

Press Release

GRIPPING DIVERSITY! Fans and Gloves from the MAK Collection

Exhibition Opening	Tuesday, 8 November 2011, 7 p.m.
Exhibition Venue	MAK Study Collection Textiles MAK, Stubenring 5, 1010 Vienna
Exhibition Term	9 November 2011 – 1 April 2012
Opening Hours	Tue MAK NITE® 10 a.m.–12 midnight Wed–Sun 10 a.m.–6 p.m., Mon closed

Right up into the 20th century, magnificent fans and gloves were essential accessories in the wardrobe of the European woman. Fans were viewed as a symbol of social status while they also served as a medium of nonverbal communication. And without gloves, the elegant lady of the 19th century was not properly dressed. Today, the fan leads a niche existence in Europe, while gloves have lost much of their former decorative qualities. The exhibition *Gripping Diversity!* puts these now somewhat neglected accessories firmly in the spotlight, presenting a selection of 70 items that exemplify fan and glove design over several centuries.

A great deal of space is devoted to objects from East Asia, where for centuries fans played a role not only in courtly etiquette but also in everyday culture. Today, they continue to be used in the performance of traditional dances, while in Japan, fans continue to be used in everyday life. Alongside painted, un-mounted fan leaves and fans from China, including a round Chinese lacquer fan from the 19th century, one particularly outstanding item in this showing is a Japanese folding screen decorated with recycled fan leaves taken from dismantled fans.

It was during the early modern period that today's most common form of fan—the folding fan—was brought from Asia to Europe by Portuguese merchants and proceeded to spread from the Iberian Peninsula to reach across the continent. In the baroque and rococo eras, the fan staged a victorious march through society. Fan makers designed diverse models ranging from folding fans to wheel-fans and brisé fans, and their craft became highly respected as an occupation. As late as the early 20th century, fans made from the most precious materials and featuring painted decoration were viewed as a standard component of female dress and served as important instruments of coquetry. During the 18th century, the so-called language of fans had developed into a means of nonverbal communication at social events.

The Empire and Biedermeier periods saw fan design become more restrained, in keeping with the simpler new fashions. While carrying a fan generally became less and less popular, the fan did experience a final upswing at the beginning of the 20th century.

In the exhibition, the sartorial and societal significance of fans in Europe is documented and traced via a wide diversity of items from seven centuries: these will include an exquisite French cockade fan from the 15th century, an example of a Venetian flag fan from the 16th century, and a folding fan with Chinoiserie elements (France or Germany, ca. 1750). One special context in which fans were used—namely as an important accessory in Christian religious rites—is illuminated by two exceptionally rare late-medieval cockade fans; these will be shown together with gloves knitted in gold and intended for ecclesiastic use.

With the emancipation of women and the attendant transformation of their role in society following the Second World War, the fan disappeared almost completely from European fashion. Since then, it has led a shadow-existence as a souvenir and marketing item, and as an unusual accessory with evening gowns and at haute couture shows.

In concert with its presentation of fans, the exhibition *Gripping Diversity!* will also show exquisite examples of European glove design. Like fans, gloves are not purely utilitarian objects. Beyond simply protecting their wearers from cold, dirt and/or injury, gloves also served throughout many centuries of European history as important instruments of coquetry and as a fashion accessory for the elegant woman. On display will be valuable examples from various eras, including contemporary items such as a glove object by Meret Oppenheim; her object offers a primarily artistic interpretation of this item.

Press photos relating to the exhibition are available for download at www.MAK.at/press.

Press Data Sheet

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Curator	Barbara Karl, MAK Curator of Textiles and Carpets
MAK Admission	€ 9.90 with MAK guide / € 7.90 / reduced: € 5.50 Free admission on Saturdays®
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