



HIDDEN HEROES

THE GENIOUS OF EVERYDAY THINGS

A Vitra Design Museum Travelling Exhibition



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“What works good is better than what looks good,
because what works good lasts.”

Ray Eames

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CONCEPT

What makes an everyday object a Hidden Hero? It must be based on an ingenious yet easily comprehensible idea. It has been produced a billion times over and constitutes an indispensable fixture of daily life. It has proven itself time and time again and remained essentially unaltered for decades. In other words, an everyday classic.

Why would a design museum devote its attention to such everyday things? Because as industrial products, they embody the ideals of modernism that are still highly relevant today: economy of material, functionality and longevity. And because their stories offer insights into larger context of cultural and industrial history.

With the exhibits, images and films shown here, we are seeking to illuminate four aspects that have been of particular interest to us in our investigation of Hidden Heroes: 1. Innovation: the fascinating history of their invention. 2. Production: the technical conditions of their successful mass-scale fabrication. 3. Evolution: their historical development and the often astonishing diversity of models and variations. 4. Inspiration: their aesthetic that continually spurs on the work of artists and designers.

The travelling exhibition “Hidden Heroes: The Genius of Everyday Things” is accompanied by an online exhibition under the same name. The real and virtual exhibitions can be experienced independently as stand-alone projects while at the same time complementing one another in an ideal manner: The travelling exhibition with its spatial layout and engaging three-dimensional exhibits, masterfully staged in multimedia presentation by Dieter Thiel. And the online exhibition with a wealth of images, information and interactive elements, in which the Grimm Gallun Holtappels agency skilfully celebrates the possibilities of the Internet medium in all its facets.

In both cases, there is much to discover.

ADHESIVE TAPE



It joins things together that belong together, helps to mend small breaks and tears, and is indispensable for crafts and packaging: adhesive tape was invented in the USA and Germany almost simultaneously. In 1930, Richard Drew developed the first transparent adhesive tape for 3M – which was marketed under the name Scotch Tape and initially used to seal food wrap. After John A. Borden invented a dispenser with an integrated cutter blade two years later, adhesive tape became a universal household helper. The development process was similar at Beiersdorf, which introduced a transparent caoutchouc tape with the name Tesa just a few years later. Thousands of different kinds of adhesive tapes for specific purposes exist today. As an artistic medium, adhesive tape is currently experiencing a heyday in Street Art – and thus finding its way into galleries and museums.



Tesa Advertisement



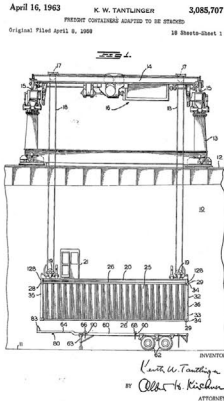
Display

Adhesive Tape

SHIPPING CONTAINER



The overseas transport container has become a symbol of globalisation. Ever since the end of the First World War, people have sought ways to make international freight transport safer, faster and more flexible. Malcolm McLean, an American shipping entrepreneur, found a solution - first by loading complete trucks and trains onto ships, and later by separating the containers from their transport vehicles. A prerequisite for the enormous growth of container transport was the international standardisation process that began in 1961 – covering all means of transport and spanning national borders. Today, global trade is literally unimaginable without the shipping container.



Container Patent



Display Shipping Container



LEGO



AIR BUBBLE FILM



STICKY NOTE



TIN CAN



SNAP FASTENER



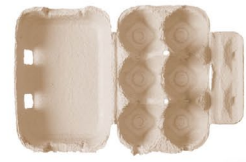
LIGHT BULB



CLOTHES HANGER



CARABINER



EGG CARTON



HOOK-AND-LOOP FASTENER



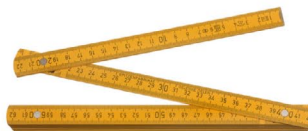
ZIPPER



UMBRELLA



BALLPOINT PEN



FOLDING YARDSTICK



BARCODE



SHIPPING CONTAINER



CANNING JAR



ADHESIVE TAPE



REFLECTOR



RUBBER BAND



CONDOM



TEA BAG



RING BINDER



COFFEE FILTER



MULTIPACK CARRIER



CLOTHES PIN



PENCIL



WALL PLUG



ADHESIVE BANDAGE



PAPER CLIP



CORKSCREW



SAFETY MATCH



BEVERAGE CARTON



FACIAL TISSUE



BABY PACIFIER



EAR PLUGS

BEVERAGE CARTON



Naoto Fukosawa Design

The development of the beverage carton was a masterstroke with respect to packaging and a revolution with respect to transport and logistics. Impressed by advancements in the American packaging industry during the 1940s, the Swedish businessman Ruben Rausing started to explore potential alternatives to the milk bottle. He invented a system that made it possible to shape a tube out of coated paperboard, fill it with milk and seal it in individual tetrahedron-shaped cartons. They gave the company its name: Tetra Pak. Thanks to the ideal dimensions of later brick-shaped cartons and aseptic filling methods, the beverage carton became the standard type of packaging for long-lasting milk by the end of the 1960s



Display

Beverage Carton

TEA BAG



The invention of the tea bag was allegedly a coincidence: in the early 20th century, the American tea trader Thomas Sullivan shipped samples of his tea in small silk packets. Some of his customers, as the story goes, dipped an unopened packet in hot water to test its quality. According to written records from the year 1913, two German entrepreneurs – Eugen Nissle and Rudolf Anders – registered the name 'Teefix' as a brand for a muslin tea bag. Tea bags made of paper fibre did not become common until after 1930, when it became possible to seal the paper with heat. Tea bags are extremely practical – and better than their reputation: to emphasise this, tea manufacturers are continually inventing new variations with visual appeal.

