



Wittkugel the East German Master

By: Steven Heller | February 9, 2016

Klaus Wittkugel was the most significant East German graphic designer during the '50s and '60s, but until now he was unknown in the West. Thanks to Project Project's Prem Krishnamurthy, who has been studying Wittkugel's output for over eight years, this East Berlin master's work is on view in New York.

Krishnamurthy's indie [P! Gallery](#) has on display in the exhibit *Ost Und ~~eder~~ West: Klaus Wittkugel and Anton Stankowski* until Feb. 21 a swath of posters, books, and DDR propaganda that will entice and confound. Enticing because his graphic and exhibition design (for trade fairs) fits squarely in the Modernist camp, yet confounding because it is all done at the behest of his primary client, the East German Socialist state (German Democratic Republic – GDR), which controlled its population through an onslaught of printed missals.

Wittkugel was a devout anti-capitalist, using the design language of Western capitalism along with other techniques. Krishnamurthy quotes from Heinz Wolf's 1964 monograph in the exhibition keepsake:

"The artist Klaus Wittkugel does not paint pictures nor does he model sculptures. His works are not collected and shown in museums; rather, they work directly in our everyday life. Wittkugel is a graphic designer. He designs exhibitions, trade fair stands, posters, book covers, logos and packaging for our people-owned industry. For nearly every important political event in the history of our Workers' and Peasants' State, there exists an artistic statement by Wittkugel, who, through his work, has contributed considerably to the new orientation of our applied graphics."

Ost Und ~~eder~~ West: Klaus Wittkugel and Anton Stankowski is curated by Kristamurthy and Cay Sophie Rabinowitz at 334 Broome St., New York City.