

Press Release

AUSTRIA DAVAJ!

Creative Forces of Austria

A Cooperation of MAK Vienna, Schusev State Museum of Architecture Moscow and Austrian Cultural Forum Moscow

Press Preview & Opening	Friday, 20 May 2011, 11 a.m.
Opening Party	Friday, 20 May 2011, 8 p.m.
Exhibition Venue	Schusev State Museum of Architecture Vozdvizhenka Street 5, 119010 Moscow, Russian Federation
Exhibition Term	21 May – 28 August 2011
Cooperating Partners	MAK Vienna, Schusev State Museum of Architecture Moscow and Austrian Cultural Forum Moscow

The exhibition “Austria Davaj! Creative Forces of Austria,” a cooperative effort between the MAK, the Schusev State Museum of Architecture Moscow, and the Austrian Cultural Forum in Moscow, will open in Moscow on Friday, 20 May 2011. This exhibition brings together seventeen different contributions by artists who have helped define their respective fields while at the same time defying all traditional categorizations. “Their artistic diversity and complexity reflect not only Austria’s creative potential, but also treat the theme of representation on various levels and in widely differing ways,” says Martina Kandeler-Fritsch, Acting Director MAK.

The exhibition’s opening will take place as part of the official visit by Austrian Federal President Heinz Fischer—as well as in the presence of Austria’s Federal Minister for Education, Arts and Culture Claudia Schmied and Russian Federation Minister of Culture Alexander Avdeyev—at the Schusev State Museum of Architecture. “I am very pleased that we have succeeded together in organizing Russia’s largest-ever presentation of Austrian contemporary art with works by some of the country’s finest artists,” says Simon Mraz, Director of the Austrian Cultural Forum Moscow. Many of the works to be displayed have been developed specifically for the exhibition and amount to a representative snapshot that looks beyond current cultural trends and fads. On exhibit will be works by Johanna Braun, Carola Dertnig, Günther Domenig, Georg Driendl / driendl*architects, Heidulf Gerngross, Franz Graf, Nilbar Güreş, Zenita Komad, Brigitte Kowanz, Helmut Lang, Otto Muehl, Stefan Sagmeister, Tamuna Sirbiladze, Manfred Wakolbinger, Walking-Chair, Franz West and Erwin Wurm.

Several of the selected artists make use of traditional or historical forms of portrayal, such as Johanna Braun does with the classic motif of a representational battle painting (after Jacques Louis David); she reinterprets and co-opts the motif by making herself the protagonist of her painting, the actual creation of which will take place on location at the Schusev State Museum of Architecture. Franz Graf will devote himself to the motif of the ceiling chandelier as a representational object of the bourgeois salon; its purpose he will alter, however, by declaring it an artistic artifact. Stefan Sagmeister will be showing his object “Dogchair,” which is reminiscent of a throne and flanked by two dogs’ bodies. The design collective Walking-Chair will install a group of “Music Furniture” items from the series “Animalfarm” (Piano, Guitar, Amplifier); this installation will come together to form a contemporary and ironic take on the bourgeois music room. Carola Dertnig will take up the motif of the folding-screen (in an interpretation of the space-related works by Friedrich Kiesler) to create her own display system. In her collages, to be mounted on the folding-screen, the artist engages in a search for forgotten Russian modernism and, in the process, makes reference to the collection of the Schusev State Museum of Architecture.

This simultaneously highlights another aspect of “Austria Davaj!”—namely its connection to the exhibition venue, the way it is embedded in the local context. Irina Korobina, Director of the Schusev State Museum of Architecture Moscow, points out: “This exhibition experiment allows us to cast a fresh gaze on the spaces of the old estate in which the museum is housed. This space, so reminiscent of the 18th century, will be transformed into a total work of art for the duration of the exhibition.” The Schusev State Museum of Architecture houses the archive of the Vkhutemas, the important arts academy which functioned as a center of the Russian avant-garde from 1920 to 1927 and was taught at by artists and architects including Alexander Rodchenko, Varvara Stepanova, Konstantin Melnikov and Wassily Kandinsky.

Tamuna Sirbiladze, Franz West and Zenita Komad work with historical, biographically colored and locational references. And while Nilbar Güreş embarks on a search for the mechanisms of societal norms and gender roles, Erwin Wurm provides an ironic take on the self-image of artists by showing a decapitated male figure with an erection visible through his pants. Otto Muehl’s current painting work, some of which will also be exhibited in the exhibition, reflects an avant-garde artist’s unbroken will to artistic expression. Manfred Wakolbinger, Georg Driendl / driendl*architects, Günther Domenig, Heidulf Gerngross, Helmut Lang and Brigitte Kowanz devote their works to issues of form creation and sculpture. A further component of the exhibition, which also serves to symbolize both Vienna and Austria, is a Viennese coffeehouse which will be integrated into the presentation.

“Austria Davaj!” (the Russian expression “Давай,” which transliterates in English as “davay,” means something like “lets go!” or “come on!”) emphasizes and reinforces the over ten-year history of cooperative projects between the MAK and the Schusev State Museum of Architecture; this

relationship was initiated by Peter Noever, MAK Director from 1986 to February 2011, and David Sarkisyan, Director of the Schusev State Museum of Architecture from 2000 to 2010. The exhibition “Austria Davaj!” arose from a mutual initiative of the Austrian Cultural Forum and the MAK as a logical continuation of the MAK exhibition “Davaj. Russian Art Now. From the Laboratory of Fine Arts in Russia,” a highly successful presentation featuring protagonists of Russia’s young, radical arts scene which was shown in Berlin in 2002, as well as in Vienna and in Cheboksary, Chuvash Republic / Russia in 2003.

All press material on this exhibition is available for download at:
www.MAK.at/press.

Press Data Sheet

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Percept	Peter Noever
Curators	Martina Kandeler-Fritsch, MAK Vienna / Irina Korobina, Schusev State Museum of Architecture Moscow
Production manager	Andreas Krištof
Project managements	Christiane Bauermeister, MAK Vienna / Simon Mraz, Austrian Cultural Forum Moscow
Project coordinators	Dunja Gottweis, MAK Vienna / Alisa Bagdonayte, Schusev State Museum of Architecture Moscow
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Press contact – MAK Vienna:

Monika Meryn (head of press office)

Olivia Harrer

Christiane Vogl

Tel. (+43-1) 711 36-229

Fax (+43-1) 711 36-227

presse@MAK.at

MAK.at

Press agent – Moscow:

ARTMANAGEMENT

Julia Grachikova

Mobile: +79057196685

press.artmanagement@gmail.com

artmanagement.ru

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