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THE MUSEUM OF
WES ANDERSON



His Movies and the Works
That Inspired Them

PRESTEL

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The Imaginary Museum		DATE 1975	MANUSCRIPT EXHIBITION CATALOGUE
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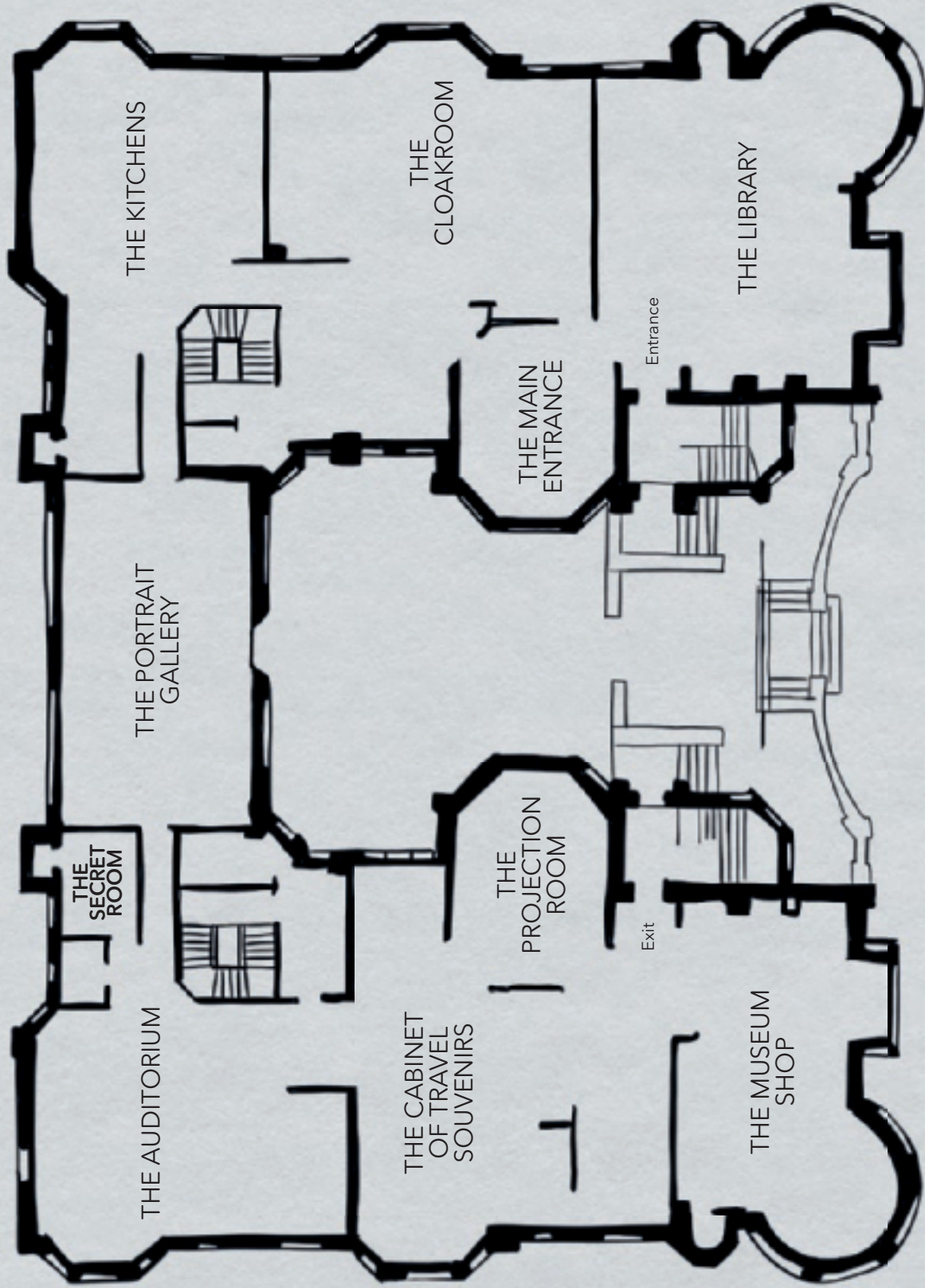
Curated by

