

Press Release

## **EXEMPLARY**

150 Years of the MAK – from Arts and Crafts to Design

Press Conference	Tuesday, 10 June 2014, 10:30 a.m.
Opening	Tuesday, 10 June 2014, 7 p.m.
Exhibition Venue	MAK Exhibition Hall MAK, Stubenring 5, 1010 Vienna
Exhibition Dates	11 June–5 October 2014
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.

The exhibition *EXEMPLARY: 150 Years of the MAK – from Arts and Crafts to Design*, one of the central projects celebrating the 150th anniversary of the MAK, sparks an inspired and inspiring confrontation between the richly traditional MAK Collection and the contemporary design avant-garde. The changeful history of the MAK is defined by its original purpose of cultivating an exemplary collection of innovative arts and crafts, as well as by its continuing efforts toward achieving a fusion of tradition and modernity. Tying in with *EXEMPLARY*'s unique orientation, nine internationally acclaimed design mavens participated in an experiment exploring the significance of the MAK Collection as both a source of inspiration and a venue for envisaging everyday life in the future.

By rapidly shifting perspective between key moments in the history of the MAK and trend-setting design themes pointing to the MAK's future, *EXEMPLARY* sketches the development of the MAK from an institution for promoting and teaching Austrian applied arts to its present-day incarnation as a leading international center of competence and a showplace for the applied arts, design, architecture, and contemporary art. Exhibition curators Tulga Beyerle, director of the Museum of Applied Arts in Dresden, and Thomas Geisler, curator of the MAK Design Collection, both co-founders of Vienna Design Week, selected exemplary personages who contributed substantially toward shaping the MAK's 150 year history and recorded them in conversation with leading design visionaries.

In documentaries filmed especially for the exhibition, these nine contemporary design

experts engage in lively discussions with a person of their choice to suss out the future of the applied arts and the museums committed to their cultivation. In parallel, by using exemplary design objects as catalysts to kindle the imagination, they envision possible future topics and expansions to the internationally renowned, one-of-a-kind MAK Collection.

Thus, design duo Dunne & Raby—**Fiona Raby**, professor of industrial design at the University of Applied Arts Vienna, and **Tony Dunne**, who together founded the faculty of Design Interaction at the Royal College of Art in London and in their work, pursue a speculative design approach—meet up with the British production designer Alex McDowell (*Minority Report*, 2002 etc.) to discuss the influence of science fiction and social fiction on the material reality of everyday culture. As their contribution to the exhibition, they selected passages of text from Edward Bellamy’s *Looking Backward: 2000–1887* (1888) and Margaret Atwood’s *Oryx and Crake* (2014), books that include both utopian and dystopian product descriptions.

Likewise, **Jan Boelen**, founder and director of the Z33 House for contemporary art in Hasselt, Belgium, and head of the Social Design Department at the Design Academy in Eindhoven, engages in a dialog with Indy Johar, a London-based architect and designer of digital platforms for co-working, to explore newly designed systems that go beyond current industrial society and its modes of production. *Curiosity Cabinet* (2014) by Netherlands-based Commonplace Studio, which includes various projects at the intersection of the digital and the analog, triggers a discussion wherein Boelen poses questions about authorship, ownership, and intellectual property rights—issues that are very relevant for a museum.

Designer **Konstantin Grcic** talks to author and science journalist Hubert Filser (*Süddeutsche Zeitung* etc.), a trained physicist, about the slow demise of furniture design and points to the exemplary attitude of colleagues like Maarten van Severen, Philippe Starck, and Jasper Morrison, as well as to the leadership of design enterprises such as Muji, Magis, and Mattiazzi. His choice of objects includes design classics like Starck’s TV *Jim Nature* (1994), Maarten van Severen’s lounge chair LC95A (1993–1995), Morrison’s *Plywood Chair* (1988), as well as pictures and texts that lend expression to his “cosmos of the exemplary”.

New York-based Austrian graphic designer **Stefan Sagmeister** talks with **Elfie Semotan**, an artist and photographer who has left her mark on the fashion world from both sides of the camera lens, about the transformative power of icons in 2D and 3D—an antique Persian Quran, Japanese poster art by Tadanori Yokoo or Makoto Saitto, the 3D-printed sofa *Random Pak Twin* (2006) by Marc Newson, or the classic car *Jaguar*

*E-Type* (1961)—and their significance in a collection that showcases the exemplary. Naturally, this dialog and Sagmeister’s selection are about “pure beauty”.

Design researcher and head of the Design Research Lab at the Berlin University of the Arts, **Gesche Joost**, who is also an emissary to the European Parliament on behalf of the German federal government for topics related to the Internet and the digital age, meets with German sociologist and futurologist **Harald Welzer** to examine emerging trends in the workplace, where new technologies like 3D printing and DIY manufacturing are redefining roles. Joost uses her selection to discuss open source practices and platforms like Creative Commons ([creativecommons.org](http://creativecommons.org)) and *Adhocracy* ([adhocracy.de](http://adhocracy.de)), also manifest design like the *One-Sqm-House* (2012) by Berlin Hartz IV furniture designer Le Van Bo, and vegetables by Culinary Misfits that are not in conformance with EU standards.

New technologies are also a hot topic for **Sabine Seymour**, founder of Moondial and a fashion technologist at the intersection of academic, cultural, and economic research and development in her work at Parsons The New School for Design, the Eyebeam Art+Technology Center, New York, the *MAK FASHION Lab*, Intel, DuPont, and Johnson Controls, among others. With a focus on designs by Iris van Herpen, Hussein Chalyan, Albert Kriemler (Akris), Neri Oxman, and Asher Levine, she talks to Niyazi Serdar Sarıçiftçi, head of the Institute for Organic Solar Cells at the Johannes Kepler University in Linz, about future developments in fashion and smart fabrics. Her curatorial eye was drawn to several items, among them *Google Glass* (2014), an accessory that turns glasses into a digital interface and is on view in Austria for the first time.

