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Siegfried Ebert Collection

1927-2005

2 boxes (0.5 linear ft.)

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The graphic artist Siegfried Ebert had an important influence on the visual language of East German television and animated motion pictures. Born in Eibau on July 20, 1926, Ebert was drafted into the Luftwaffe in 1943, but shortly after going on active duty, he was severely wounded and taken prisoner by the English. After his release, Ebert shifted course in life, studying commercial art at the Kunstgewerbeschule Zittau and film at the Hochschule für bildende und angewandte Kunst in Wiessensee. He became one of the earliest artists to specialize in the new medium of television, working for Deutscher Fernsehfunk, doing graphic design and animation. A member of the Verband Bildender Künstler Deutschlands, he later worked on animated films for the DEFA studios. Suffering from ill health for the last several years of his life, Ebert suffered a heart attack in November 1985, and died at home shortly after his sixtieth birthday in 1986.

The Ebert Collection includes a small assortment of correspondence, awards, and biographical materials, along with examples of his graphic work for television and film. Among other unusual items in the collection are attractive handbills (small posters) for Progress and DEFA films, some original sketches, photographs and mockups of his artwork for television, and an assortment of personal and professional ephemera.

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Background on Siegfried Ebert

One of the pioneers in East Germany in graphic design for television and film animation, Martin Siegfried Ebert was born on July 20, 1926. In an all too brief sixty years, Ebert experienced the full vicissitudes of mid-century life in Germany, witnessing the rise of National Socialism as a child, wartime service as a young man, and the rise of the socialist state in East Germany as an adult. A native of Eibau, a small town near the Czech border, and the son of a teacher in an occupational school, Ebert was apprenticed as a clerk with Junkers during the early years of the war and trained with the Nationalsozialistisches Fliegerkorps until his 17th birthday, when he was drafted into the Luftwaffe. His active military service, however, was to be very brief. In October 1944, less than a month after he joined Fliegerregiment 51 in the Netherlands, he was severely wounded and taken prisoner. During a year and half of captivity in England, much of it spent in hospital, Ebert began to reflect on the direction of his life and decided to build upon his artistic talents to make a career when he returned to civilian life.

Consequently, after his release from prison in England in May 1946, still suffering from his wounds, Ebert returned to his hometown and embarked on a career in the arts. After studying commercial art at the Kunstgewerbeschule in nearby Zittau, he found employment as a poster designer and calligrapher with HO Lebensmittel Zittau until 1951, when he returned to his studies at the Hochschule für bildende und angewandte Kunst (University for Motion Picture and Applied Arts) in Weissensee Berlin, where he specialized in film. With his education coinciding with the early years of television in East Germany, Ebert became one of the first commercial artists to work in the new medium, rapidly establishing a critical reputation for his diverse and imaginative artwork, earning laurels for his efforts in animation for the Deutscher Fernsehfunk.

A member of the Verband Bildender Künstler Deutschlands, Ebert gradually shifted his attention to film, working for the DEFA and Progress studios and contributing to a long succession of motion pictures as a designer of posters, in animation, and other areas. Throughout his career, he also remained active as a general graphic designer, producing a profusion of logos, letterheads, cartoons, drawings, and artwork.

In the last years of his life, Ebert had a slow decline and battle with ill health. Suffering a heart attack in November 1985, he died at home two months after his sixtieth birthday in 1986. He was survived by his wife Inge.

Scope of collection

An eclectic assemblage of artwork, correspondence, and legal papers, the Siegfried Ebert Collection documents the life of a significant East German graphic designer who worked in early television and in animated film. What survives of a personal nature hints at the outlines of Ebert's life and work during the early years of the DDR. In addition to a series of handbills (small posters) for films released in East Germany during the late 1950s, the collection includes original artwork and photographs of some of Ebert's work in television and film, animation cels and stills, and samples of his commercial work in graphic design.

From animation stills and original drawings for use in various contexts on television and film, from signoff cards to letterhead for children's television to commercial work of various sorts, Ebert's artwork forms the core of the collection. The original drawings,



Siegfried Ebert, ca.1965

storyboards, cels, logos, and other design work provide a sense of Ebert's range as a commercial artist and his aesthetic sense, which reflects various currents in illustration of the 1950s and 1960s.

