



ein museum der **wienholding**

## Media Information April 2022

### ***(Un)Pleasant Journey. The Life of Stefan Edlis after HIM***

As of April 13, 2022, the Jewish Museum Vienna will be telling the eventful life story of Stefan Edlis, who had to flee Vienna with his mother and siblings at the age of sixteen and in the following decades became one of the most important international collectors of contemporary art in the USA.

### **From Meidling to the USA**

The moving and at the same time adventurous life story of Stefan Edlis leads from the Viennese working-class district of Meidling to the USA. At the age of sixteen, he was able to flee Vienna with his widowed mother and his two siblings in 1941. Years of unsuccessful efforts by the family to get to relatives in the United States only made a last-minute escape possible.

A difficult start to a new life awaited in the USA. Stefan Edlis joined the US Navy and was deployed on the Japanese island of Iwo Jima following the major battle there. After the end of World War II and his return to his new homeland, Stefan Edlis began working in a small tool company. In his free time, he drew, dabbled in precious stones and developed into a passionate folk dancer, but also a racing driver. Using his skill and talent, he designed and produced tools made of plastic. He subsequently founded a plastics factory, called Apollo Plastics, a company that, among other things, manufactured components for electronic devices and earned him incredible success and fortune.

Edlis became one of the most important international collectors and patrons of contemporary art. Together with his wife Gael Neeson, he built up a spectacular collection that also included provocative works of art.

### ***Him to be seen for the first time in Austria***

Stefan Edlis and Maurizio Cattelan shared a special friendship. The descriptions of the Italian artist Cattelan range from artistic genius to art clown or senseless provocateur. Throughout his career he has caused a stir with surprising works: taxidermied horses with their heads stuck in a wall; a wax figure of Pope John Paul II lying on the ground after being struck by a meteorite; a golden toilet, as well as a real banana, which he stuck to the wall with duct tape and was sold for \$120,000. His most discussed work, *Him*, was created in 2002. It is a sculpture that, when approached from behind, apparently shows an innocent-looking, kneeling boy in a gray woolen suit. From the front, one recognizes that the figure represents Adolf Hitler, kneeling with his hands clasped in prayer. Produced by the French wax figure manufacturer and sculptor Daniel Druet on behalf of Maurizio Cattelan, only three copies of this sculpture exist. The second one is owned by the Canadian artist Ydessa Hendeles, the daughter of two Auschwitz survivors, and the third belongs to the French entrepreneur and art collector François Pinault. With the support of Gael Neeson, *Him* will be presented in Austria for the first time.

Stefan Edlis died in Chicago in October 2019 at the age of ninety-four. One of his last wishes was that his passport, stamped with the letter “J” for Jew, be kept in the Jewish Museum Vienna.

### ***(Un)Pleasant Journey. The Life of Stefan Edlis after HIM***

can be seen from April 13, 2022 to October 2, 2022 at the Jewish Museum Vienna, a Wien Holding museum. Curated by Danielle Spera in collaboration with Michaela Vocelka and designed by Margula Architects, the exhibition is accompanied by a self-published German/English catalog that costs €27.90. The Jewish Museum Vienna at Dorotheergasse 11, 1010 Vienna, is open Sunday to Friday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. The second location, Museum Judenplatz, Judenplatz 8, 1010 Vienna, is open Sunday to Thursday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Friday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. (wintertime), respectively 5 p.m. (summertime). Further information can be found at [www.jmw.at](http://www.jmw.at) or [info@jmw.at](mailto:info@jmw.at).

#### **Queries**

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Photos and press material for the current exhibitions are available on the Jewish Museum Vienna website at [www.jmw.at/presse](http://www.jmw.at/presse).



**#EdlisHIM**

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