

specific object

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presents

Stephen Kaltenbach : slantstep 2

May 9 through June 10, 2011

Specific Object / David Platzker is pleased to announce the opening of the exhibition Stephen Kaltenbach : slantstep 2. The exhibition will be on view at Specific Object from May 9 through June 10, 2011. This exhibition celebrates slantstep 2, 1969, a multiple by Stephen Kaltenbach designed by William Plumb.

The Slant Step, an object discovered in the Mount Carmel Salvage Shop in Mill Valley, California in 1965 by William T. Wiley and Bruce Nauman, became an iconic inspiration, a muse, for Bay Area artists resulting in Slant Step themed artworks, exhibitions, books, and the slantstep 2.

The slantstep 2 was one of the ultimate ends to my investigation of conceptual minimalism. I believed I had attained an extreme simplicity of form in the room constructions where the form was so united with the space it existed in, that whether it was a form in space or a shaped space became equally true. Looking to further my minimalist investigation at this point led to a number of projects. One was the William Plumb redesign of the original Slant Step. When Rosa Esman, was interested in doing a multiple with me, I asked her to choose an industrial designer to redesign the Slant Step to enhance its consumer appeal. My artistic motive was to cause the existence of an object which I had no part in its appearance, reducing to zero the artist's aesthetic involvement. I kept this non-involvement as pure as possible. I never met Bill Plumb and I never saw his design until the steps were made.

– Stephen Kaltenbach, 2011

The story of slantstep 2 dates back to 1969. I was working with Stephen Kaltenbach on his piece for the edition 7 Objects / 69 which I was publishing under the aegis of Tanglewood Press. At that time, Stephen proposed that I cooperate with him in the design of a contemporary version of the original Slant Step, a worn found object discovered by William T. Wiley in a salvage shop, which soon developed an iconic significance and inspiration to a group of Marin County artists. Stephen wanted to realize the worn Slant Step, a seemingly non-functional item, as newly-designed by a contemporary industrial designer of utilitarian objects. In some mysterious fashion which I do not recall, I was fortunately directed to William Plumb, who directed his own design studio, and who applied du jour design concepts with sensitivity and artistry, producing a pristine, plastic molded, brand-new slantstep 2 in three brightly colored variants. It was intended to be published in an edition of 75 by Tanglewood Press, but only 18 were produced - six in each of the three colors.

– Rosa Esman, 2011

One day in 1969 I got a call from Rosa Esman who wanted to discuss a design project. Though somewhat bizarre, the project interested me. I had at the time a fully equipped model shop capable of making prototype plastic parts such as I envisioned – that is, molded fiberglass. The idea was a low quantity multiple series and I had vendors capable of making such a short run once a prototype had been made. My shop could make a highly finished prototype. My designers and I could design it. My design background included a couple of years working in Italy with people at the forefront of what is now called "mid-century modern design." I was very active in creating products that answered a functional and esthetic need. My recollection is that Bruce Nauman brought the original item to my office then on 3rd Avenue and 17th Street in New York City. I know I had it at one time to examine it. We agreed that the new object should have all of the "functional" characteristics of the original, what they actually were was a mystery, of course – but one could figure out that it was a footrest of some kind with a slanted "ramp" for resting one's feet. My designers and I determined the rough dimensions of the object by measuring the original and did preliminary sketches of how it might be made in a mold, allowing for easy removal, and with an exterior

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configuration and finish that would be pleasing to the eye. My shop made a solid plaster model and from that we made a mold from fiberglass and from this we made several prototypes until we had one that pleased all the participants and that could be molded in enough copies to make the desired series.

– William Plumb, 2011

The exhibition at Specific Object features the original Slant Step on loan from The New York Society for the Preservation of the Slant Step, Slant Step inspired drawings by Kaltenbach, the Slant Step Book by Phil Weidman, an issue of Artforum from November 1969 featuring a full-page advertisement announcing the publication of the slantstep 2, and a copy of the slantstep 2 multiple.

Specific Object is grateful for the assistance of Stephen Kaltenbach; William Plumb; Rosa Esman; David E. Stone / Another Year in LA; Lawrence Markey / Lawrence Markey, Inc.; Frank Charles Owen / The New York Society for the Preservation of the Slant Step; Eric Fertman, and Kirk Rader for their generous help in making this exhibition possible.

References

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Specific Object's hours are Monday - Friday 10 AM to 5 PM, or by appointment.

Specific Object is located at 601 West 26th Street / Floor 2M / Room M285, New York City.
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Specific Object's website is www.specificobject.com

For additional information regarding the exhibition or Specific Object please email David Platzker at david@specificobject.com

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