The collection is richest in documenting Ebert's collaboration with Andrew Thorndike on the film *Die Alte und Neue Welt* (1977), including a script, some original artwork, animation cels, ephemera, and some newsclippings. There is also a script for a trickfilm on which Ebert presumably worked, *Sozialismus im Vormarsch*.

Glimpses of Ebert's wartime experience can be found in a series of documents pertaining to his imprisonment in England and his medical care during and after the war. The two surviving letters home are not particularly revealing: they are upbeat, despite the imprisonment and hospitalization, and one captures a moment when Ebert was considering a career as an artist. There is also a sample of Ebert's drawings for a graphic prisoners' newsletter along with a pencil self-portrait.

Although the collection is not particularly rich in correspondence, a few letters survive to document turning points in Ebert's career and awards he received. Fortunately, on at least four occasions, Ebert was asked to provide a capsule history of his life which, along with an essay on the meaning of art in his life and a eulogy read at his funeral, make it possible to reconstruct his life course. Less eloquent, but more poignant is a questionnaire from the Landesregierung Sachsen in 1949 probing into Ebert's past, his wartime military service, family connections, and any association with the Nazi Party or its offshoots. Coinciding with the birth of the East German state, the Fragebogen provides quiet testimony to a new nation struggling with the horrific history of its recent past. Of minor note in the collection are a series of documents that hint at life in early East Germany: Ebert's dues books for membership in the Gesellschaft für Deutsch-Sowjetische Freundschaft, Verband Bildender Künstler Deutschlands, and the Freie Deutsche Jugend.

Inventory

Architectural brochures (Kongresshalle Berlin and Sportbauten, by Rudolf Ortner)

1956

Box 1: 1

Biographical and autobiographical materials

1950-2005

Box 1: 2

Correspondence

1935-1949

Box 1: 3

One of Ebert's letters as a prisoner of war includes a self portrait in pencil.



Correspondence

1953-1986

Box 1: 4

Death and cremation records

1986-1987

Box 1: 5

Ebert, Siegfried: Benötige ich die Kunst zur Entwicklung meiner Persönlichkeit?

ca.1975

Box 1: 6

Ebert, Siegfried: Self portraits during final sickness

1980

2 ballpoint pen sketches

Box 1: 7



Educational records

1933-1953

Box 1: 8

Ebert's student identification card for 1947-1948 includes a pencil sketch of a young man on the verso.

Employment records

1949-1963

Box 1: 9

Ephemera

1927-1980

Box 1: 10

Includes dues books for membership in the Gesellschaft für Deutsch-Sowjetische Freundschaft and Verband Bildender Künstler Deutschlands, travel passes, etc.

Freie Deutsche Jugend

1951-1957

Box 1: 11

Includes dues booklet, notification of award of prize, information on trip to Moscow and Leningrad.

Graphic design work: Camera ready copy, D-Erste

ca.1960

Box 1: 12



Graphic design work: Camera ready copy, Etwas

ca.1960

Box 1: 13



Graphic design work: Camera ready copy, F-H

ca.1960

Box 1: 14

Graphic design work: Camera ready copy, I

ca.1960

Box 1: 15



Graphic design work: Camera ready copy, K

ca.1960

Box 1: 16

Graphic design work: Camera ready copy, L

ca.1960

Box 1: 17

Graphic design work: Camera ready copy, M

ca.1960

Box 1: 18

Graphic design work: Camera ready copy, N-P

ca.1960

Box 1: 19



Graphic design work: Camera ready copy, S-U

ca.1960

Box 1: 20

Graphic design work: Clip art

Undated

Box 1: 21

Graphic design work: DDR

1950-1979

Box 1: 22



Graphic design work: Demokratische Frauenbund Deutschlands, 8. März 1957 * 10 Jahre DFD [Poster]
1957

Box 2: 1

Graphic design work: Deutscher Fernsehfunk

ca.1955

Box 1: 23

Graphic design work: Kinderfernsehen Berlin [letterhead]

1964

Box 1: 24



Graphic design work: Logos

ca.1960-1975?

