford, Gullaskruf and Iittala.

The collection was international in scope, with items from Scandinavia, The Commonwealth and beyond including these

figures from Poland, a Llama shaped drinking vessel from Peru, and a traditional basketry bread bowl.

Toys are also an important part of the collection, such as these lovely 1960s wooden boats by Sam Smith. Other items including Pop Art graphics and textiles were also collected.

The objects were taken to schools in specially made wooden cabinets, which opened out to form themed displays, such as this one which looked at glassware. These displays had two functions: to allow students to pick up the objects, learning by handling them to understand their properties, and as part of the project to promote good design.

Following this exhibition, the collection will continue to be used by students of the new MA Curating and Collections course within the practice-based strand of the course called Exhibition Studio Workshop. They will research and exhibit objects from the I.L.E.A./Camberwell Collection as well as objects from the Chelsea College of Arts Collection of artworks, the Chelsea Space archive and the Chelsea College of Arts Library Special Collections. It is hoped that their engagement with these collections will breathe new life into them as well as allowing the public to see them regularly.

A Good Design? opens to coincide with the London Design Festival (13–21 September 2014). The exhibition will feature a range of objects selected from the I.L.E.A./Camberwell Collection and is curated by researcher and current CCW PhD student Maria Georgaki.

A Good Design? runs at Chelsea Space from 10 September – 31 October

**Opening hours:
Wednesday – Friday,
11am – 5pm or by appointment**

**Private View:
7 October, 6 – 8.30pm**



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1 Peasant wood carving, Cracow, Poland, 1960s

2 Boat by Sam Smith, 1960s

3 Two peasant wood carvings, Cracow, Poland, 1960s

4 Glass vase designed by Bodil Kjaer for Gullaskruf, 1960s

5 Mid-twentieth century studio pottery

6 Stainless steel coffee pot, Oriana range, Old Hall, design Robert Welch, 1950s

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