CAMILLE MATHIEU & JOHAN CHIARAMONTE

A COMPACT
PLAN

PLAN OF THE MUSEUM

FIRST FLOOR



I

THE MAIN ENTRANCE

1975. The Imaginary Museum is both delighted and proud to host a great exhibition devoted to the American movie director Wes Anderson. Like many other movie enthusiasts, you too may have dreamed of entering the mind of one of your favorite filmmakers. Better still, to discover its secret nooks and crannies, to lose yourself in its corridors, to unearth the treasure trunks, to wander around and visit it like a stroller visiting a museum... With its abundance of details, its rich universe and its evocative power, Wes Anderson's films are more inviting than any other to this phantasmagorical stroll.

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Throughout this exhibition, which is not comprehensive, our museum will attempt to draw the contours of a body of work which, despite its detractors, has never ceased to evolve, to mutate and to transform. Much has been said about the undeniable formal qualities of Anderson's cinematographic works: a whimsical, old-fashioned aesthetic, instantly recognizable among thousands, infinite attention devoted to every shot, films reminiscent of picture books, overflowing with trinkets and small objects. Anderson's cinema is indeed art that teems with details, a swarm of features,

an accumulation of meticulously distilled references and of elements arranged with maniacal rigor. This is Anderson's gentle madness, entirely contained within this rigorously organized disorder, where nothing is ever left to chance.

We too sought to forsake the wide-angle lens, and instead, focus on the details, the accessories, the references and the characters that populate his world. In the guise of humble archivists, we will seek to dust them off, to list them and to catalogue them, so that we can better arrange them within the walls of a genuine "imaginary museum."

The book that you are holding in your hands is the catalogue of this fantasized exhibition. From this guided tour will emerge a vast cartography of the Texan filmmaker's imagination. Here, you are free to wander throughout a museum devoid of any real boundaries, whose shape-shifting architecture will gladly adapt to your pleasure. Don't be afraid to act as the passer-through-walls: in this place, nothing is set in stone. In this book, you will read about Indian cinema, French pop music, speeding trains, jaguar sharks, pancakes, fur hats, flashing and buzzing electronic machines, picturesque Italian villages and mysterious islands.

We wanted this meander to be a reflection of Anderson's cinematographic approach: playful and containing a wealth of details; some real, others made up, springing from a universe that one can imagine to be vast, infinite even. Because reality and fiction are constantly intertwined throughout the filmmaker's entire body of work, we too felt that it was necessary to build a bridge between the world of reality and the imaginary, between what is and what could be. Finally, to those of you who find it preposterous, absurd, impossible even, that this exhibition was held in 1975, we ask: when did Wes Anderson and his characters ever allow themselves to be hindered by such practical considerations? The laws of time and physics do not apply here.

Let us now undertake a journey from the priceless captain Zissou to the underwater adventures of Captain Cousteau, from the Grand Budapest cake hotel to Stefan Zweig's World of Yesterday, from the pages of The New Yorker to the columns of the French Dispatch, from the roadrunner's cartoonish deserts to the Technicolor horizons of Asteroid City. Let us sail upon the seas of a movie director that one would be misled to perceive only as a precious stylist, and let us scrape off a little of the varnish from The Darjeeling Limited's sleeper cars and attempt to enter the secrets of Anderson's (occasionally) aquatic world.

Welcome to the Museum of Wes Anderson!

PLEASE FOLLOW THE GUIDE ...