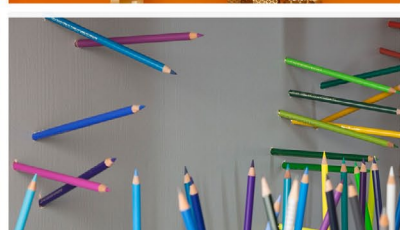
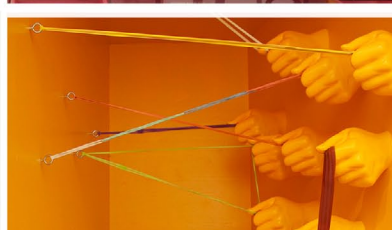
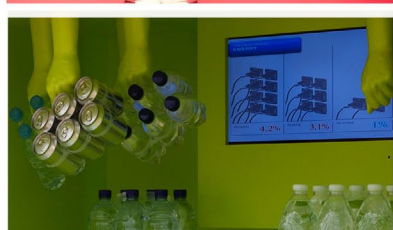
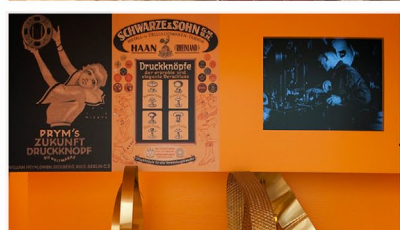
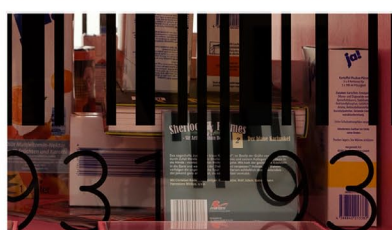
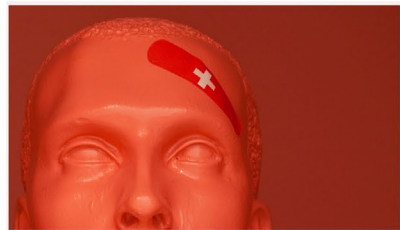
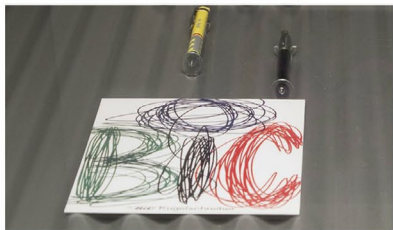
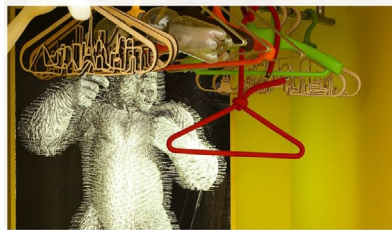


N. Ponomareva Design



Display

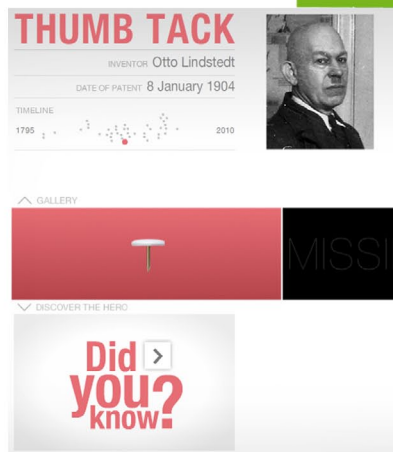
Tea Bag



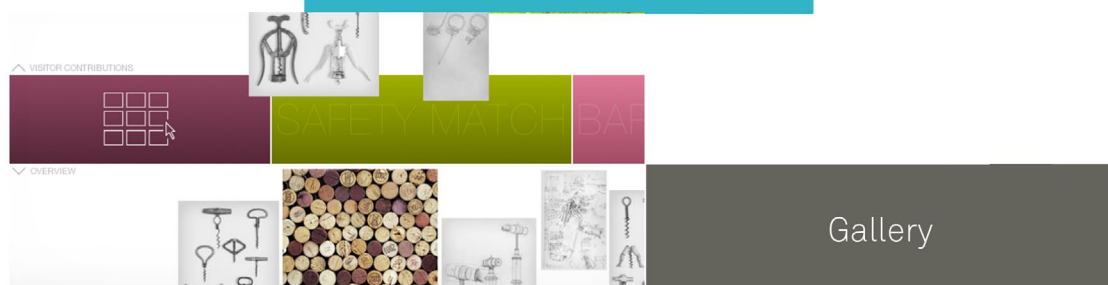
WWW.HIDDEN-HEROES.NET



My Hidden Heroes



Did You Know?



CURATOR

Born in 1970, Jochen Eisenbrand received a master's degree in Cultural Studies and has worked since 1998 for the Vitra Design Museum. As a curator he has prepared various exhibitions that have travelled from Weil on to other museums in Europe, the United States and Japan. They have included an Isamu Noguchi and George Nelson retrospective, a show on Ingo Maurer and "Airworld: Design and Architecture for Air Travel". Eisenbrand has co-edited and contributed to several exhibition catalogues and writes for different German design and architecture magazines. Since April 2007 he has served as a member of the acquisitions committee of FRAC Centre in Orléans.

CONTACT

The exhibition will be available from October 2011 onwards.

Questions about the exhibition concept or content should be directed to:

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“My opinion is that the design world has drifted away from normality, forgotten its roots and the basic notion that we designers are supposed to take care of the man-made environment and try to improve it.”

Jasper Morrison



Ingo Maurer, Lucellino