



MAK

Press Release

ADRIANA CZERNIN: Fragment

Press Conference	Tuesday, 17 April 2018, 10:30 a.m.
Opening	Tuesday, 17 April 2018, 7 pm
Exhibition Venue	MAK GALLERY MAK, Stubenring 5, 1010 Vienna
Exhibition Dates	18 April – 30 September 2018
Opening Hours	Tue 10 a.m.–10 p.m., Wed–Sun 10 a.m.–6 p.m.

The MAK exhibition *ADRIANA CZERNIN: Fragment* starting 18 April 2018 in the MAK GALLERY traces an arc between yesterday and today, between East and West. Inspired by the rosette for the minbar of the Ibn Tulun Mosque in Cairo from the year 1296, a masterpiece of the Mamluk era, the artist Adriana Czernin (b. 1969) developed a work series that takes as its theme the different aspects of geometric construction. In doing so, she sees ornament as a metaphor for cultural, social, and personal entanglements. The three-dimensional installation in the MAK places the series of drawings executed in acrylic, colored pencil, and pencil face to face with the carved, intarsia-worked fragment of the rosette, which has been in the MAK Collection since 1907.

Czernin's first points of contact with this major work of Egyptian art history occurred already in 2014. At the invitation of the MAK, she worked on the large-format pencil drawing *Nach Ibn-Tulun* [After Ibn Tulun], so to speak the initial impetus of the work series. This resulted in strictly geometric works, their lines seeking connections between central points. "In order to rediscover what was lost I connected all existing points and lines together. A new network emerged under my ruler, full of relationships, almost conspiratorial interrelations," says Adriana Czernin.

Czernin pursues not only the strictness of the system with all its symmetries and repetitions, but also potential asymmetries. The deliberate removal of certain ornamental parts generates a dynamic composition of seemingly free forms that spread out over the picture area, transversing and penetrating other elements. In contrast to Adriana Czernin's earlier works, in which the ornamental element frequently interacts with female, expressionist figurations, the work series on show in the MAK exhibition is structured strictly geometrically.

Construction and deconstruction—keeping to strict rules but also breaking and dodging them are components of Czernin’s intensive work with the ornamental element. Apart from the strictly formal approach to the historic relict’s language of forms, Czernin focuses on the function of the ornament as vehicle of tradition and religion, thus alluding to its transcendent significance in the religious context. The inherent themes of her work series involve the sublimation of the individual in the infinity of order, the potential swoon into the ecstasy of optical perception, and the function of the ornamental element as a way towards contemplation.

Minbar of the Ibn Tulun Mosque in Cairo

The Ibn Tulun Mosque in Cairo was built in the late ninth century and renovated under Sultan Lagin in 1296. One of the most important furnishings of a mosque is the minbar, originally an elevated seat used as pulpit, but also with symbolic meaning as “Mohammed’s Throne.” This explains their costly fashioning with intarsia work in stone or wood. The minbar of the Ibn Tulun Mosque was one of the most costly of its kind worldwide. Parts of the rich wooden panelling were exhibited at the Paris World Exhibition in 1867 as one of the most important works of Egyptian applied arts. Afterwards the fragments landed in a great number of European collections. The largest coherent ornament fields are today in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and in the MAK in Vienna.

Adriana Czernin was born in 1969 in Sofia and has lived and worked since 1990 in Vienna and Rettenegg (Styria). She completed the class for free graphics at the University of Applied Arts Vienna in 1998. Her work has been shown in diverse solo exhibitions, including in the Galerie Martin Janda, Vienna, the Struktura Gallery, Sofia (2017), and in the Institute for Contemporary Art, ATA Center, Sofia (2003); her works were also seen in group exhibitions in the LENTOS, Linz (2017), in the 21er Haus, Vienna (2017, 2013), in the Albertina, Vienna (2012, 2011, 2008, 2004), in the Belvedere, Vienna (2009), in the Austrian Cultural Forum New York (2009), in the Kunsthhaus Baselland, Basel (2004), and in the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, North Adams, MA (2002).

In 2014 she worked on the large-format pencil drawing *Nach Ibn-Tulun* [After Ibn Tulun] for the thematic island *Ornament* in the MAK DESIGN LAB, which ever since has been part of the MAK Collection.

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

Press Data Sheet

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Curator	Johannes Wieninger, Curator, MAK Asia Collection
Curator-Guided Tour	Thursday, 19 April 2018, 5 p.m.
MAK Admission	€ 12 / Reduced € 9 / Family Ticket € 15 Every Tuesday from 6–10 p.m.: Admission € 5 Free admission for children and teens under 19
MAK Press and Public Relations	Judith Anna Schwarz-Jungmann (Head) Sandra Hell-Ghignone Lara Steinhäuber Veronika Träger T +43 1 711 36-233, -212, -229 presse@MAK.at www.MAK.at

Vienna, 19 February 2018