II

THE CLOAKROOM

Once your entry ticket has been punched by our friendly ticket seller, it's time for you to remove your overcoat, your bags and your hat and to leave them in the care of your hosts. Be warned, however: the cloakroom in our Imaginary Museum is no ordinary cloakroom. In this room, silky fur coats hang beside terrycloth tennis headbands. Impeccably folded scout outfits, covered with patches, hang beside the purple liveries of the bellhops. Everything holds its rightful place, and everyone wears the uniform given to them. Indeed, in Wes Anderson's movies, there is no room for happenstance; every item in this cloakroom carries its own story, its own intimate meaning, its own share of fantasies, of hopes—and, of course, of intense neuroses. Whether they delineate the contours of a family, a clan or a vocation, Wes Anderson's costumes can never be ignored. While it is true that our clothes do reveal a part of ourselves, this rule could not be any truer than in the filmmaker's works. In Wes Anderson's world, you are always what you wear; so it is wise indeed to trust appearances. Hence, a red cap that never leaves your head might well make you a worthy heir to Captain Cousteau. To begin the tour, let us explore a few emblematic pieces from this great Andersonian cloakroom. Don your finest suits—preferably Italian— and step out onto the thick carpet of our imaginary cloakroom.

Rushmore's Uniform

The Hallmark of Excellence

A pair of tortoiseshell glasses, a sensible blue Oxford shirt, a neatly knotted striped tie, a navy blue blazer adorned with two honorary pins boasting some unspectacular accomplishments. Only the bright red beret pressed deeply onto the young Max Fischer's skull might provide any indication of the storm that rages within the confines of his well-shaped head. Overly proud to be a member of the eminent Rushmore Academy, Max always looks sharp indeed, in his preppy uniform. On the private school campus, he dreams of being an exemplary student, solving impossible equations, earning unanimous praise from his teachers, and even the affection of the highly respected dean. And yet, while he certainly attempts to compensate by looking like the best student in the classroom, Max Fischer is far from achieving academic miracles. On the contrary, his school years prove to be rather haphazard, and instead, he accumulates extracurricular activities in the hope of concealing mediocre, if not downright poor results.

However, if Max Fischer wears the school uniform with such aplomb, it is foremost because he feels that he belongs, body and soul, to Rushmore's noble institution. His uniform is filled with symbolism, as is often the case in Anderson's world; indeed, this working-class child was granted access to Rushmore's prestigious benches after being awarded a scholarship thanks to one of his many extracurricular talents: playwriting. While his comrades seem to belong to Rushmore by privilege and birth, Max Fischer constantly needs to prove that he indeed deserves to be here. In the absence of an impeccable educational record, it is important, if not absolutely essential, for him to "keep up appearances" by donning an impeccably ironed shirt, while





also lying about his modest social background. However, far from blending in with the rest of the student body, this overdressed suit actually sets him apart from the rest of the students, for the simple reason that he is the only one among them who wears it. Through this chosen, rather than imposed, uniform, Max Fischer dons the outfit of the young man that he projects himself to be, rather than the young man who he really is.

Beneath the surface, the evolution of Max Fischer's outfit symbolizes a quest for identity, an extensive initiatory journey. So when the Rushmore academy dismisses him out of hand, Max's destiny is shaken to the core. For the young man who must now remove Rushmore's noble uniform and return to the benches of the public school, it is the beginning of a genuine identity crisis that manifests through sartorial symptoms.

Max soon seeks refuge with his father, a humble hairdresser, by adopting his vocation... and also his outfit. Embracing a true social legacy and a family heirloom, Max immediately dons an outfit consisting of a fur

hat, a thick brown coat and a trusty Thermos, identical to that worn by his "old man." The young Max Fischer no longer dresses as the person he hopes to become, but as the person that he resigns himself to being.

A movie that narrates the tumultuous transition into adulthood, the difficulty of becoming "one's own" in a society that is obsessed with superficial social success, Rushmore leads us along the initiatory and bumpy pathway of adolescence. When at last, in a final burst of emancipation, Max Fischer decides to embrace his individuality, he finally liberates himself from social uniforms. This liberation is expressed through a new selection of clothing: a forest green velvet suit accompanied by a pale pink bow tie—an outfit that reminds us somewhat of the movie director's own choice of clothing. For Wes Anderson, as for Max Fischer, it is much easier to truly be oneself. 🔑