With her team at Participle, **Hilary Cottam** uses methods such as design thinking to come up with solutions-oriented approaches in the areas of healthcare and geriatric care, job placement, and in the formation of self-help groups. A social researcher, she was chosen UK Designer of the Year in 2005. Through her work as a social entrepreneur, she is continually developing institutional models that supply statistics and facts for improving the British welfare system. In conversation with designer Jennie Winhall, who has been involved in many Participle projects, Cottam discusses her approaches to social design processes. With British reformer William Beveridge (1879–1963) as their inspiration, Cottam and Winhall conceived the visionary program *Beveridge 4.0* (2008). Their “product” is a better society, something that is difficult to exhibit or archive in a museum, however!

Art and architecture critic **Hans-Ulrich Obrist**, co-director and curator at the Serpentine Gallery in London, is interested in unrealized projects. Taking as examples a

number of projects that never came to fruition by designers such as Irma Boom, Matthew Carter, Nathaniel Corum, Martina Gamper, Hella Jongerius, Emily Pilloton, and Casey Reas, he discusses how failure affects the future in his dialog with design commentator Alice Rawsthorn, a design critic at the *International New York Times* and a columnist for *Frieze*.

In the conceptual and experimental approaches taken by designers such as Maarten Baas and Nacho Carbonell, trend researcher and former president of the Design Academy Eindhoven **Lidewij Edelkoort** sees transformative powers pushing design in new directions, a topic she delves into with **Jeroen Lutters**, art educator and rector of the Bernard Lievegoed University. Together, they ponder a “School of Universal Learning”. In their contribution to the exhibition, they present up-and-coming talent from around the world, including Rodrigo Almeida from South American, Massoud Hassani from Afghanistan, and Brynjar Sigurðarson from Iceland, in addition to established designers like Rai Kawakubo or Issey Miyake.

In *EXEMPLARY*, contemporary perspectives commingle with protagonists and collected objects that tell the story of the MAK’s development. Crisscrossing connections that reach back through time tell the story of the MAK, which is presented in the exhibition in a design concept based on a kaleidoscope. Exemplary artists of the Renaissance whose names and profiles in relief adorn the façade of the MAK in a decorative frieze encircling the Ringstrasse building (1868–1871) mark the start of the museum’s international reputation. Following their lead, directors, museum staff, artists, collectors, entrepreneurs, and sponsors carried the torch for the next 150 years of the museum’s history. The documentary film shown at the entrance to the exhibit, *Das Band [Vorbilder]* (2014), by Pavel Cuzuioc und Michael Schindegger, students of Austrian filmmaker Michael Haneke, highlights the connections along this continuum.

These personages, who include Rudolf von Eitelberger (founding director 1864–1885) and Peter Noever (director 1986–2011) and collectors like Bertha von Pappenheim (1859–1936) and Julius Paul (1867–1938), inspired the curators to select significant objects from the MAK Collection, which, in addition to books, magazines, and archival materials, encompasses around 600,000 objects. The objects were specifically chosen as material examples that document the history of the development of the MAK from arts and crafts to design, including breaking and turning points.

“Even though at the start we questioned whether the exemplars themselves were up-to-date, we became convinced of their necessity especially in these times. The museum is the ideal place to make these objects available for viewing and debating. Not to put them on pedestals as untouchable, but to find their place and orientation through our

confrontation with them,” is how Tulga Beyerle and Thomas Geisler explain their curatorial approach to *EXEMPLARY*, which they set up in partnership with Vienna design firm Lichtwitz Leinfellner visuelle Kultur KG. They found intellectual kinship with German psychoanalyst Margarete Mitscherlich (1917–2012), who said the following about her publication *Das Ende der Vorbilder – Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Idealisierung* (1978) [The End of Exemplars – the Utility and Disadvantage of Idealization]: “We all need ideals, models, goals to guide us, which we can strive to realize. Without them we are subject to a feeling of emptiness; our lively interest in the things of the world and our fellow human beings gets lost”.

Accompanying the exhibition is an online participation platform, produced in collaboration with partou e. G.; this ongoing liquid democracy project offers visitors the opportunity to comment on and add their own material to the contemporary exemplary collection: **[MAK.at/participate](https://www.mak.at/participate)**

### ***AFTER-IMAGES: 150 Years of the MAK – Exhibitions in Pictures***

With reference to *EXEMPLARY*, the exhibition *AFTER-IMAGES: 150 Years of the MAK – Exhibitions in Pictures* (MAK Works on Paper Room, 11 June–5 October 2014) uses historical and modern photographs to consider forms of presentation of exhibition topics and spatial concepts in a contemporary context.

The exhibition *AFTER-IMAGES* will be opened simultaneously with *EXEMPLARY*. Curated by Kathrin Pokorny-Nagel, Head of the MAK Library and Works on Paper Collection/Archive

You can find out more about the history of the MAK at [MAK.at/en/the\\_mak/history](https://www.mak.at/en/the_mak/history).

Pictorial material relating to the exhibition can be downloaded at [MAK.at/press](https://www.mak.at/press).

Press Data Sheet

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Guest Curator	Tulga Beyerle, Director, Museum of Applied Arts, Dresden
MAK Curator	Thomas Geisler, Curator, MAK Design Collection
Exhibition and graphic design	Lichtwitz Leinfellner visuelle Kultur KG
Special Program	In preparation
MAK Admission	€ 7.90 / reduced € 5.50 / family ticket € 11 / Free admission for children and teens up to 19

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