



Smithsonian
Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum

Tommi Parzinger collection, 1935-1981

2011

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Smithsonian Libraries
Title:	Tommi Parzinger collection
Identifier:	SIL-CH.1998-19-1
Date:	1935-1981
Extent:	5 Cubic Feet
Creator:	Robsjohn-Gibbings, Terence Harold, b. 1905 Parzinger, Tommi, 1903-1981.
Language:	Undetermined
Summary:	This collection does not represent the entire Parzinger archive. The German firm, K.P.M., has the drawings Parzinger produced for the line of ceramics and a part of the documentation for the work in the United States was damaged or lost in a 1951 flood in the Madison Avenue office. However, enough of the archive remains to document a significant part of the designer's work from the 1940s-1970s. Included in the collection are brochures, ad sheets, magazine pages, chart-like sheets of furniture designs, drawings or blueprints, clippings, photographs, press articles, and pages of notes. The collection does not include business papers which were deliberately excluded for space reasons.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

All materials were donated to the museum by Donald Cameron in 1998.

Separated Materials

The Cooper-Hewitt departments of Drawings and Prints, Applied Arts, and Textiles and Wallcoverings has additional materials on Parzinger in their collections.

Other Finding Aids

No finding aid available. A detailed biography of Parzinger was prepared by Gail Davidson.

Restrictions

Unprocessed; access is limited; Permission of Library Director required; Policy.

Biographical Note

Tommi (Anton) Parzinger (1903-1981) was born in Munich and received professional design training there at the Kunstgewebeschool (School of Arts and Crafts). He began his career as a freelance designer in Germany and Austria, working in ceramics, wallpapers, lighting, textiles, and furniture. In 1932 he came to the United States as a prize for winning a poster contest for North German Lloyd, the steamship company. In 1935 he settled in New York and became associated with Rena Rosenthal ("smart furniture and accessories shop") as a designer of china, glassware and furniture. Furniture became his primary focus in 1938 he became a designer for Charak of Boston. In 1939 he formed his own business, Parzinger, Inc., 54 East 57th Street, designing silver as well as furniture. Renamed Parzinger Originals in 1946, the firm also had addresses at 32 East 57th Street; 601 Fifth Avenue and 441 Madison Avenue. Donald Cameron became his partner. In addition to his own firm, he designed furniture, fabrics, lighting and a range of accessories for other firms, including Salterini (wrought iron), Hofstatter (furniture), Dorlyn (brass), and Willow & Reed (rattan). He also produced custom designs for interior decorators and many private clients. In 1996 and 1998 his work was shown by Palumbo Gallery, 972 Lexington Avenue, New York City.

Arrangement

Materials are arranged into ten record groups: I. Furniture Designs for Willow & Reed, Salterini, Parzinger Originals and others; II. Silver Design; III. Ceramic/China Design; IV. Designs for Objects made of non-precious metals; V. Objects of Miscellaneous or Obscure Materials; VI. Designs for Enamel Work; VII. Designs for Textiles and/or Wallcoverings; IX. Lighting Fixture Design (electric); and X. Miscellaneous Items. There are also seven 3-ring binders containing photographs of Parzinger's furniture, silver, ceramics, and metalwork from the 1930s--the 1970s. There are notes on the backs of many of the photographs. There are also sketches of his designs for clients. Binder 7 contains photographs of 63 furniture designs by T.H. Robsjohn-Gibbings.

Bibliography

English & French furniture and decorations ... with silver designed by Tommi Parzinger. New York : Parke-Bernet Galleries, Inc., 1941.

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

Design -- History -- 20th century -- Sources

Types of Materials:

Articles
Awards
Blueprints
Catalogs
Clippings

Correspondence
Drawings
Photographic prints
Photographs
Sketches

Names:

American Designers' Institute
Cameron, Donald
Charak of Boston
Cooper-Hewitt Design Archive
Katzenbach & Warren
Norddeutscher Lloyd
Palumbo Gallery
Parzinger Originals (Firm)
Parzinger, Tommi, 1903-1981.
Robsjohn-Gibbings, Terence Harold, b. 1905
Rosenthal, Rena.
Textile Workers Union of America
Tritt, Olga.
Widdicomb, William.

Occupations:

Furniture designers -- Germany
Furniture designers -- United States
Industrial designers -- Germany
Industrial designers -- United States
Interior designers -- Germany
Interior designers -- United States