

DO WOMEN  
HAVE TO  
BE NAKED  
TO GET INTO  
THE MK&G?

In this gallery we take inspiration from the Guerrilla Girls and evaluate the Graphics and Posters collection at the MK&G: How many pieces by women belong to the collection? In which countries are these female designers active? How many works by each individual have been collected, and how many have been exhibited?

It is important to ask these questions, for only objects that have been preserved will be available in the future for display, scholarly research and publication. Decisions about what to collect determine which stories we will tell in the future, and whose work will have visibility. Our preliminary analysis confirms the status quo: up until today, works by white Western males comprise a great majority of the items that have been chosen for the collection and shown in exhibitions. If we want to live up to our ambition of representing the diversity of society, we must change our acquisition strategies and exhibition practices.



Rund die Hälfte der Gestalterinnen ist mit nur einer Arbeit in der Sammlung vertreten.  
Around half of the women designers in the collection are represented by only one work.

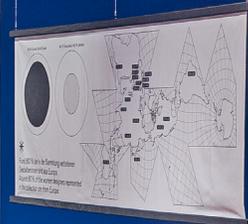
Anzahl der Gestalterinnen (683 gesamt)  
Number of women designers (683 total)



Anzahl der Arbeiten  
Number of works

### TOP TEN SIGNS THAT YOU'RE AN ART WORLD TOKEN:

1. You have a "signature" or "brand" that is instantly recognizable.
2. You have a "signature" or "brand" that is instantly recognizable.
3. You have a "signature" or "brand" that is instantly recognizable.
4. You have a "signature" or "brand" that is instantly recognizable.
5. You have a "signature" or "brand" that is instantly recognizable.
6. You have a "signature" or "brand" that is instantly recognizable.
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9. You have a "signature" or "brand" that is instantly recognizable.
10. You have a "signature" or "brand" that is instantly recognizable.



Green The Women



IT'S EVEN WORSE  
IN ~~EUROPE~~  
DESIGN

MADE WITH HELP FROM  
**GUERRILLA GIRLS**  
DESIGNERS OF THE 21ST CENTURY

NEW AND OLD  
DESIGN OF THE YEAR

0

Design has never stopped evolving and challenging us. From the first hand-drawn sketches to the most cutting-edge digital work, it's always been a part of our lives. And it's always been a part of the world.

# ‘DEAREST DESIGN COLLECTOR ...’

The Graphics and Posters collection encompasses some 400,000 works. Only about 6000 of them are attributed to female designers. That amounts to 1.5 percent!

Of course we did not expect to find a proportion of 50 percent. The collection has been continually growing for 150 years, and well into the 20th century, a significantly smaller number of women were professionally active as designers in comparison to today. But even in the area of contemporary graphic design, there are only a few works by females – despite the fact that, for decades, women have constituted around half of the students enrolled in design programmes. And roughly 50 percent of current workers in the creative sector are women.

In the future, we want to ensure that at least 50 percent of our new acquisitions are works by female designers. Furthermore, we aim to give increased attention to the representation of queer and non-binary persons, as well as designers with a migrant background and international viewpoints.

# ‘DESIGN WORLD TOKENS’

In addition to counting the total number of works by female designers in the collection, we also looked at how many pieces by each individual have been accumulated. The result: more than half of the female designers are represented with just one work. This supports the conclusion that these pieces were primarily collected due to their subject matter. In cases where a larger number of works were found – optimally from various phases of the individual’s creative career – the focus was evidently on the designer’s personal development.

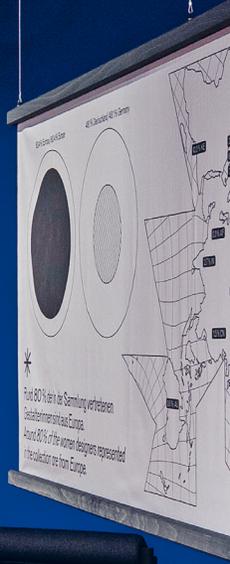
It is important to us to be able to record and portray the evolution of women designers, along with the diversity of their output. For this reason, in future we will request a more comprehensive sampling of a designer’s work and also seek to obtain the professional estates of female creatives.

