

From Tableware to a Prefabricated Housing: The Architect and Designer Carl Auböck (1924–1993)

Living Archive

05.09.–04.11.2024, Gallery

Opening: Wed 04.09.2024, 18:00

Press conference: Wed 04.09.2024, 11:00

“It doesn't make a difference if one is planning part of a city or tableware, both incorporate design.” (Carl Auböck)

Marking the hundredth anniversary of his birth and the acquisition of his archive by the Collection, the exhibition offers dual insights – into Auböck's oeuvre and into Az W's collection activity. Like a large-format archival box, the exhibition opens up, yielding material from Carl Auböck's cosmopolitan life and work. Living Archive, our new exhibition series, provides a glimpse of how Az W goes about its work behind the scenes.

With his buildings and designs, Carl Auböck III (1924–1993) – a member of a family dynasty which has produced classics in architecture and the design disciplines for some 125 years – contributed to a surge in innovation in postwar Austria. In the early 1950s, having completed artisanal apprenticeships and received a degree in architecture from the Vienna University of Technology, Auböck headed to the United States to pursue postgraduate studies at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in Boston and become acquainted with proponents of international modernism. When he returned to Vienna, the methods of serial prefabrication of entire buildings and of specialized components he had learned in the United States had an influence on his work in residential architecture. His broad interpretation of the scope of architecture and design spanned from city planning ideas, via construction of single-family homes and housing blocks, to the design of objects of daily use such as tableware and skiwear. He worked with well-established firms such as Tyrolia, Riedel Glas, and Neuzeughammer Ambosswerk to produce a number of innovative products whose design set new standards in Austria.

The show is divided into three parts: arrival, immersion, and communication. Four threads demonstrate the breadth of his oeuvre. Beginnings, the first chapter, presents student projects and designs in which Carl Auböck's quest to arrive at finely detailed architecture and interiors becomes apparent. Prefab/Series tracks Transatlantic knowledge transfer concerning prefabricated building components. We also take a look at his serial product design. Homecoming addresses both the arrival at actual private residences and at the site of the Auböck archive's new “home”: the Az W Collection Depot in Möllersdorf. By spotlighting designs for skiers (ski bindings, ski boots, and skiwear), Made in Austria shows a selection of Auböck's work as product designer.

A cardboard wall, bearing Carl Auböck's biography, information about other members of the family, and a catalogue raisonné, underlines the central theme of the room. In addition,

Auböck's "Life and Work" is situated both within his extensive network of clients, players and within the various organizations he interacted with.

The exhibitions subsumed in our Living Archive series provide a platform for collecting activities that are not just a matter of preservation, but also incorporate new approaches and methodologies. The discussion series entitled Out of the Box features persons who encountered Carl Auböck as well as specialists knowledgeable of his work.

Life and Work: Carl Auböck III (1924–1993)

Carl Auböck III descended from a family of craftspeople and artists: His grandfather Karl Heinrich Auböck ("the first") was a goldsmith and set up a bronzeware company on Bernardgasse in Vienna's seventh district. His father Carl Auböck ("the second"), was a painter and designer, and his mother, Mara Uckunowa-Auböck, a sculptor from Bulgaria; both of his parents studied at the Bauhaus.

From 1943 to 1949, Carl Auböck III studied architecture at the Technische Hochschule in Vienna (now named Vienna University of Technology), where he met Ferdinand Kitt, who was later to become his office partner. When the war ended, Auböck began an apprenticeship as girdler and chaser – two separate branches of fine metalwork – in his father's business, but he soon turned his attention back to architecture. During his stay in the United States in 1952, Carl Auböck came into contact (earlier than most other Austrian architects) with the developments taking place there: during his post-graduate study at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) he became acquainted with methods of serial prefabrication. He also had the opportunity to realize his first building, a residence for Valerie Gallet, his aunt, in Union Town, Pennsylvania. At MIT he met the Danish architect Henning Larsen; they travelled together to California to visit Ray and Charles Eames. Auböck also met with Walter Gropius.

When he returned to Austria, he had the opportunity to integrate what he had learned in the United States in his housing designs: At Veitingergasse, Vienna, thirteenth district, (1953–1954), following US examples, he and Roland Rainer designed a model housing development in panelized construction, with integrated plumbing and electrical systems and combined living–kitchen areas. The housing complex on Vorgartenstraße (1959–1962) in Vienna's second district he devised with Adolf Hoch and Carl Rössler for the City of Vienna was also ahead of its time; the innovative construction techniques, state-of-the-art infrastructure (including central heating and elevators), and introduction of the "American floor plan," in which the bedrooms and bathroom are accessible from a hallway connected to the living room, added international flair. Following his father's premature death in 1957, he took over the Werkstatt Auböck. The following year he received a gold medal at the Brussels World's Fair for the cutlery set "2060".

Beginning in the 1970s, industrial design became the focus of Auböck's work. He applied his knowledge of the items his father had made in the workshop and transferred the high standards of those handcrafted, one-of-a-kind creations to serial production. In 1977, he was appointed professor at the Hochschule für angewandte Kunst, heading the product design masterclass (metal) until 1993. But architecture also continued to play a significant role in his practice – during this phase he realized several projects, including single-family

homes, shop interiors, and large housing blocks. In 1993, at just 69 years of age, Carl Auböck passed away in Vienna.

Out of the Box – a discussion series:

Wed., Sept. 25, 17:30: Let's Talk Family

Maria Auböck-Kárász, Auböck + Kárász Landscape Architects and Carl Auböck IV, Werkstatt Auböck (Carl Auböck III's children)

Wed., Oct. 16, 17:30: Let's Talk Home Ambience

Eva Badura-Triska, art historian and curator at WAM (Vienna Actionism Museum) and Thomas Fillitz, social and cultural anthropologist, inhabitants of Auböck's designs

Mon., Nov. 4, 17:30, closing event: Let's Talk Design

Veronika Müller, architectural historian, assistant professor, culture of building / cultural heritage at the KU Linz and Harald Gründl, head of IDVR, co-founder of EOOS Design

Curators: Sonja Pisarik and Monika Platzer, Az W

Exhibition design: asphalt Kollektiv für Architektur (Natascha Peinsipp, Felix Steinhoff)

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The press release, as well as high-resolution press photos, are available free of charge for download at www.azw.at/press.

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