



Jean-François Jaeger, 2013 © Droits réservés, Courtesy Jeanne Bucher Jaeger, Paris

Dear Friends,

It gives me great sorrow to inform you of the death of our father, Jean-François Jaeger, at 6:30 a.m. on Sunday, December 26, at the age of 98. He passed away in his family home in the Lot valley in southwestern France, where he had been living for the past two years.

As a sign of his irresistible destiny — one that imposed on him an enormous responsibility for the rest of his life, and total devotion to his profession as a gallery owner — in 1947, when he was just 23, freshly arrived in Paris from his native Alsace, Jean-François Jaeger accepted to take on management of the gallery founded in 1925 by our great-grandmother, Jeanne Bucher, who was famous for her informed choices of avant-garde artists, and to keep her adventure alive.

Born in Strasbourg on November 3rd, 1923, the third child in a bourgeois family of six, Jean-François Jaeger was raised in Obernai, surrounded by nature, in a former water mill where he was lulled by the sounds of the waterfall. This deep connection to the lushness of the Alsace landscape, where each season provides a variety of sensations, smells, colors, tastes, and harvests, unquestionably contributed to the appetite for life that would characterize him throughout his life. The vivid image of his maternal grandfather, Dr. Pierre Bucher, a great defender of the French spirit in the Germanic city of Strasbourg before World War I, was an important component in his education. Politically and socially prominent, Pierre Bucher was also very active on the cultural level; he was one of the founders of the Alsatian Museum in Strasbourg, the epitome of a well-conceived ethnological collection, as he would often say. His happy childhood was nevertheless marked by the rise of Hitlerism, which his father, an ardent patriot, paid close attention to from his Strasbourg offices, hiding from his family his anxiety about Europe's future, which he sensed would be difficult. These two patriarchal models were essential to the sense of duty and selflessness that accompanied Jean-François Jaeger all his life, and to his deep love for his native country.

I don't possess, I belong to, thus became his leitmotif, embodied in the way he practiced his profession as a gallery owner, as a profession of faith. For more than 66 years, with a rare sense of commitment, humility and integrity, he maintained the dedication to excellence instilled by Jeanne Bucher, while following the creative development of outstanding artists and passionately defending their work. The list of his activities is as long as it is rich, both in the gallery and in international museums where he worked tirelessly to support the artists who were the gallery's mainstays, and on whom his expertise was legendary: Vieira da Silva and Árpád Szenes, Nicolas de Staël, Hans Reichel, Bissière, Mark Tobey, Jean Dubuffet, Asger Jorn, Louis Nallard, Fermin Aguayo, Wilfrid Moser....

In addition, his open-mindedness, insatiable curiosity and insight in identifying new artistic trends were reflected in countless exhibitions of such artists as Magdalena Abakanowicz, Jean Amado, Jean Bertholle, Janice Biala, Jean-Jacques Ceccarelli, Youla Chapoval, Miodrag Dado, Fred Deux, Mark Di Suvero, Marcel Fiorini, Gérard Fromanger, Michel Gérard, Henri

Goetz, Etienne Hajdu, Dani Karavan, Louttre B., Louis Le Brocq, Michael Lechner, Jean Lurçat, Alfred Manessier, Kuniyoshi Moriguchi, Louise Nevelson, Vera Pagava, Jean-Paul Philippe, Arthur Luiz Piza, Paul Rebeyrolle, Felix Rozen, Antonio Seguí, Gérard Singer, François Stahly, Gérard Vulliamy, Yamamoto Wakako, Yang Jiechang...

The themes of exhibitions he organized from the 1960s onward revealed him to be a veritable pioneer:

- the exhibitions of *Primitive Arts*, with masterpieces from New Guinea and New Hebrides as well as Pre-Columbian Mexican and Mayan stone sculptures, long before the galleries in the rue de Seine neighborhood specialized in this art;
- *L'Espace en Demeure*, an exhibition devoted to the works of three exceptional women – Abakanowicz, Nevelson and Vieira da Silva – revealing their unique spatial vision;
- his marked interest in the East with, first, an invitation to the Chinese Taoist master, Maître Chen, to perform daily a traditional tea ceremony at the gallery, and to present his magical incantations, the Fu, a transcription made by the gods of the primordial signs preceding the creation of the universe in Chinese cosmogony; and with several exhibitions devoted to the works of Kuniyoshi Moriguchi, a Living National Treasure in Japan, and his traditional yuzen dyeing techniques;
- his interest in *Public Art*, very much ahead of his time, demonstrated in an exhibition entitled *Questions d'urbanité* in the 1980s, with large-scale projects by Jean-Pierre Raynaud, Gérard Singer and Dani Karavan, as well as in a memorable installation of monumental outdoor sculptures by Mark Di Suvero at several Parisian sites.