## TOP TEN SIGNS THAT YOU'RE AN ART WORLD TOKEN:

10. Your busiest months are February (Black History Month), March (Women's History), April (Asian-American Awareness), June (Stonewall Anniversary) and September (Latino Heritage).
9. At openings and parties, the only other people of color are serving drinks, even when they don't know your work.
8. Everyone knows your race, gender and sexual orientation even when they don't know your work.
7. A museum that won't show your work gives you a prominent place in its lecture series.
6. Your last show got a lot of publicity, but no cash.
5. You're a finalist for a non-tenure-track teaching position at every art school on the east coast.
4. No collector ever buys more than one of your pieces.
3. Whenever you open your mouth, it's assumed that you speak for "your people," not just yourself.
2. Everyone is always telling you their interracial and gay sexual fantasies.
1. A curator who never gave you the time of day before calls you right after a Guerrilla Girls demonstration.

A PUBLIC SERVICE MESSAGE FROM **GUERRILLA GIRLS** CONSCIENCE OF THE ARTWORLD











Im letzten Jahr wurden 830 Arbeiten von Gestalterinnen inventarisiert. In den ersten 100 Jahren nach der Gründung des Museums waren es 175 Arbeiten.  
*Last year, 830 works by women designers were inventoried. In the first 100 years after the museum was founded, 175 such works entered the collection.*

830 Arbeiten in einem Jahr  
830 works in one year



175 Arbeiten in 100 Jahren  
175 works in 100 years

1874–1974

2022



IT'S EVEN WORSE  
IN EUROPE  
DESIGN

STILL PROHIBITED BY  
GUERRILLA GIRLS  
UNLESS BY THE USE OF ART



# ‘WE SELL WHITE BREAD’

Among the female designers with works in the Graphics and Posters collection at the MK&G, at least 40 different nationalities are represented – ranging from Afghanistan, India and Japan to Kenya, Norway and Ukraine. However, most are limited to a single work from their oeuvre, so that the first impression of an internationally diverse collection is quickly relativised: of more than 6000 works by females, roughly 5000 come from Germany, and 2500 of these are from Hamburg. Another 300 were created in the USA, 200 in Switzerland, and almost 150 in Poland. The remaining 350 works are mainly from Europe. That is not truly international.

Against the backdrop of the museum’s colonial past, the question arises as to how we can meaningfully and respectfully make the collection more international. One possible way would be to regard the collection as a mirror of civic life. As applied to Hamburg, this would mean collecting a greater number of works by designers with Turkish roots, and continuing to acquire many Polish artefacts. In addition, measured by the size of these communities in our city, the work of creatives from Afghanistan and Ghana should be a focus.

# ‘YOU’RE SEEING ONLY PART OF THE PICTURE’

There are gaps in the statistical data presented in this room: for example, we would like to reveal how many works by non-German citizens are in the collection. Unfortunately, this is not possible, because so far only around 20 percent of the holdings have been digitised – and in many cases just rudimentarily.

Another unresolved question is how we can meaningfully classify the work of individuals with a migrant background in terms of statistical data. Esra Rotthoff, for example, was born in Germany with Turkish roots and addresses the topics of identity and multi-culturalism in her work. In our database, her migrant story can only be recorded in the form of an explanatory text; in regard to statistics, she and her works are categorised as being of German origin.

WOMEN HAVE  
TO BE NAKED  
TO GET INTO  
THE MK&G?

Wie geht es mit der Technik der Gewebe,  
die in der Welt der Kleidung sind, und wie  
die Welt der Kleidung von Frauen gibt es  
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**THAT YOU'RE A  
 OLD TOKEN:**

7 Black History Month, March (Women's  
 8. As openings and parties, the on-  
 9. At openings and parties, the on-  
 people of color are serving drinks,  
 your race, gender and sexual orientation  
 dinner your work.

