

Press release

28 February 2023

Unpacking Jak R. Maier Inherited and Unpacked – The Value of Things

1 March 2023 – 30 June 2023, the temporary bauhaus-archiv

In the new exhibition *Unpacking Jak R. Maier*, the Bauhaus-Archiv / Museum für Gestaltung presents the story of a surprising inheritance and the first review of the life and work of the Berlin artist who died in 2010. The public vernissage will take place on Wednesday, 1 March 2023 at 6:30 pm at the temporary bauhaus-archiv, Knesebeckstraße 1, 10623 Berlin.

Everything began with an unexpected phone call and a testament. The Bauhaus-Archiv had inherited the estate of the artist Jak R. Maier. But who was Jak R. Maier? And how did the archive come to inherit his estate? What does it mean to assume responsibility for and make decisions about other people's personal belongings? **The exhibition *Unpacking Jak R. Maier* takes a first look at the artistic and private archive of this Berlin artist** and explores key questions regarding museum collection practices today.

The exhibition consists of four stations featuring **original sculptures, graphic works and selected documents** which introduce visitors to the life and works of Jak R. Maier. Interactive, multimedia elements shed light on contemporary museum collection practices – and problems – which are usually hidden from public view. Current videos capture the unpacking and inventorying process of the estate, while visitors can participate in a shadow play based on Maier's works and test their skills at recognising the objects. At the station "My Estate", the exhibition's guests can write down what they would leave to posterity, assign it a value and stipulate what should happen to it.

A changing exhibition

The **event series *unpackings*** dynamically presents the themes of the exhibition. In dialogue with distinguished researchers and practitioners, the museum team will examine the artist's estate live at **six theme-based events**. The information we learn about Jak R. Maier, his work and the value of things will be documented on site by the designers sieblersiebler, thereby constantly changing the exhibition as more of the estate comes to light.

Dr Annemarie Jaeggi, director of the Bauhaus-Archiv / Museum für Gestaltung: "I can still clearly remember that unexpected call when we learned about Jak R. Maier's estate. I

look forward to having his works presented for the first time in an exhibition. What's especially exciting, I find, is the process-driven approach the project team has adopted and the topical questions these evoke regarding the responsibility of museums in handling estates."

Project team of the Bauhaus-Archiv / Museum für Gestaltung: "We've become fans of Jak R. Maier. He documented his work in hundreds of photo albums. They inspired us to think about legacies and the value of things. We're especially looking forward to seeing how the exhibition changes over time through our work with the visitors and designers."

The exhibition was curated by Nina Wiedemeyer, curator at the Bauhaus-Archiv / Museum für Gestaltung, Gloria Fock, research associate at the Bauhaus-Archiv / Museum für Gestaltung and curatorial member of the project team and Maximilian Wahlich, research associate at the Bauhaus-Archiv / Museum für Gestaltung and curatorial member of the project team.

The inheritance

It all started with the last will and testament of Marianne Maier. After she died in 2013, she bequeathed her estate to the Bauhaus-Archiv. It comprised her house in Berlin-Reinickendorf, the artistic works produced by her husband Jak R. Maier, who had passed away in 2010, and an assortment of household items. The proceeds from the sale of the property were transferred to the *Jakob and Marianne Maier Foundation for the Cultivation of the Ideas of the Bauhaus*. The artistic estate of 100 small sculptures, 2,000 photographs and 1,500 drawings, graphic works and documents – enough to fill 17 boxes and 10 portfolios – became part of the collection of the Bauhaus-Archiv. In her testament, Marianne Maier wrote, "Jak R. Maier was the ideal Bauhaus artist." These words aptly express Maier's appreciation for the art of the Bauhaus and his connection to the school. His academic path and devotion to teaching also mirrored the principles of the Bauhaus. Maier was trained as a blacksmith before he eventually became a professor for metal sculpting at what is today the University of the Arts in Berlin.

Unpacking Jak R. Meier

Inherited and Unpacked – The Value of Things

1 March – 30 June 2023

the temporary bauhaus-archiv

Knesebeckstraße 1, 10623 Berlin

Mon–Sat, 10 am – 6 pm

free admission

unpackings

Wed., 1 Mar. 2023, 6:30 pm – 8 pm | unpacking 1: public vernissage

Wed., 29 Mar. 2023, 6:30 pm – 8 pm | unpacking 2 – Who was Jak R. Maier?

Wed., 26 Apr. 2023, 6:30 pm – 8 pm | unpacking 3 – What does the estate contain?

Wed., 24 May 2023, 6:30 pm – 8 pm | unpacking 4 – What can be sorted out?

Wed., 14 Jun. 2023, 6:30 pm – 8 pm | unpacking 5 – How is an estate catalogued?

Fri., 30 Jun. 2023, 6:30 pm – 8 pm | unpacking 6 – public finissage

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