

BOOK REVIEW:
BY WILLIAM P. HOOD JR.

**Europäisches Besteck Design / Modern European Cutlery Design, 1948-2000:
The Bauer Design Collection**

Author: Wolfgang-Otto Bauer

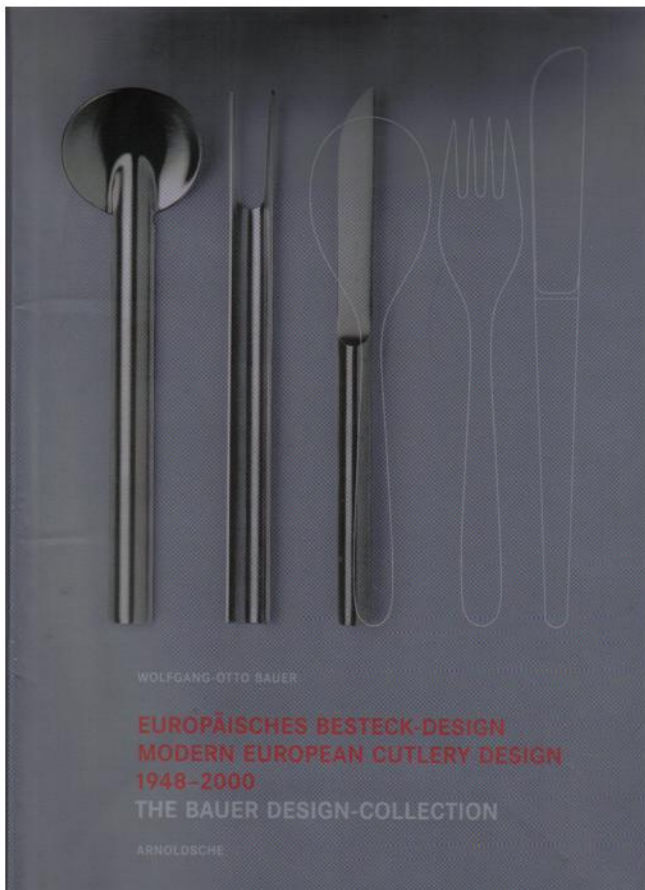
Publisher: Arnoldsche, Stuttgart, 2007

Hardcover with dust jacket: 8 1/4 x 12 1/4 inches; 208 pages; 16 full-page, 127 half-page, and numerous smaller b/w illustrations; text in German and English

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Wolfgang-Otto Bauer (b. 1931) is a German industrial designer whose interest in metals prompted him to start collecting flatware of modern design in the 1950s. In the ensuing 50-plus years he has accumulated some 1000 patterns, usually as single place settings, and primarily in stainless steel. From these he chose 132 for inclusion in this book to show the diversity in style and form that characterizes the period from 1948 to 2000. The examples represent the creations of almost 100 designers/design teams for numerous producers from the major European countries, most especially Germany, plus a few from outside Europe.

The book opens with a series of essays on how the author built his

collection and his interpretation of major stylistic trends decade by decade. In the author's opinion, the "soft" lines (rounded shapes) of flatware introduced immediately after WWII were a reaction to the hardships of the conflict, and it was the young people—who wanted to break with the past—that ensured these designs were successful on the market. Various institutions, including the re-founded Deutscher Werkbund and the Hochschule für Gestaltung [College of Design] in Ulm, made concerted efforts to cultivate appreciation of good form in Germany.

The introductory essays are followed by a catalog of the 132 patterns, one per page, with usually a half-page photo of a three- to five-piece place setting, plus basic cataloging data. All the photos are black and white and are of excellent quality. But almost without exception only frontal views are shown. The flatware pieces are photographed straight up and down, side-by-side; there is no styling to show curves, bends and thickness.

