



MAK

Press Release

CHRISTOPH NIEMANN: Drawing the Line

Press Preview	Tuesday, 30 June 2015, 10:30 a.m.
Opening	Tuesday, 30 June 2015, 7:30 p.m.
Exhibition Venue	MAK Works on Paper Room MAK, Stubenring 5, 1010 Vienna
Exhibition Dates	1 July 2015 – 11 October 2015
Opening Hours	Tue 10 a.m.–10 p.m., Wed–Sun 10 a.m.–6 p.m. Free admission on Tuesdays from 6–10 p.m.

Christoph Niemann is one of the most sought-after graphic designers in the world. For many years, he has been designing covers for *THE NEW YORKER*, *The New York Times*, *TIME Magazine*, *WIRED*, and *ZEITmagazin*, creating distinctive advertising campaigns, illustrating texts, producing apps, and writing children's books. The MAK is dedicating an exhibition to this many award-winning master of his craft, showing *CHRISTOPH NIEMANN: Drawing the Line* in the Works on Paper Room: an overview of his broad creative work with 170 illustrations, graphics, screen prints, pencil and ink drawings, books, apps, and animations.

After finishing his studies at the Academy of Fine Arts in Stuttgart, Christoph Niemann (* 1970 in Waiblingen, Germany) moved to New York where between 1997 and 2008 he rapidly took his place alongside the graphic design elite. He has since returned to Germany and produces drawings from his Berlin studio for clients around the world. His humorous and ironic portrayal of not only serious current affairs but also mundane everyday scenes is unparalleled. Niemann prefers to combine traditional techniques such as pencil and ink with digital tools. However, he also frequently uses unconventional visual tools—such as dough, leaves, toys, paper clips, coat hangers, coffee cups, and salt shakers, which he places in occasionally ludicrous contexts—to capture his creative ideas.

Christoph Niemann made headlines with his 2013 piece *Brooklyn Bridge*, in which two hands create the world-famous New York landmark with a piece of string, much like in the popular children's game cat's cradle. The German Federal President Gauck presented a screen print of this work to US President Barack Obama during his visit to Berlin in 2013. With its pointed statement, *Brooklyn Bridge* is representative of Niemann's reductive tendency. His book project *I Lego New York* (2009) "reads"



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similarly, showing typical New York scenes made of small, abstract Lego bricks.

Christoph Niemann works both on commission and independently, and has been very successful with this approach. In his “Kampagnen ohne Auftrag” (self-generated work), the exceptional graphic designer and artist portrays—amongst other topics—familiar everyday situations: the battle for the armrest in economy class, the hassle of inflatable neck cushions, swollen legs on long-haul flights, or the sweet sensation of chewing on a gummy bear. Short strokes on paper together with often only a few lines of pointed text tell the story of inner struggles during the creative process, the shock of reading bad news while relaxing on the beach, or the story of creation made out of dough while baking Christmas cookies.

Social media are a central component of Niemann’s universe. Since 2008 he has been writing and illustrating the blog “Abstract City” for the *New York Times*, which has been published under the title *Abstract Sunday* by the *New York Times Magazine* since 2011. His experimental series of images *Sunday Sketches* gained a huge fan base on Instagram within a very short space of time.

The MoMA in New York commissioned Niemann to produce an animation for the online-curated project *Design and Violence*, which addresses the relationship between these two topics in contemporary society. As a tourist in Rio during the 2015 football World Cup, he designed his first interactive essay about his experiences with Brazilian football, with losing, and with reconciliation. With many of these interactive projects the users themselves have to become creative with digital tools, for example in the app *Petting Zoo* (2013), in which animals are brought to life by touch. It was in internet, too, where Christoph Niemann realized his most frequently seen works: animated logos for the Google homepage.

Christoph Niemann is connected to Austria through his work for the Vienna-based law firm WOLF THEISS, which regularly publishes the Berliner’s works in the Austrian daily newspapers *Der Standard* and *Die Presse*. These reductive illustrations, which promote the services offered by the firm with a great deal of irony and subtle humor, become branded on the memory of their viewers and will be easily recognized by Austrian visitors to the MAK exhibition.

Christoph Niemann’s clients include not only media agencies with a global audience but also famous international companies such as Citibank, Amtrak, and Nike. One of his latest projects is the illustration of Erich Kästner’s *Es gibt nichts Gutes, außer: Man tut es* (Atrium Verlag, 2015), in which he reinterprets the relationship between

language and image. Christoph Niemann's works have been awarded many prizes, including the Sondermann Prize for Comic Art (2012), and been nominated for the German Children's Literature Award (2014). In 2010 he was inducted into the Hall Of Fame at the Art Directors Club of New York. He is a member of the Alliance Graphique Internationale.

Press photos are available for download at [MAK.at/press](https://www.mak.at/press).

Press Data Sheet

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Curator	Kathrin Pokorny-Nagel, Head MAK Library and Works on Paper Collection/Archive
Related Events	Institute for Design at the University of Applied Arts Vienna Talk by Christoph Niemann about his works and the creative process Lichthof A, University of Applied Arts Vienna, Tue, 6 Oct 2015, 7 p.m. Free admission
Curator-guided Tour	5 p.m. on Thursdays 2 July 2015 and 8 October 2015
MAK Admission	€ 9.90 / Reduced € 7.50 / Family Ticket € 13 Free admission for children and teens up to 19
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Vienna, 30 June 2015