

Bremerhaven - 06/24/2021

Object History

An example of a thematic showcase in the "Salon of Biographies II"

In total, the German Emigration Center shows more than 400 new objects in its permanent exhibition, which have been given to the museum by families with an immigration history. The Migration Museum presents them with audio texts and media stations that look at the objects from multiple perspectives. In this respect, the three examples give a small insight into the new permanent exhibition.

Three baby carriages that at first glance have nothing to do with each other, except - that they are baby carriages. And yet they have one thing in common: all of the carriages tell German migration history in the new permanent exhibition.



BABY CARRIAGES (from left to right)

1. Baby carriage, German Reich, around 1940

© Collection German Emigration Center, donation Edward Box

Lyrics and song of the listening station for the visitors of the museum:

»Maikäfer flieg! « ("Maybug fly!")

» <i>Maikäfer flieg,</i>	<i>"Maybug fly,</i>
<i>der Vater ist im Krieg,</i>	<i>father is at war,</i>
<i>die Mutter ist in Pommerland,</i>	<i>mother is in Pomerania,</i>
<i>Pommerland ist abgebrannt, ... «</i>	<i>Pomerania is burned down, ..."</i>

This song is now more than 250 years old. It probably originates from the time of the Seven Years' War, when Pomerania was devastated by war. Even after the Second World War, the "Maikäfer flieg" song was sung in Germany. In the meantime, Pomerania was partly German and partly Polish. The fathers were no longer at war, but were still often prisoners of war.

The song causes some anxiety for many, because it does follow the soothing "Schlaf Kindlein, Schlaf" ("Sleep, dear child, sleep") melody. But the child who is singing in it does not know where his parents are. Somewhere in a life-threatening war and in the burned down Pomerania. He thinks of his parents while playing the old game: Catch a maybug and let it fly, set it free.

The baby carriage also triggers this kind of unrest. An infant is said to have lain in it. His German mother fled with him from the East to the West from the Soviet army during the Second World War. Probably in 1945, that's all we know.

The carriage, originally built for strolling, became an escape vehicle during the war. If you look inside the baby carriage, there is a jute sack inside, which has been converted into a mattress - and a black swastika is embossed on the light gray jute sack.

Did the child lie on this jute sack for the entire escape and thus on the swastika, the symbol of the National Socialist dictatorship? How much did the parents, the grandparents later tell the child about the escape? Did they often speak of their old homeland, which the child does not know, even if he was born there?

War, flight and displacement are experiences that traumatized parents pass on to their children. Often without intending to, simply by the way they behave. Since the end of the Second World War in 1945, millions of children in both German states have parents or later grandparents who themselves experienced flight or expulsion during the Second World War.

2. Baby carriage, GDR, around 1980

© Collection German Emigration Center, donation: Marianne Rüdiger

Lyrics and song of the listening station for the visitors of the museum: »Warte nicht auf bessere Zeiten« (“Don’t wait for better days”)

<i>»Wartest du auf bessere Zeiten</i>	<i>"Are you waiting for better times</i>
<i>Wartest du mit deinem Mut</i>	<i>Do you wait with your courage</i>
<i>Gleich dem Tor, der Tag für Tag</i>	<i>Like the gate that day by day</i>
<i>An des Flusses Ufer wartet</i>	<i>On the river bank waits</i>
<i>Bis die Wasser abgeflossen</i>	<i>Till the waters flow away</i>
<i>Die doch ewig fließen«</i>	<i>That flow forever"</i>

Encouraging words to give to people along the way. Marianne Rüdiger does this in a certain sense for her two children when she leaves the GDR with them out of political conviction in 1984. Her son is lying in this baby carriage as they cross the German-German border. The song "Don't wait for better times ..." is written in 1974 by the musician Wolf Biermann in the GDR, the German Democratic Republic. It tells of discontent and anger in the population of the GDR. But it also says: a, new different socialism is possible. In 1976 Wolf Biermann was expatriated from the GDR. He remains in the West, in the Federal Republic of Germany.

The GDR, with its SED dictatorship and planned economy, continued to exist until 1990, when Germany was reunified. Biermann's expatriation in 1976 was a sign to many that the attempt at a new, non-dictatorial socialism had failed. Marianne Rüdiger then applied to leave the GDR. But she had already stopped believing in the GDR before: she had already tried to flee across the Hungarian-Austrian border in the 1960s. But her escape attempt had failed and had earned her a prison sentence and a ban from working for several years.

After her application to leave the country in 1976, seven long years pass before Marianne Rüdiger receives permission to leave the GDR. During this time, she was harassed by the state authorities, who even threatened to put her children in a home. "House arrest" is imposed on the family several times, until they are finally allowed to push the baby carriage across the German-German border in February 1984.

What do children take with them for their own lives, whose parents take suffering and pain upon themselves for their own convictions, for their own ideals? Who want to leave their own country because of this? And risk so much for it?

"Don't wait for better times..."

3. Baby carriage, Malaysia, Germany, 2010 and 2016

© Collection German Emigration Center, donation Naomi und Lars Hüners

Lyrics and song of the listening station for the visitors of the museum:

»Twinkle, Twinkle little Star«

*“Twinkle, twinkle, little star
How I wonder what you are ...”*

*»Funkel, funkel kleiner Stern,
Was du bist, das wüßt' ich gern...«*

Naomi and Lars used to sing this old English nursery rhyme to their four boys when they were little. First in Malaysia, then in Germany.

Before the gray buggy emigrated from Malaysia to Germany with them, it had already been around a lot: One after the other, brothers Lucas and Aiden sat in that buggy, traveling in Malaysia, on Bali, in Indonesia, Ireland and Germany.

In most countries, they visited relatives of their parents: In Malaysia, their grandfather - their mother's father, and their grandmother, their father's mother. In Ireland, they met the family of their grandmother, their mother's mother. And in Germany, their grandfather's family, their father's father.

Sounds complicated, but only to outsiders. For Lucas and Aiden, having four grandparents from three different countries is normal. From Malaysia, from Germany and from Ireland. It is also normal to understand them when they speak in English, German and Malay.

Their mother Naomi is a journalist and teacher, their father Lars an interior designer. When the two become parents of twins in 2016, they decide to move from Malaysia to Germany for the children's future. Upon immigrating to Germany, twin brothers Dylan and Mali sit in the red buggy.

Doing something for their own children was and is a strong motivation for emigration. One puts aside what that might mean for oneself. For Naomi, the mother, it still means homesickness for Malaysia and longing for her family there. But she is a fighter: she wants to work in Germany again as a teacher and she wants to make these serious Germans laugh.

The first thing six-year-old Lucas notices after arriving is the gray sky in Germany. It is very different from the blue sky in Malaysia. And at night, different stars twinkle there, too.

CONTACT

Press / Public relations:

presse@dah-bremerhaven.de

Hilka Baumann, Tel.: 0471 / 90 22 0 – 208

Magdalena Gerwien, Tel.: 0471 / 90 22 0 – 205