



MAK

Press Release

MAK FASHION Lab #01
SONIC FABRIC feat.
BLESS N°45 Soundperfume
engineered by Popkalab

Press Preview	Tuesday, 25 June 2013, 10:30 a.m.
Opening	Tuesday, 25 June 2013, 7 p.m.
Exhibition Venue	MAK DESIGN SPACE MAK, Stubenring 5, 1010 Vienna
Exhibition Dates	26 June – 13 October 2013
Opening Hours	Tue 10 a.m.–10 p.m., Wed–Sun 10 a.m.–6 p.m. Free admission on Tuesdays 6–10 p.m.

With its new exhibition series MAK FASHION Lab, the MAK is initiating an experimental examination of intelligent fashion as its own field of applied arts. Future-oriented projects commissioned by the MAK are to examine interactions between fashion and new technologies, with the topic of smart textiles opening up an interdisciplinary discourse focused on that area where art, design, science, and research intersect and overlap. This series will begin with a focus on *Sonic Fabric*. With the site-specific installation *BLESS N°45 Soundperfume*, the studio BLESS (Berlin/Paris) will be joining forces with Popkalab (Rotterdam/Rio de Janeiro) to transform the MAK DESIGN SPACE into an interactive sonic landscape composed of articles of clothing and space accessories for the analog and digital production of sound.

“With the MAK FASHION Lab, the MAK—home to one of the world’s most valuable and extensive museum collections of textiles and carpets—opens itself up to innovative, avant-garde worlds of fashion that are not only trendy and wearable, but also invested with the intention of presenting forward-looking design solutions,” explains MAK Director Christoph Thun-Hohenstein. The MAK invited Sabine Seymour, the author of publications including *Fashionable Technology* (2008), as guest curator for the MAK FASHION Lab series, which she is developing and will be realizing together with Thomas Geisler, curator of the MAK Design Collection.

Sound is our constant companion in everyday life. Back in the mid-1970s, when the phenomenon of so-called “ghetto blasters”—preferably carried on one’s shoulder—went from subcultural to fashionable, society was served up a vivid experience of how individual sonic landscapes can arise in public. Though these boom boxes were not wearable like a piece of clothing, they did point to an urge to express one’s personality in “clouds of sound” while out and about. It was shortly thereafter, in



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1979, that Sony laid the cornerstone for the boom of truly wearable music with the introduction of its Walkman to the market. And nowadays, every smartphone is capable of playing music in the digital MP3 format.

The experimental installation *BLESS N°45 Soundperfume* takes on the following question: “How do you want to sound?” For this project, the fashion and design studio BLESS, founded by Ines Kaag (Berlin) and Desiree Heiss (Paris) in 1997, has for the first time devoted itself to technological intelligence that can be worn on the body, with the caveat that the technology employed should never be allowed to co-opt or have an aesthetically determining influence on the clothing itself. Together with the design studio Popkalab, which was founded by Ricardo O’Nascimento and specializes in interactive media, BLESS has developed three new works in which the body and space accessories from their existing collection are lent a sonic dimension.

These BLESS works, made from classic high-end materials, emit individual mixes of ambient sound that lend audible expression to their users’ personalities. What is exceptional about this project is the fact that BLESS’s textile accessories, in order to become instruments, require interplay with their wearers—be it via patterns of motion or the ways in which they are worn. The result is a personalized sonic ambience, an individualized sonic perfume. Visitors are invited to experiment on their own, creating individual sound mixes by wearing shoes that record and play back noises with a built-in delay. The “sonic confusion” thus created serves to break through well-practiced listening patterns, with wearers feeling as if they were walking while standing still. The “composing scarf,” on the other hand, allows its wearer to create a specific sonic work by manipulating its various closures.

BLESS will integrate these articles of clothing into a site-adapted curtain consisting of sound objects and collection pieces that can be played by visitors much like one would play a harp. And a hammock, repurposed to become the ultimate musical and performance tool, will emit sounds in response to the manipulation of its large pillows, thereby expanding the sonic experience by a spatial dimension. This unusual display piece, which is likewise to be “played” by the visitors, will see its first public demonstration at the opening of a MAK NITE Lab in the MAK Columned Main Hall.

A look into the artistic research behind *SONIC FABRIC* is to be provided by video collages from all manner of projects that explore the interaction between sound, textiles and bodies. These include this exhibition’s namesake *Sonic Fabric (2007)*, developed by sound and conceptual artist Alyce Santoro; this was one of the very first projects to combine sound and textiles, and it featured old, recycled cassette tapes woven into polyester yarn to create a “playable” fabric. Also on display will be playful

product developments for Nike and Adidas that allow the use of sneakers to create individual beats.

Sabine Seymour does research on “next-generation wearables” and on the intertwining of aesthetics and functionality. A trendsetting, unconventional thinker with a holistic outlook, she is the author of the bestselling book *Fashionable Technology. The Intersection of Design, Fashion, Science, and Technology* (2008) and *Functional Aesthetics* (2010), as well as an editorial review board member for the *International Journal of Mobile Human Computer Interaction* (Hershey, US) and the *Journal of Textile Design Research and Practice* (London). Seymour, who has received numerous grants and awards including the Michael Kalil Endowment for Smart Design Fellowship in 2010, is director of the Fashionable Technology Lab at Parsons The New School for Design (New York), co-chairs the Rockefeller Foundation Grant-funded project Computational Fashion at Eyebeam Art and Technology Center (New York), is a visiting professor at Aalto University (Helsinki), and serves as Chief Creative Officer of her own company Moondial (moondial.com).

The works by BLESS, which will be shown for the first time and offer an entirely new wearing experience, underline the laboratory-like character of the MAK FASHION Lab, which is meant to provide impulses for visionary new approaches and developments in the technological and scientific fields. And despite its experimental character, this Lab’s impulses are also meant to benefit the fashion and design industries. For this reason, the cooperative program *design> new strategies* of the MAK and *departure* – The Creative Agency of the City of Vienna will be holding a modular impulse workshop led by Sabine Seymour and involving the participating artists and technologists on 26 and 27 June 2013. This workshop is intended above all to encourage the domestic fashion, textile and technology industries’ adoption of innovative and interdisciplinary development and production processes. (Details at departure.at)

Further information on BLESS and Popkalab can be found at bless-service.de and popkalab.com.

For details on the participatory events, workshops, and the MAK FASHION Lab Blog, please see fashion.MAK.at.

Press photos are available for download at MAK.at/press.

Press Data Sheet

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Guest Curator	Sabine Seymour
Curator	Thomas Geisler, Curator, MAK Design Collection
Scholarly consulting:	Barbara Karl, Curator, MAK Textiles and Carpets Collection
MAK Admission	€ 7.90 / reduced € 5.50 / family ticket € 11 Free admission for children and teens up to 19
MAK NITE Lab	SONIC FABRIC feat. BLESS N°45 Soundperfume engineered by Popkalab Tuesday, 25 June 2013, following the exhibition opening MAK Columned Main Hall
Supporting Program	Wednesday, 26 June 2013, 5 p.m. Artists' talk and demonstration with Desiree Heiss & Ines Kaag (BLESS), Ricardo O'Nascimento (Popkalab) and Guest Curator Sabine Seymour (held in English) Thursday, 10 October 2013, 5 p.m. Curator-guided tour led by Thomas Geisler, Curator, MAK Design Collection (held in German)

Tuesdays, 8–9 p.m., and Sundays, 11 a.m.–12 noon,
Experience happenings and test demonstrations
with visitors led by media artist and researcher Hugo
Camargo
(held in English)

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