

Press Release



Deutsches Technikmuseum Berlin

→ Press and
Public Relations

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From Ballooning to the Berlin Airlift

The new permanent exhibition on the history of aviation and space flight in the Deutsches Technikmuseum Berlin

Flying had always been one of mankind's greatest desires. With the invention of aircraft, this dream became a reality. The permanent exhibition planned by Prof. Dr. Dr. Holger Steinle and his staff demonstrates the most important developments and events from around 200 years of German aviation history across more than 6,000 square metres. Since its foundation in 1982, the Deutsches Technikmuseum Berlin has been gathering together objects from around the world for the purposes of this exhibition.

From ballooning to the Berlin Airlift – 200 years of German aviation history

The exhibition depicts the development from the first balloons ascents at the end of the 18th century until the 1950's in nine sections. The more than 40 aircraft and large-scale objects on display in the exhibition document far more than just a technological development and include details about the many different ways the planes were used and the fates of the people who worked or came into contact with them in other ways. Aviation pioneers and engineers, pilots both male and female, anti-aircraft auxiliaries, victims of bombs and enforced labour and concentration camp prisoners all tell their stories in their own different ways. Their experiences and memories bring the political, cultural and socio-historic aspects of German aviation to life in a way which goes far beyond the merely technical. The chronological tour is supplemented by a section on aircraft engineering.

Lighter than air – inflated competitors

This section of the exhibition goes back to the time when balloons and airships were the first aircraft to conquer the skies. Copper etchings, porcelain and other artefacts reflect the huge fascination that resulted from this breakthrough into the third dimension. A balloon basket, various balloon instruments and parts belonging to an original airship also illustrate how balloons and airships were used for scientific, sporting and military purposes.

Otto Lilienthal – the most important German aviation pioneer

The life and work of this famous aviation pioneer is documented with copies of four of his gliders, documents and historic photographs.

Johannisthal – the birthplace of engine-powered flight in Germany

This section of the exhibition deals with beginnings of engine-powered flight and the history of the first airfield in Germany at Johannisthal close to Berlin. Trophies, recollections of pilots and a reconstruction of an aviator's pub bring to life the everyday experiences of pilots in the early years of engine-powered flight. A historic recreation of an aircraft workshop also provides an insight into how the aviation pioneers worked.

World War I 1914–1918 – aviation loses its innocence

This section of the exhibition focuses on how aircraft developed technically from being used for reconnaissance to becoming specialized fighter planes. A Stahltaube ('Steel Dove') aircraft from the French company Jeannin is on show as an example of a reconnaissance plane. The section also covers social, economic and political aspects such as the "Knights of the Air" myth and Neal O'Connor's unique collection on military history provides an insight into the lives of early German fighter pilots.

German aviation 1919–1939 – Berlin at the centre of the European route network

Commercial and sports flying in the 1920s and 1930s took place against the background of the Treaty of Versailles and its restrictive conditions, which placed huge limitations on the development of German aviation after the World War I. The main item in this section is the "Tante Ju" (Aunt Ju), the legendary Junkers Ju 52 transport plane. Other key themes are changes in passenger comfort, women's involvement in aviation, how the Luftwaffe was built up in secret before World War II and the development of aviation industry.

The Third Reich – the rise and fall of the German Luftwaffe

This section of the exhibition shows how the National Socialists misused the fascination with flying for their own purposes, how their war policies had a formative influence on the arming of the Luftwaffe and how the battle for air supremacy ultimately rebounded on Germany with severe consequences. In addition to ten aircraft, including rarities like the Messerschmitt Bf 110 fighter plane, a media station relates the life stories of several ex-members of the Luftwaffe.

Post-War Period – Berlin Airlift, Cold War, aviation in the two German states

The MiG-15 and F-86 fighter planes are an evidence of the race for arms that occurred during the Cold War. Photographs, texts, aircraft and transported goods are used to illustrate the history of the Berlin Airlift. The uniform of an airlift pilot and children's pictures provide some insight into the experiences of those that lived during this dramatic time. The section finishes with the renaissance of aviation in both German states.

Space Flight – from the inferno to the stars

The exhibition begins with the dreams and experiments of the early enthusiasts. Parts of the V2 long-distance rocket and rare anti-aircraft missiles demonstrate how the National Socialists incorporated this technology into their armaments plans. Drawings by eyewitnesses from the Mittelbau/Dora concentration camp and reports by male and female victims of enforced labour in Peenemünde document the dehumanizing work conditions suffered during missile production.

Aviation engineering – engines, propellers and landing gear

This section illustrates the development and workings of various components such as engines, propellers and landing gear. A 'transparent aircraft', a partially-exposed Arado Ar 96 built in 1943, provides some insight into the complex inner workings of an airplane.

Realisation

Exhibition design and media

A distinctive design feature of the exhibition are islands of up to 250 square metres, which combine large and small-scale objects, texts and audiovisual media to form a thematic whole. Historic sound and film material, and the recollections of contemporary witnesses create a vivid impression of what it was like to live and work with the planes on a daily basis. Media stations are on hand for 20 of the large-scale items. These provide visitors with information on the various types of aircraft and enable them to call up technical and historical information on a screen.

Project team

Design: Prof. Dr. Dr. Holger Steinle, Astrid Venn, Michael Hundertmark; **Media:** Tomke Hahn; **Academic assistant:** Christiane Reiß-Schmidt, Dr. Wibke Becker, Thilo Kuner; **Design:** Christian Axt Architekturbüro, Berlin; **Construction:** tes_tudo, Architektur und Gestaltung Tanja Sprang; **Graphics:** Lidwien Steenbrink, Steenbrink Vormgeving; **Lighting:** Michael Flegel; **Development of interactive media:** Schiel Projektgesellschaft mbH; **Film production:** starfish filmproduktion Berlin; MJB Film- und Fernsehproduktion; **Media design:** Art+Com AG; **Audio visual equipment:** ICT AG

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