

Everyday Life in Soviet Latvia. Living Room Interior of the 1960s

The interior of the 1960s is created using original items from the museum's collection. The offered insight of a living room is not a copy of any particular flat. However, the wall colouration, radiators painted in a bright silver colour, furniture and household items that at those times were used in the homes of Soviet people, allow the visitor to feel the inherent atmosphere of home life in the 1960s.

Since the 1960s the production of consumer goods depended on several factors. With faster development of light industry more attention was paid to the quality of household items. It was supported by the act "On Improvement of the Quality of Engineering Production and Manufacturing of Cultural-household Goods, Introducing the Method of Artistic Design" which was adopted in 1962. In the creation of mass production grew the role of the designer, who at those times was called the artist-designer.

At the end of the 1950s and in the beginning of the 1960s changes in the building of the apartment houses in the Soviet Union emerged. There appeared free planning districts in Latvia. The first residential area in Rīga was "*Āgenskalna priedes*" and buildings on Grīva street. There were small 2-3 room flats in the new standard buildings. In such a standardized economic flat with amenities, that is, central heating, bath or shower and toilet, residential area, depending on the number of rooms was: in a single-room flat approximately from 18 to 20 m², in a two-room flat from 24 to 28 m², but in a three room-flat from 32 to 36 m². Auxiliary premises took approximately 12 m².

The reality was harsh, because the problem with a lack of flats was never solved. However, small-sized flats with low ceilings needed a new type of furniture, which made a significant turning point in the furniture industry. The furniture in the exhibition is made in Latvia and shows the development of the local furniture industry and furniture design.

Shelving unit furniture became popular. For producing it, unified elements were used. This type of furniture is illustrated in the exposition by a scaffolding set of furniture (produced in 1965 in the woodworking factory "*Vulkāns*" in Kuldīga), placed by the wall on the left side of the room, where a shelving unit with shelves, drawers and lockers is combined with a desk for a pupil. There are books in the shelves of the multifunctional standard furniture, which were popular in the 1960s, e.g., the series of books "Life of Famous People" and "The Adventures and Science Fiction", Latvian original literature and translated fiction, art books, vinyl records, coffee set and porcelain figurines produced in the Porcelain and faience factory of Rīga, family photographs, wooden souvenirs, made according to the tradition of Latvian applied art.

The living room was usually used for various purposes – for work and for rest. By the window there is a group of seating furniture – armchair (produced at the mid-1960s in the woodworking factory "*Vulkāns*" in Kuldīga), at those times modern, low

table on three legs with a triangular surface (produced at the beginning of the 1960s in the woodworking factory “*Latvijas Bērzs*” in Rīga), a stool (produced in 1965 in the woodworking factory “*Vulkāns*” in Kuldīga). A floor vase and a floor lamp (produced in 1962 in the electro-technical factory of Panevēžys) complement the group of furniture, creating a homelike mood.

There are also two items of a set of furniture “*Rīga*” in the furnishing of the room: the box for linen located on the left from the window, and a couch (produced in the second quarter or in the middle of the 20th century in the furniture factory “*Rīga*”).

In the 1960s trends of modernism entered the applied arts, design of everyday objects, and manufacture of clothing; there appeared new materials, household items got laconic geometric shapes with minimal stylized décor. There is a metal candlestick on the low bookcase (produced in 1965 in the furniture factory “*Sarkanais mēbelnieks*” in Daugavpils), which stands out with expressively curved linear silhouette. Nearby there are two vases on the shelf produced at the Porcelain and faience factory of Rīga. Their simple shapes are combined with bright patches of colour, line, with geometrized architectural motifs and patterns applied in the design.

Besides the industrially produced items, works of applied art maintained a stable position in the interior of the flats.

Leisure time activities became more diverse when the TV shows appeared. One of the most popular TV set was “*Rekords*”. It was produced in the Soviet Union since 1956. The survey organized by the radio program of the Latvian radio called “*Mikrofons*” rose great interest in the society. The vote of the survey’s participants determined the most favourite pop-song of the year. The song “*Mežrozīte*”, composed by Raimonds Pauls, won in the first survey in 1968. The company “*Melodija*” released the first album of pop-songs called “*Tev, mana labā!*” in 1969. There is a small vinyl record by Raimonds Pauls called “*Zilie lini*” on the vinyl player of the music set “*Rigonda*” (produced in the 1960s in the Rīga radio factory).