PRESS KIT
Lausanne, October 2015

FREITAG AD ABSURDUM
CARTE BLANCHE TO THE FREITAG BROTHERS FEAT. FRANK & PATRIK RIKLIN

PRESS CONFERENCE: TUESDAY 27 OCTOBER AT 10.30
ATTENDED BY THE FREITAG AND RIKLIN BROTHERS

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PRESS RELEASE

FREITAG AD ABSURDUM
CARTE BLANCHE TO THE FREITAG BROTHERS FEAT. FRANK & PATRIK RIKLIN

Having been given carte blanche by mudac, Markus and Daniel Freitag have joined forces with conceptual artists Frank & Patrik Riklin, known for their offbeat practice outside of ordinary artistic circles. The four brothers share a mindset and similar fundamental principles underlie their work: actions centred on resources, the enjoyment of social interaction, and a cyclical way of thinking and acting.

Their project is not confined to the museum and largely takes place in public space. The Freitag and Riklin brothers set off in early summer to meet users of FREITAG bags, which are made from used truck tarpaulins. They invited them to take part in an action which pushes the manufacturing process for their products to the edge of absurdity: to give up their bags and let them return to being a lorry tarp. The four brothers took up banners and headed for locations including Zurich station and the cathedral square outside mudac, where they succeeded in convincing complete strangers to hand over their bags. All the FREITAG stores joined in with the campaign and asked customers to bring back their shabby totes. In this way, a hundred or so bags were garnered from around the world.

In the Zurich factory where every FREITAG bag is cut, the four brothers unpicked the bags they had gathered in, pieced and soldered them together. The lorry tarp was transformed... into a lorry tarp, pushing the FREITAG upcycling principle ad absurdum. The new multicoloured patchwork tarpaulin was mounted on a truck and the Freitag and Riklin brothers set off in August on a road trip around Switzerland, and engaged in dialogue with people in every region.

The four brothers were not afraid to invite themselves into strangers' homes if it would get a conversation started, and they were confronted by reactions to their manifesto on consumption and production in the 21st century. They

In early summer, the Freitag and Riklin brothers set off to search the streets for used bags, here at Zurich station.
Image © Friklin
put their convictions to the test, and measured their ability to change reactions and attitudes. They counted it a success when they were able to sleep in a total stranger's garden, spontaneously get people to make soup from the leftovers found on the various floors of an apartment building, or plant a placard questioning the fidelity of lawnmowers…

These experiences and encounters gave birth to objects that are both surprising and original, made, in turn, from the re-re-recycled lorry tarp: these include a free-rider seat, a shopping bag prosthesis and even a compost catapult. In September, the four brothers went to test these objects on the people of Lausanne. Could unfamiliar objects shake up familiar habits? Could unexpected encounters create new consumer behaviours? This ironic take on recycling, extended to infinity, frees up the very serious position on consumption and our contemporary use of resources taken by the Freitag and Riklin brothers.

Every stage in this adventure will be retraced in the exhibition, which will enable visitors to join in and play an active part by borrowing objects which were themselves created as part of this extreme recycling project, with its stated aim of altering consumer behaviour.
Inviting Markus and Daniel Freitag to mudac was a way of pondering a striking success story of Swiss entrepreneurship in the design world. It is more than 20 years after their first fabric bag was created from recycled lorry tarpaulin, but public interest in their objects is as strong as ever. Their attachment to a unique production type, their consistency, rigour and quality products all appealed to us at mudac.

The Freitag brothers stand for precision and responsibility in their attitude, philosophy and work ethic. For them, consideration for individuals, employees and natural resources, and a transparent manufacturing process, are the keystones of an intelligent, respectful and efficient approach to design. An instantly recognisable design (even its smell is unique); constant questioning and desire to do better; attention to behaviour patterns and a critical eye on consumer society help to explain the success of a company in step with what matters to its clientele. And that is without mentioning their utterly original approach: creating a functional product from a dirty and used raw material.