8. Moreover that work's done your work give  
 dominant place in its before.

9. but no cash.

8. A special for a non-museum teaching  
 every art school on the best past  
 set back of your pieces.

9. "no-museum," it's assumed that you speak  
 yourself.

8. It is always telling you their interracial and  
 sentences.

9. He knew of and before calls you  
 nation.

**QUEERILLA GIRLS** (WORKS BY THE ARTIST)

# ‘DEAREST CURATORS ...’

First and foremost, the Guerrilla Girls evaluate exhibitions, rather than collections or archives. Based on this approach, we delved into the MK&G’s in-house archive and discovered that the first solo exhibition devoted to a female creative took place in 1972 – almost 100 years after the museum was founded – presenting the work of the artist Hanne Darboven. Up until the present day, there has not been a single monographic show on a female graphic designer – while 28 solo exhibitions featuring the work of male designers have been mounted over the past 30 years.

# \* CONFESSIONS OF THE CURATOR

As Head of the Graphics and Posters collection, I have been intentionally acquiring works by female designers over the past two years, including both historic and contemporary artefacts. 830 such works have entered the collection just in the last year. I am proud to be able to display numerous examples in this exhibition and to know that they will be preserved for posterity. But for me, these new acquisitions also point to a problem that remains unsolved: in my role as department head, I am the person who decides what will be added to the collection. My network and knowledge are that of an expert, yet they remain limited – just like the available resources. Would it be feasible to establish an advisory board with a broader range of viewpoints?

# ACCOMPLISHED!

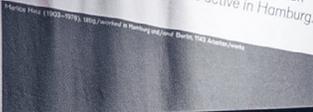
- We have examined the contents of a large portion of the museum’s filing drawers and cabinets to find works by female designers, which were subsequently photographed and entered into the database. This makes them readily accessible for future exhibitions and research enquiries.
- Moreover, we have improved the existing entries in the museum’s database. For example, we have researched missing biographical information like dates of birth and death, as well as nationality, and added keywords to facilitate successful searches. An important keyword, by the way, is ‘female designer’ – because before it was not possible to search the database specifically for works created by women.

# TO DO:

- We want to make the complete body of works by female designers available to the general public. This is made possible within the framework of the MK&G's Online Collection. However, it is first necessary to research and procure the respective copyrights.
- We want to help improve the data in existing databases administered by museums and other entities (e. g. Wikipedia, Wikidata or the Integrated Authority File of the German National Library).
- Together with the Kunstbibliothek Berlin and the Museum für Gestaltung Zürich, we plan to submit grant applications for the joint research project \*in\_ventur. The purpose of this project is to compile works by female commercial artists, graphic designers and communication designers, and to increase their visibility. As part of this process, we want to gather the available information and make it accessible, so that it can serve as the basis for further research and publications.
- The database used by the museum allows the categories of 'male' or 'female' when entering biographical data. We will continue to urge the developers of our database to add the term 'diverse' as a further option.



Die Hälfte der Arbeiten stammt von nur zehn  
Gestalterinnen, acht davon in Hamburg tätig.  
*Half of the works were created by just ten women  
designers, eight of whom were active in Hamburg.*



Martha Hill (1908-1979), 1962 Awarded in Hamburg and/or Berlin 1922 Akademiepreis

1874 Julius Drechselmann

1914 Kerne, Direktorin/Direktorialin/sozialist

1919 Fritz Saugstang

1938 Hermann Korfes  
1934 Wilhelm Künzshelm vom Landefeld

1937 Konrad Hübner

1945 Martin Feddersen (Internatsionalkont./Internat. Director)

1947 Erich Meyer

1952 Eiga Lotte Möller



Seit der Gründung wurde das MK&G  
113 Jahre von Männern geleitet.

*The MK&G has been run by men for  
113 of the years since its founding.*

1972 Axel von Sillern

1988 Wilfried Hornbostel

2008 Sabine Schulze

2018 Tiffa Eberle



Curson Pine Scott & Co.



Curson Pine Scott & Co.