

## Beyond the Wall XL: Art and artifacts from the GDR

Justinian Jampol

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**Justinian Jampol : Beyond the Wall XL: Art and artifacts from the GDR** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Beyond the Wall XL: Art and artifacts from the GDR:

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Exquisite! By A voracious reader This book is absolutely a \*treasure\*! The extensive and gorgeous collection of pictures plus the write-up are absolutely \*superb\*. As an aside, I spent a lot of time in (then-East) Germany - and most of eastern Europe - during the Cold War era, and I've returned many times post-1989. This book therefore has particular significance and meaning for me, but I'm certain anyone who's interested in this topic and who loves an extensive/beautiful collection such as that shown in this book would be enthralled. The book is very heavy, but that means it's filled to the brim with treasures. 4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. and I have to say I was not disappointed. It is quite expensive By Woody the Woodworker So I purchased this mostly from reading the reviews, and I have to say I was not disappointed. It is quite expensive, but it is also quite extensive, and if you are interested in the soviet era of Germany, and what life was like behind the curtain, this is the ultimate book. I visited East Berlin as a child and it mesmerized me... seemed so strange and different compared to the west, and this documents the East German lifestyle and ephemera with tremendous detail. Yes, its expensive, but it is HUGE at over 2" thick and very well organized. I'm glad I bought it and would do it again. 6 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Diary of a failed nation! By jpcoper A fascinating and novel look into the secret world of East Germany. Twenty-five years after the fact, it is hard to remember what a scary place the Iron Curtain hid from our view. This book presents more of a consumerist / cultural peek into that world rather than an expose into the horrors of a communist dystopia. That's fine, however, other books have already taken up that task. What immediately came to mind after perusing page after page of communist-inspired consumer goods were the similarities to post-WWII Japanese products. As a baby-boomer, I recall the flood of cheaply produced toys and household items that appeared on our variety store shelves. A "Made in Japan" stamp on the bottom of any product was prima facie evidence you held in your hand a crudely manufactured piece of junk. The poorly printed packaging was your first clue. "Made in Japan" was synonymous with poor quality. In time they were able to completely turn that reputation on its head. Today, Japanese goods are among the finest produced on the planet. Such was not the case with

East Germany. Their laughably shoddy products remained so for the duration of the country's existence. There may have been a few isolated exceptions to this rule but they were truly exceptions. Again, as was the case with post-WWII Japanese packaging, East German goods had the most uninspired and unattractive packaging imaginable. I guess when there is no competition to consider, details like that go overlooked. What makes East Germany such an intriguing study is the contrast to its western neighbor - the Federal Republic of Germany. To contrast the two countries on any level, especially its manufactured goods, is to detect a most dramatic difference. Within just a couple of years after the war West Germany was producing goods that lived up to their historical reputation for quality - which remains the case to the present day. These two countries were composed of the same people, the same culture, the same history and the same values, yet, as a result of their two distinctly different economic and political systems, they ended up with two radically different futures. I visited Berlin in 1969 and managed a one day pass that allowed me to wander around the streets of East Berlin. The grey, gloomy impressions of that visit have stayed with me to this day. In the mid 1990s I had a military surplus business that stocked a wide array of East German gear. I carried a broad selection of West German military clothing as well. The contrast in quality between the two lines was quite stark. The same differences one would notice if they were to compare the two country's consumer goods. Many of the East German products appear to mimic the modern look of Western goods. But like any copycat version they were never more than a weak imitation - and a rather humorous one at that. As much as they must have hated to admit it, the DDR was forever looking over The Wall to see where they should be headed next. It would prove impossible to block out the cultural influences of their capitalist neighbors. And their citizenry demanded they at least give the impression of being part of the Twentieth-Century. "Beyond the Wall" does a herculean job inventorying all the assorted artifacts of this short lived nation. Practically every imaginable category is covered in some depth. With 900 pages at their disposal they didn't have to leave much on the cutting room floor. "Beyond the Wall" will likely have a rather limited audience. Unless this subject REALLY interests you, you're not apt to shell out the \$100 admission price. For those that are THAT interested they won't be disappointed. This is indeed a fascinating work and Taschen is to be commended for bringing it to print. Books like this almost never produce any return on investment. They are a labor of love for all involved, and for publishers - a noble act of public service. As for the book itself - It's a solidly constructed volume, well designed to offer years of private or institutional handling. The cover material consists of a very rugged book cloth with a smooth surfaced illustrated band. The binding graphics are not my favorite but that's probably my sole criticism in the whole production. The pages are heavier than one sees in most art books and the image resolution quite good considering the vintage subject matter. The book comes housed in a very sturdy, illustrated, carrying case with built in handle - a nice addition for a book of this size. There is also a softcover, facsimile scrapbook included, that chronicles one family's various vacation memories. This book, incidentally, is smaller than describes. Rather than being 15" in length it's closer to 13 1/2". If space is a consideration this might help!

Life behind the Iron Curtain: The East German collection of the Wende Museum

About the Author Justinian Jampol is Founder and Executive Director of the Wende Museum. His work focuses on visual cultural studies and the connection between contemporary art and Cold War iconography. Jampol studied at UCLA before earning his doctoral degree in Modern History from Oxford University. The curator of several exhibitions, Jampol has also produced two documentary films on the Cold War, as well as urban art programs including The Wall Project. His writing and work has been featured in The Atlantic, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, and The New York Times.