Markus and Daniel Freitag were instantly intrigued by the challenge of applying these principles and ideas to the halls at mudac, with a need to take a step back and rethink recycling. In the interests of detachment and opening up the field of investigation, they joined forces with twins Frank and Patrik Riklin, conceptual artists known for their offbeat practice outside of ordinary artistic circles.

The four brothers’ started by questioning industrial production methods and the way we use resources, which were then staged and condensed. The result is an exhibition centred on giving the viewer an immersive but non-didactic experience. The Freitag and Riklin brothers are excellent communicators and hugely committed personally – they launched their project by setting out into the streets of Zurich and Lausanne to seek out passers-by and invite them to do something utterly unexpected: hand over their FREITAG bags! This was the first step on an adventure based more on a consumer’s gesture than a designer’s creativity, extending the principle of recycling ad absurdum. In keeping with the policy of openness that runs through their company, the various stages in designing and implementing the exhibition will be unveiled as it takes its course.

For mudac as a museum, this exhibition is also an opportunity to reflect on our own processes: how can we exhibit an attitude, a process, a reflection, rather than objects? How will the role of the visitor develop if we expect them to be active participants?

While this project poses a challenge to the viewer, it is also a gamble for the brothers and the museum. A bold gesture, a striking manifesto and an immersion into the Freitag brothers’ design practices: we at mudac are thrilled to present these elements to the public.

In early summer, the Freitag and Riklin brothers set off to search the streets for used bags, here outside mudac.
MARKUS AND DANIEL FREITAG

In 1993, graphic artists Markus and Daniel Freitag were looking for a bag that would be functional, waterproof and robust enough for their projects. Inspired by the multicoloured HGV traffic that passed their apartment on the main transport route through Zurich, they developed a messenger bag made from old lorry tarpaulins, bicycle inner tubes and used seatbelts. Thus the first FREITAG bags were born in the living room of the brothers’ shared flat – each bag is unique and made from recycled material.

The two brothers had inadvertently created a new trend in the world of bags, which started in Zurich and spread through the capitals of Europe to Asia, making FREITAG the unofficial outfitter to every bike-riding urban individualist.

FRANK ET PATRIK RIKLIN

Conceptual artists Frank and Patrik Riklin have been the CEOs of the Atelier für Sonderaufgaben (Studio for Special Works) since 1999. They founded what they call a small cultural business with the aim of producing art independently and without compromise, and creating unique projects for which nobody feels truly responsible.

Twins Frank and Patrik Riklin (born 1973) see themselves as actors set between art and economics. They argue that art must have a function, and invented the profession of “artonomist”. They work together with industry to come up with ideas that are equally valid from an artistic or an economic perspective. This not only gives them a certain independence from conventional art funding mechanisms, but also calls the specifics of their profession into question. In this way, they open up new fields of inquiry.

The Riklin brothers both trained as carpenters and went on to study at several art schools. They gained international prominence as conceptual artists in 2009 with the idea for a radical hotel experience under the “Zero Star” brand (Null Stern – the only star is you).
EXHIBITION EVENTS

GUIDED TOURS

Tuesday 10 November 2015 at 12.15 p.m., led by a mudac curator
Saturday 7 November 2015 at 4 p.m., led by a mudac facilitator
Saturday 12 December 2015 at 4 p.m., led by a mudac facilitator
Saturday 6 February 2016 at 4 p.m., led by a mudac facilitator

In French
Fee: admission to the museum
No reservation

FAMILY WORKSHOPS: FREITAGMANIA OR THE ART OF INFINITE RECYCLING

Join Markus, one of the Freitag brothers, to make a small and surprising object from truck tarpaulin.

Family Workshops, ages 6 – 96
Saturday 21 November 2015 from 14.00 to 15.30
Saturday 21 November 2015 from 16.00 to 17.30
Sunday 22 November 2015 from 11.00 to 12.30
Sunday 22 November 2015 from 14.00 to 15.30

Price 10.-
Reservation essential: 021 315 25 30 or inscription@mudac.ch
Places are limited.

