

–Press release–

ZOO MOCKBA

Toy Animals from the Soviet Union – 1950 to 1980

The Köpcke & Weinhold Collection

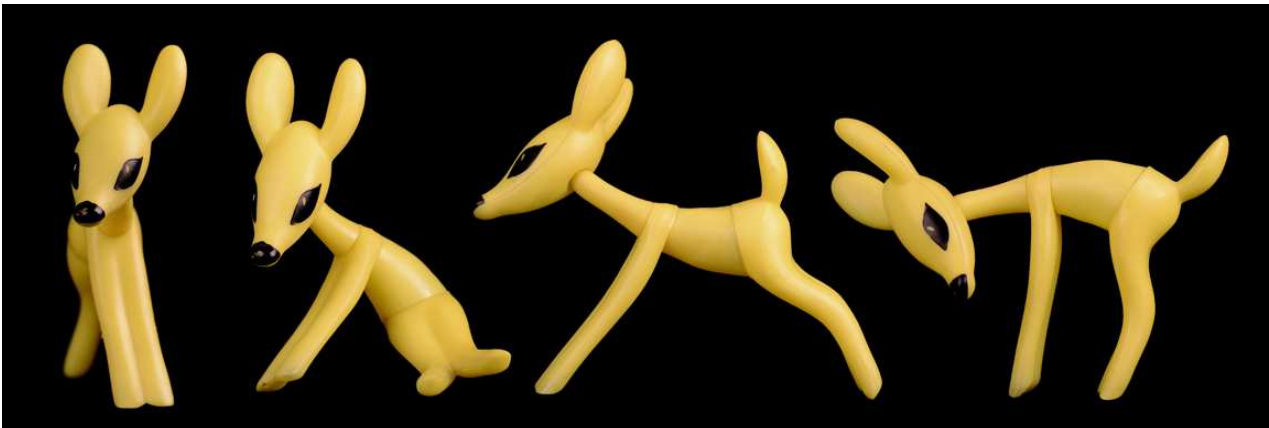
15 February to 13 May 2019

me Collectors Room Berlin / Olbricht Foundation

Auguststrasse 68, 10117 Berlin

Opening hours: Wed–Mon, noon – 6 p.m.

Berlin, 14 February 2019



ZOO MOCKBA – *Toy Animals from the Soviet Union* presents an exemplary selection of original toys produced between 1950 and 1980. Approximately 200 figures by eleven artists – all sourced from the Köpcke & Weinhold Collection, which comprises more than 400 objects in total – will be on view in the lounge of me Collectors Room from 15 February to 13 May 2019.

During the tsarist era, Russia had no toy industry of its own. Those who could afford it spoiled their children with dolls and toys from Germany and France; everyone else made do with handmade pieces carved from wood or sculpted from clay. Such objects reflected a traditional folk art aesthetic that in many ways still characterises the broader perception of Russian toys and Russian culture in general.

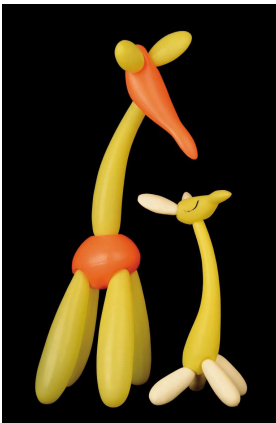
But in the 1930s, when the Soviet Union’s first industrially manufactured toys first rolled off the assembly line, designs began mirroring aspects of international models. After World War II, toy production was not a top priority; nevertheless, companies were encouraged to continue producing toys in addition to essential goods.

In the early 1950s, graduates of the Leningrad Art Academy began venturing into the modern age. In the Soviet toy industry, artists were given the creative freedom to experiment and, unlike in other “more serious” state-controlled areas of artistic production, develop their own formal language in which they could confidently express the zeitgeist and a new, postwar spirit. Even though some of these artists no longer like to discuss the fact that they once designed industrial toys, a strong avant-garde influence can be found in their creations even at this early stage.

Many of these colourful figures count as art for kids – sculptures made of plastic that nonetheless reflect a cultural heritage steeped in tradition. Using synthetic materials such as celluloid and polyethylene, the toy designers of the Soviet Union brought to life a species-rich animal kingdom that boasted an unprecedented degree of colourful diversity. These inexpensive industrial products often spoke to a sophisticated creative drive that remains influential to this day. Generations of children in the Soviet Union were familiar with these playthings; here in Germany, however, they remained largely unknown.

ZOO MOCKBA presents an outstanding selection of these pieces. In addition to toys manufactured from celluloid, polyethylene, and rubber, handmade design models will also be on view. Many of the toys can be attributed to specific artists – among them Natalia Tyrkova, Boris Worobjew, Lew Razumowsky, Lew Smorgon, Adolf Neystat, Galina Sokolowa, Tamara Fedorowa, Anatoli Borisow, and the Czech designer Libuse Niklova – whose biographies will also be presented as part of the exhibition. In addition to the objects and information labels, *ZOO MOCKBA* will include large-format photographs of individual toys and groups of figures that highlight the unique artistic qualities of these industrial products.

A guided tour of the exhibition with collectors Sebastian Köpcke and Volker Weinhold will take place on Thursday, 14 March 2019 at 6 p.m.



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Lew Smorgon, Giraffen, 1970er Jahre, Plastik © Köpcke und Weinhold

Natalia Tyrkova, Frosch, 1970er Jahre, Plastik © Köpcke und Weinhold

Tamara Fedorowa, Löwen, 1960er – 1970er Jahre, Zelluloid und Plastik © Köpcke und Weinhold