Throughout the years, he also maintained privileged relationships with curators and directors of major museums around the world: Alfred Barr, Jean Leymarie, François Mathey, Bram and Renilde Hammacher, Thomas Messer, Ted Schemp, Niels Onstad, Henrick Moë, Werner Schmalenbach, Willem Sandberg, Georges-Henri Rivière, Robert Goldwater, René Berger, René Huyghe, Wieland Schmied, Rudolf Oxenaar, Bernd Krimmel, J.C. Ebbinge Wubben, Georges-Henri Rivière, Dominique Bozo, Gérard Cahn, Jean-Claude Greshens, Bernard Ceysson, Jean Lescure, Max-Pol Fouchet, Eddy de Wilde, Pierre Gaudibert, Jacques Lassaing, Louis Deledicq, Marcel Evrard, Armande Trentinian, Jose Sommer Ribeiro, Christian Derouet, Nadine Lehn, Alfred Pacquement, Jean-Paul Ameline, Serge Lemoine, Daniel Abadie, Jean-Louis Prat, Germain Viatte... as well as with art critics, writers and poets: Tristan Tzara, Georges Duby, Christian Zervos, Michel Tapié, Michel Foucault, Gaëtan Picon, Pierre Courthion, Francis Ponge, Dora Vallier, Charles Estienne, Michel Ragon, Max Loreau, Roger van Gindertael, Genevieve Breerette, Pierre Daix, Pierre Descargues, Jean-Clarence Lambert, Sarah Wilson, Claude Esteban, Dore Ashton, Vivian Endicott Barnett, Margit Rowell, Guy Weelen, Bernard Noël, Léopold Sédar Senghor, Herta Wescher, Jean-Luc Daval, Lydia Harambourg.... not to mention the innumerable colleagues with whom he forged close ties, as well as all his faithful collector friends -- a list too long to enumerate here, and who are essential to the life of the gallery. This veritable passage through the history of art of the second half of the twentieth century made it possible for him to ensure the promotion of the artists he so passionately defended, placing their work in the foremost collections, both private and in national and international museums.

His total commitment to his artists was frequently expressed in his exceptionally sensitive texts, which can be found in catalogues published by the gallery, incredibly apt and perceptive regarding each artist's work. The way in which he exhibited their works, always rigorous and innovative, established his reputation as an iconic European dealer for the period, and created a model for the way we can listen to painting, and for stimulating intellectual dialogues.

He considered these artists as spiritual guides accompanying him in his inner journey and for him, each encounter was auspicious. One does not seek, one finds, was certainly one of his mottos, as was the saying, What we see is only valid and only lives through what looks at us, as the Leonardo de Vinci's Mona Lisa, whose mystery will continue to fuel countless discussions, seems to indicate. Perhaps without stating it explicitly but by suggesting it, he taught me how to feel the aura of a work of art, to discover it over time. Rare are the dealers who like him never tire of observing artworks over the long term, in all the nuances of the gallery's fluctuating daylight, always looking for unexpected inspiration.

I will never forget the curiosity and the open-mindedness he showed, along with the maieutics of his approach, after joining him as gallery director on the rue de Seine in 2004, when four years later, I decided to open a second, larger space, on the rue de Saintonge in the Marais – as much to exhibit new artists as to rediscover those we had promoted since the beginning, in a neighborhood more adapted to contemporary creation. His drive, his motivation communicated to me all the passion he was reliving, the moments when he moved the gallery from the boulevard du Montparnasse to the rue de Seine in 1960.

I am happy we were able to pay tribute to him during his lifetime, on the occasion of his 90th birthday in 2013, during the exhibitions Matter and Memory: The Patriarch's Realm, organized jointly in the galleries on the rue de Seine and the rue de Saintonge. The list of works was kept secret until the last moment, and when he discovered the exhibition, it inspired in him the first emotional tears I had ever seen; his modesty and reserve had always been prodigious. In the same way, the generous invitation I received from Bruno Ely to co-curate a show with him at the Musée Granet in Aix-en-Provence in 2017, made it possible to organize the first exhibition retracing the gallery's 88-year history, an exhibition Jean-François Jaeger was able to discover with us and enjoy fully. Not to mention all the curiosity, enthusiasm and constantly renewed attention that the discoveries of new artists exhibited on rue de Seine and rue de Saintonge awakened in him; and as well his questions and concern regarding an artmarket fundamentally different from the one he had known, which affected and worried him to the utmost. We were recently talking together, on his 98th birthday, about plans for his upcoming hundredth birthday in 2023 and for the gallery's centennial in 2025, imagining these exceptional moments. Yet sadly this was not to be, despite our deep conviction that the spirit he instilled in the gallery would continue to guide us.

His cremation will take place on Friday morning, December 31, and an intimate family service will be held that afternoon at the Église Saint-Pierre de Boissierette in the Lot, which was entirely renovated by his friend Louttre B., with stained-glass windows and a cross created by the painter Bissière, whom he considered his first spiritual father in painting. The Canticle of the Sun by Saint Francis of Assisi, illustrated with woodcuts by Bissière, published by the gallery in 1954, will be read aloud on this occasion.

An event bringing together all his friends will be organized as soon as possible in 2022 in Paris, in the gallery space on the rue de Seine that he presided over for more than 60 years.

My older brother Emmanuel who joined me as director of the gallery since 2015, my brother Frédéric, co-director with me of the gallery from 2003 to 2010, and our sisters Elisabeth and Stéphane join in this message and thank the countless testimonies of friendship received since last week.

Our mother Muriel passed away in the early morning of December 31, the same morning as our father's cremation, two days after their platinum wedding anniversary, while she had been with him for two years in their family home in the Lot.

Granddaughter of Jeanne Bucher, Muriel Jaeger worked all her life for dance and for peace; they both remained linked, connected and attached to the gallery all their lives.

A ceremony in their memory will be held in the beautiful days in the Church of Saint-Pierre de Boissierette, near Marminiac in the Lot, near the small cemetery where they both rest, not far from the painter Bissière, his wife Mousse and their son Louttre B.

We wish you all the best for this new year,

Véronique Jaeger



Emmanuel Jaeger, Jean-François Jaeger et Véronique Jaeger, exposition Tobey-Biberstein, Écritures contemplatives, 2018 © Droits réservés, Courtesy Jeanne Bucher Jaeger, Paris



Véronique Jaeger et Jean-François Jaeger, exposition Passion de l'Art - Galerie Jeanne Bucher Jaeger depuis 1925, du 24 juin au 24 septembre 2017, Musée Granet, Aix-en-Provence © Droits réservés, Courtesy Jeanne Bucher Jaeger, Paris



Muriel & Jean-François Jaeger © Droits réservés, Courtesy Jeanne Bucher Jaeger, Paris