EXCURSION DESIGN

The mudac invites you on an excursion to see inside the FREITAG factory and Zurich’s Museum of Design. This is an opportunity to discover the various stages by which banal lorry tarps are transformed into the famous bags, as well as the philosophy that the Freitag brothers breathe into their company. The factory will also open up its canteen for a unique and utterly simple meal. We then head towards the Schaudepot, where the Zurich Museum für Gestaltung (Museum of Design) displays the 500,000 objects in its collections for a guided tour of the storerooms.

Thursday 12 November 2015

Price: 105.- (transport and lunch included / 75.- for the Friends of the mudac
Reservation essential: 021 315 25 30 or inscription@mudac.ch before 30 October
Places are limited.
The re-recycled tarp mounted on the lorry, here in the canton of Appenzell.

The two pairs of brothers criss-crossed Switzerland on board their lorry, in search of unusual encounters with local residents.
They regained around a hundred bags, which yielded enough tarp to cover a 7-metre lorry.

On their road trip, the brothers were able to persuade complete strangers to let them sleep outside their houses.
During their road-trip, the four brothers invited themselves into strangers’ homes to test their reactions to their manifesto.

One of the placards planted in a garden during the brothers’ road trip; it asks whether neighbours could share objects.
The Freitag and Riklin brothers on arrival in Lausanne, where they tested the objects they presented to mudac.

One of the objects made in re-recycled tarpaulin, questioning whether neighbours can share lawnmowers, here on location in Lausanne.
Exhibition views at mudac
USEFUL INFORMATION

Opening
Tuesday 27 October from 18.00 dèrs 18h attended by the Freitag and Riklin brothers

Dates and hours
28 October 2015 – 28 February 2016
Tuesday-Sunday 11.00-18.00
Open on every public holiday, Mondays included, except on 25 December and 1 January
24 and 31 December : 11.00-16.00
Free admission on the first Saturday of the month

Contact
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Images
High-resolution images available here: www.mudac.ch/press
Login: presse2015 / images2015

The first “F13 TOP CAT” re-re-recycled bag made from used FREITAG bags.
In early summer, the Freitag and Riklin brothers set off to search the streets for used bags, here at Zurich station.
Image © Friklin

A donor offers the brothers her old, shabby FREITAG bag to be recycled back into a lorry tarp.
Image © Friklin

After having unpicked the bags they had gathered in, the two pairs of brothers soldered them to make them back into a lorry tarp.
Image © Friklin

The Freitag and Riklin brothers in St Gallen at the start of their road trip.
Image © Peter Hauser
One of the placards planted in a garden during the brothers’ road trip; it asks whether neighbours could share objects. Image © Peter Hauser

They regained around a hundred bags, which yielded enough tarp to cover a 7-metre lorry. Image © Peter Hauser

During their road-trip, the four brothers invited themselves into strangers’ homes to test their reactions to their manifesto. Image © Peter Hauser

On their road trip, the brothers were able to persuade complete strangers to let them sleep outside their houses. Image © Peter Hauser

The re-recycled tarp mounted on the lorry, here in the canton of Appenzell. Image © Peter Hauser

The two pairs of brothers criss-crossed Switzerland on board their lorry, in search of unusual encounters with local residents. Image © Peter Hauser
One of the objects made in re-recycled tarpaulin, questioning whether neighbours can share lawnmowers, here on location in Lausanne. Image © Friklin

The Freitag and Riklin brothers on arrival in Lausanne, where they tested the objects they presented to mudac Image © Friklin

The first “F13 TOP CAT” re-re-recycled bag made from used FREITAG bags. Image © Friklin

The Freitag and Riklin brothers with a woman from Lausanne, after testing their compost catapult. Image © Friklin

Exhibition view at mudac Image © David Gagnebin-de Bons

Exhibition view at mudac Image © David Gagnebin-de Bons