Of the 132 patterns, 109 are of stainless steel (with or without handles of other materials), 15 are silver-plated, 4 are sterling, and 4 are all-plastic. In terms of style they range from streamlined to post-modern to "New Wave." They include well-known modern "classics" and obscure examples. I have a special inter-



Amboss 2060, 1956,
Design Carl Auböck I (1900–1975) and
Carl Auböck II (1924–1993)
Maker: Neuzeughammer Ambosswerk., Austria
Stainless Steel



Amboss 7000, 1970, Design János Megyik
Maker: Neuzeughammer Ambosswerk, Austria
Stainless Steel

est in the subject of modern flatware but was familiar with only 70 of the 132. Nevertheless a number of the most innovative of the period are omitted, among them *Boca, Pott 86, Profil, Trapani, Vitalis, Palio, Three Courses, Magnussen, Alix, Victoria.*

The cataloging data contain some important errors; e.g., the pattern *Ultima* is listed as *Ultimo*; the pattern *Mangetoo* is called *Faitoo*; Dansk is listed as a Danish firm when in fact it is, and always has been, American. Often omitted are interesting sidelights such as the fact that *Arne Jacobsen* (introduced 1957) was chosen as the flatware for the spacecraft in the movie *2001: A Space Odyssey*. The usually generous references include many European exhibition catalogs that few North Americans would otherwise know about,

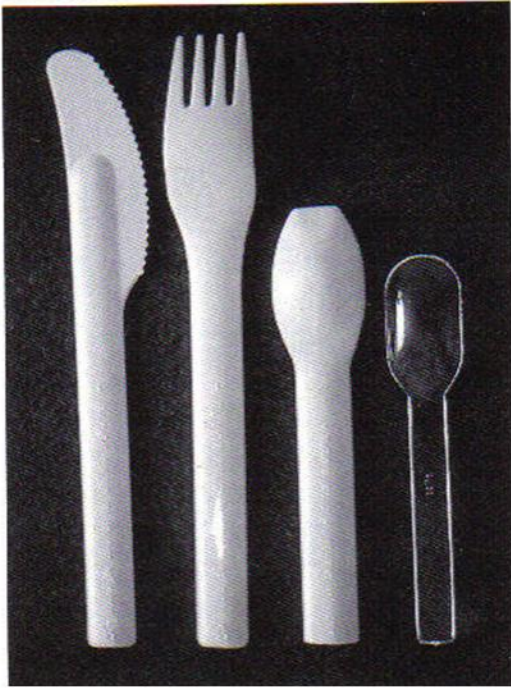
The German text is by the author and the English by someone else. The English translation is generally very good, but there are a few occasions where the meaning is not clear. Often this is due to more or less direct translation of undefined terms in the German; examples: “scan form,” “trapeze line.” *Vorderteile* is consistently translated as “fronts” rather than “front parts,” or “functional ends.”



Sillage ,1985,
Design Philippe Costard
Maker: Chabanne S.A., Thiers, France



Esotismo II, 1988
Design: Jean-Marie Patois
Maker: Jean-Marie Patois, France



Alitalia, 1970,
Design: Joe Colombo
Maker: Silpa, Perugia/I

The work includes valuable brief biographies of the designers, but here again there are errors, e.g., Henning Koppel is called a silversmith, sculptor and designer but was not a trained silversmith. A general bibliography contains many useful publications in languages other than English. In the English translation of a glossary, “sterling silver” is said, inexplicably, to include American silver of 900/1000 purity.

This book demonstrates the gamut of modern flatware styles and form introduced by European producers in the last half of the 20th century but would have been more successful had more

creativity been employed in the photography. It is also flawed by factual errors and omissions but does contribute to scholarship through its extensive literature citations.

William P. Hood Jr., M.D., is a retired cardiologist and former university professor who lives in Alabama. He is the principal author of “Tiffany Silver Flatware 1845–1905, When Dining was an Art”, Suffolk, 2000, and numerous articles about flatware in antiques publications. A selection of Dr. Hood’s contemporary flatware collection is currently on view at the Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Art on the campus of Auburn University, Auburn, Alabama