

VOLKSWARE

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Volksware is the name of a brand. It exists since 1999. Volksware works in projects. Each idea is presented as a product, a "Volks' Ware" that means "people's product" or "product for people". The product is presented as a concept, an unic specimen, a limited edition or as a product without its own production. The form of the product depends on the idea and concept that the project is about.

Volksware is presented in galleries, shops, fairs, public spaces and other events that offer the best background and platform for each Volksware project; like for example the "Passagen 2003" while the Furniture Fair in Cologne (GE), the Centraal Museum in Den Haag (NL), Montevideo, the Netherlands Media Art Institute in Amsterdam (NL), Artforum in Berlin (GE) or the Designmai in Berlin (GE).

Volksware explores the function of consumptions goods in the current time. The main focus is the meaning of consuming for the customer, the value creation of consumer products and its effect on the consumer.

The project ©VOLKSWARE (2000) works on the emotional value of consumption goods for its owners; and the following project VOLKSWARE heim (2001) is looking at the forms of these goods, that invite the consumer for such an emotional value.

The VOLKSWARE coat, € 759.987,20, the most expensive coat in the world (2004) is a project about the value creation of these goods. In how far does an already defined value of a product influence the consumer in its social, cultural and economic life?

The VOLKSWARE carpet - a yard good (2005), questions the effects of the 'over'-supply and mass production of products on the consumer.

The interest of Volksware is the mass of products and not the brand of products. Volksware shall lead to a discussion about the sense and function of design and production in the current time. At the same time, it should offer new inspirations for new ways of dealing with 'over'-supply and mass production of

Short introduction into the main Volksware projects in their time process:

©VOLKSWARE

since 1999

(event, unlimited edition)

©Volksware does not have its own production line, but Volksware labels the products of the people. Products, that have an emotional value for their owners, receive the Volksware label and become a Volksware – that means, “people’s product”.

Volksware investigates the emotional worth of daily-life objects and the possibility to build an emotional bond with these objects. The Volksware-label presents the emotional value of a product, independent from its brand and price. The Volksware shop is presented in galleries in different cities. People can bring their very personal clothes and they get the Volksware label on it. Each label has its own number. By the number all “volkswares” and their stories can be found on the internet, www.volksware.org.



VOLKLORE

since 2000

(event, unlimited edition)

Volklore takes place as an event in galleries. In the Volklore exhibition, the clothes of the visitors get embroidered with wolfs and deers. The visitor can choose his favourite motive from the Volklore catalogue. The photographs of the catalogue show clothes of different mass-production brands. Each picture is embroidered with Volklore motives. In the end of the exhibition a herd of wolfs and deers is run-ning over all clothes, hunting for booty; “auf der Jagd nach Beute und im Streifzug durchs Dickicht”. Volklore is a cooperation with Kirsten Hermans and Petra Warrass.



VOLKSWARE heim

2002

(prototype)

“The abundance of designed objects and the proposal for an uniformmass production”

The ©Volksware research (1999) about people’s most favourite daily-life objects is the basis for an archive of 12.304 objects with emotional value. These objects share certain specific qualities. These “emotion transporters” have a simple and pure form that easily invite one to use them. All these products - ranging from table, chair, plate, cup and apron - have been brought back to their core form. These generic shapes form the uniform living set for people, the Volksware heim.

Manifest: “(...) Why should we get a new cup, when we already have the one that we like? Buying new clothes; the 100th coffee cup and millionst chair, seems to be nothing more than the identity search of a mass-production society, which is suffering from the tiredness of consuming. (...) An uniform living-set for people; to be used by all people in all households of all countries. Volksware heim has the exact form that most people get the highest possible emotional bond with.

If the emotional value is predetermined by a certain form and all people feel attracted by similar forms than all others get redundant.”



VOLKSWARE coat, € 759.987,20

The most expensive coat in the world

2003

(unique piece)

The Volksware coat is made out of labels, that are taken from 7.531 different pieces of clothes. The labels present a value of exactly € 759.987,20.

Manifest: “Millions of objects are designed, produced and consumed. In contrast to earlier days, a product does not only have to serve its function as a tool and as a beautifier of the everyday.

Today’s products must offer the customer an affordable feeling of happiness achieved through pre-constructed brand identity and fastchanging trends and styles. Ironically, one attempts the construction of their own identity using mass-produced objects, delivered under the illusion of individuality and cus-tomisation. This leads to a naive readiness to accept any price: not only for the cotton t-shirt for € 500 but also for the bag with twenty zippers for € 15, people are willing to pay. Developed from a tension between the individual person and the society, the sense of value of a product has been lost. On the one hand there is the need for presenting community mem-bership through the regognition of a brand and on the other hand the need for the unique to present its own individuality.

This contradiction leads for a “hunting in the consumption-jungle for the unique”: an almost desperate attempt to find and keep this own identity in the abundance of things. Price does not play any role here.



300 qm VOLKSWARE

2005

(photo 1,20 x 0,80 m)

A carpet presenting a person’s clothes of a lifetime.



VOLKSWARE Carpet

a yard good

2005 (unique piece)

A cloth carpet made by a person’s lifetime consumption. The carpet is an unique piece and a „yardgood“. It is sold per meter. Each sold meter is numbered and marked with its qms.