Box 1: 25



Graphic design work: Miscellaneous

Undated

Box 1: 26

Graphic design work: Miscellaneous television

ca.1960

Box 2: 2

Graphic design work: Original artwork

ca.1960-1964

Box 2: 3

Includes six drawings of boats and ships and two cartons for the Deutschlandtreffen des Jugend (1964).

Graphic design work: Panther [letterhead, logos, etc.]

ca.1975

Box 1: 27

Graphic design work: Stickers

Undated

Box 1: 28



Handels Organisation HO Zittau

1950-1951

Box 1: 29

Landesregierung Sachsen. Ministerium des Innern: Fragebogen

1949 Sept. 6

Box 1: 30

Questionnaire from newly forming East German government probing into the military, political, and family background, particularly association with Nazi Party.

Military records

1943-1946

Box 1: 31

Military records: medical

1944-1952

Box 1: 32

Newsclippings

1977

Box 1: 33

Photographs: Andrew Thorndike 70th birthday

1979

Box 1: 34

Photographs: Ebert studio

ca.1970

Box 1: 35



Photographs: Television graphic design work

ca.1955-1960

Box 1: 36



Progress Film handbills, A-K

1954-1958

Box 1: 37

Die Abenteuer der drie Musketiere [handbill]

1955

Das sollte man regeln [handbill]

1954



Emilia Galotti [handbill]

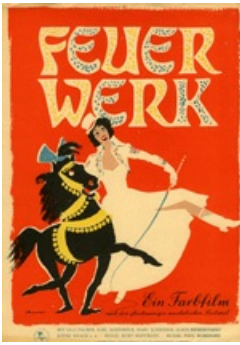
1957

Die Fälschung [handbill]

1958

Feuerwerk [handbill]

1955



Das Fäulein von Scuderi [handbill]

1955

Giovanna [handbill]

1958

Die golden Spinne [handbill]

1958



Kinder von Hiroshima [handbill]

1955



Progress Film handbills, L-W

1955-1959

Box 1: 38

Lachen verboten [handbill]

1955

Malwa [handbill]

1958

Morgen ist es zu spät [handbill]

1955

Neujahrsopfer [handbill]

1956

Paloma [handbill]

1959



Die Rebellion der Gehenkten [handbill]

1957

Rio Escondido [handbill]

1955



Das Fäulein von Scuderi [handbill]

1955

Der Schatz des Kapitän Martens [handbill]

1957

Umberto D [handbill]

1955

Der Weg zu dir [handbill]

1957



Die Welt des Schweigens [handbill]

1957



Sozialismus in Vormarsch [script for short trickfilm]

Undated

Box 1: 39

Staatliches Komitee für Fernsehen beim Ministerat der DDR

1980-1982

Box 1: 40

Thorndike, Annelie and Andrew: Die Alte Neue Welt (ephemera)

1977

Box 1: 41

Thorndike, Annelie and Andrew: Die Alte Neue Welt (script)

1977

Box 1: 42

Thorndike, Annelie and Andrew: Die Alte Neue Welt (storyboard and graphic design work)

1977

Box 1: 43

Thorndike, Annelie and Andrew: Die Alte Neue Welt (storyboard, cels, and stills)

1977

Box 2: 4

Thorndike, Andrew. Funeral notice

1977

Box 1: 44

VEB Stern-Radio Berlin [promotional brochure]

ca.1961

Box 1: 45

Administrative information

Access

The collection is open for research.

Provenance

Gift of James and Sibylle Fraser, 2007.

Processing Information

Processed by Dex Haven, November 2008.

Related Material

For materials related to East German graphic arts, see the East German Packaging Design Collection (MS 519) and the Hans Joachim Ring Collection (MS 566).

Language:

German

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Search terms

Subjects

Germany, East--Social life and customs.

Graphic artists--Germany, East.

Motion pictures--Germany, East.

Prisoners of War--Germany.

Television--Germany, East.

World War, 1939-1945.

Contributors

Ebert, Siegfried [**main entry**]

Ebert, Siegfried.

Thorndike, Andrew, 1909-1979.

Genres and formats

Animation drawings.

Ephemera.
Handbills.
Photographs.
Posters.

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Arts and literature
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Germany
Photographs
World War II



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