Interview Annet Dekker, Curator at Montevideo, Netherlands Media Art Institute in Amsterdam and Silke Wawro (2004):
“...about idea and function of Volksware”

(...) Since when does Volksware exist and why this name?

Since 1999 I am working with the name Volksware. It began as a project while my studies on the Gerrit Rietveld Academy in Amsterdam. I was working with the “trades of use and wear” of consumer goods, like holes, stains and tears, and the emotional value, that their owners had for these products. Why does a person love his cup with a broken handle, cannot throw it away and buy a new one? These objects I called Volksware, that means “people’s products” or “product for people”.

Where does the idea for the certain Volksware project come from?

The motivation for the Volksware projects lies in my own interest to understand the things that I see, to question them and maybe to make new proposal for their senses and functions. The way I am using is very often a reduction. I am working with different medias and materials to communicate my work. The Volksware products are the “transporters” of my ideas. The so called product does not necessarily been usable to present its idea. Depending on the project it enough that only it’s function for use is visible and that it is an unic specimen.

What is the sense and function of Volksware?

For myself, I regard the different Volksware projects as studies about consuming, consumer products, the value creation of consumer products and its effects on the cosumer. By behaving as a “parasit” in many projects, I am trying to give new inspirations for proposals of dealing with over offer and mass production. I am trying to understand its effects on the consumer and at second, I am looking at the form of these consumer products that invite the consumer to built up an emotional bond with. From my own point of view, there

are two main groups of consumer products: “moving- products” and “staying - products”. “Moving- products” get transported from their place of production into the shop; from there they are carried to a household, and then, they walk straight into the dustbin. I am interested into the ones, that stay. And why. And what they look like.

How does Volksware communicate?

The first contact to the public is mostly an advertisement, a new paper article or another form of a campagne. Volksware is presented in galleries, shops, fairs, public spaces and other events that offer the best background and platform for each Volksware project; like for example the “Passagen 2003” while the Furniture Fair in Cologne (GE), the Centraal Museum in Den Haag (NL), Montevideo, the Netherlands Media Art Institute in Amsterdam (NL), Artforum in Berlin (GE) or the Designmai in Berlin (GE).

Is Volksware an “anti-design brand”?

It is not my idea to say that brands are bad and designers redundant. My interest is the mass and not the brand. Dividing the amount of all produced cotton t-shirts by the amount of people living on earth, we can take a new shirt every 5 hours and throw away the old one. My ideas are subjective from my own perspective.

I want to know why a person feels related to a product; why is one cup more important for him than the other one? Two pieces of textiles have the same value. By getting a brand onto them; these pieces can get a difference of some €100.

I am interested in how far such a pre-defined value creation of products influence the consumer in his social life. This aspect is the centre of my work that I am regarding from different perspectives in my Volksware projects. My work is for myself a constant learning process. (...)

Silke Wawro, born 1974 in Germany. 1996-2000 Study Gerrit Rietveld Akademie in Amsterdam. 2000-2002 Masterclass Sandberg Institute in Amsterdam. Since 2003 teaching at HGB, Academy of Visual Arts in Leipzig. Since 2004 teaching at Sandberg Institute in Amsterdam. Lives and works in Amsterdam und Leipzig.

Stipendias and Prizes (selection)

2006 basisstipendia Fonds BKVB in Amsterdam. 2005 Deutscher Studienpreis Körberstiftung; Kunstförderpreis der Medienstiftung der Sparkasse. 2003 startstipendia Fonds BKVB in Amsterdam. 2002 Rem Koolhaas - Lagos wide & close, projectstipendia Stimuleringsfonds in Amsterdam; produktionsstipendia Prins Bernhards Fonds in Amsterdam.

Exhibitions and projects (selection)

2006 de boekenhoek in gallery de Appel, Amsterdam; Visual Power Show in Zeche Zollverein, Essen. 2005 Grassi Museum, Leipzig; Experimenta Design, Lissabon; Art Forum

Berlin, Galerie Kleindienst, Leipzig; Design Mai, Berlin. 2004 Galerie Lignum, Iserlohn; Centraal Museum, Den Haag. 2003 Montevideo, Netherlands Media Art Institute, Amsterdam; Passagen, Off-Programm Furniture Fair Cologne; Mobile World, in cooperation with Mieke Gerritzen - NL Design, Amsterdam. 2002 Cooper Union, New York; Galerie Kunst+, Düsseldorf; Galerie Fanclub, Amsterdam. 2000 Mediamatics, Amsterdam; Westergasfabrik, Amsterdam.

Press and literature (selection)

2006/7 Kunstforum "Parasitäre Strategien in der Kunst.". 2005 Home, Apex (China), O-Independent (Portugal), Berliner Zeitung. 2004 "start" art-catalogus Medienstiftung der Sparkasse, Baby!Magazine (NL) (D), Volkskrant (NL), Art, Squeeze, Die Zeit, Art-NL (NL). 2003 Art, Spex, FAZ, ARD Polilux, Items. 2001 Die Zeit, ARTE, ZDF, Metropolis M, Fanclub, PAGE. 2000 Wallpaper, Net-Business, Allegra, Spiegel, Morgenpost, AMICA, Blvd.