

Press Release

## 24/7: the human condition

A group exhibition at the MAK

Exhibition Venue	MAK DESIGN LAB, MAK GALLERY MAK, Weiskirchnerstraße 3, 1010 Vienna
Exhibition Dates	11 June – 4 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.

Between biorhythm, constant communication, the pressure to perform, the value of work, relationship building, motherhood, self-marketing, anonymous goods, and standards of creativity, the group exhibition *24/7: the human condition* poses questions about the conditions of being human, work, and self-determination. Eighteen artists from a younger generation demonstrate a broad spectrum of artistic engagement with various aspects of a cultural understanding of work, labor, and action.

Based on theories by the philosopher Hannah Arendt, who describes the basic conditions of human life with the three words "labor," "work," and "action" in her magnum opus *The Human Condition* (1958), *24/7: the human condition* focuses on the "conditio humana" against the background of an increasingly fast-paced, performance-based society and describes (inter)action—language and communication—as human beings' highest good.

Works from the context of the art scene in Vienna and beyond—some of which were created or adapted specifically for the exhibition—deal with subjects such as time as a determining factor of our "non-stop society" and the long-dissolved boundaries between work and leisure as well as private and public space. Contrary to the measures of chronobiology and human beings' and nature's "inner clock," all activities are becoming one through the simultaneity of analog and digital experience.

Between distraction and inspiration, the progressive digitalization of all areas of life is leading to the complete dissolution of the boundaries of our perception of time and expectations of performance. Life and work bring the same symptoms to light: overload, lack of sleep, the pressure of responsibility, and the loss of autonomy and freedom.

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The group exhibition begins with a clock set to the mean solar time in Vienna by Christian Mayer (\* 1976, lives and works in Vienna) in the stairwell to the MAK DESIGN LAB. The time measured according to the position of the sun in *tempo rubato*, 2008/2015, draws attention to the confusing inconsistency of the natural measurement of time and the functionalization of time, which goes against our biological rhythm.

The “inner clock” or sleep-wake rhythm in plants, animals, and humans plays an essential role in chronobiology and can be seen as a natural model of the digital 24/7 world of work. The Swedish natural scientist Carl von Linné (1707–1778) developed a “flower clock” out of plants that bloom at different times of the day, which together would continually offer nectar and pollen for their animal pollinators over a period of 24 hours.

In a work created specifically for the exhibition at the MAK and named after a quotation from Georg Büchner’s *Leonce and Lena*, ... *we’ll smash all clocks, forbid all calendars, and only count hours and moons by the flower clock, only by flowering and fruit*, 2015, Andreas Duscha (\* 1976, lives and works in Vienna) examines this topic through the camera obscura, which symbolizes the mirror image of the world as the origin of analog photography. It was used by Karl Marx as a metaphor for the inversion of capitalist ideology and by Sigmund Freud to illustrate the unconscious.

The value and valuation of (invisible) human work are central to social mechanisms of judgement. Our efforts are measured by their speed, accuracy, and efficiency—in short, man is measured against machines. But the complex processes that constitute human decisions and thus our ability to act cannot be taken over by artificial intelligence.

The walk-in light installation *So only the shadows are left described*, 2015, by Seth Weiner (\* 1982, lives and works in Vienna), which was created for 24/7, alludes to Fordism and its influence on the attitude toward labor in the 20th century. In reference to the assembly line production introduced by Henry Ford, in which work follows a 24-hour schedule, the artist combines the estimated total light intensity of the Ford factory in the Highland Park neighborhood of Detroit to create product lighting in his installation. Thus, visitors—a measure of the productivity of the museum—cast their shadows on the immaterial work of post-Fordism.

Mass-produced gifts are part of the corporate culture at certain companies and are presented as a symbolic reward at the end of the year. Kathi Hofer (\* 1981, lives and works in Vienna and Berlin) experiments with these often awkward, apparently useful objects in her new work *Offering*, 2015, which take on a character of their own through their artisanal, “personalized” production and both poetically and critically question the system of values and rewards in the work environment.

In his combination of two canvases in different sizes on a construction of aluminum rods, Franz Graf (\* 1954, lives and works in Vienna and the Waldviertel [Forest Quarter], AT) gives himself and the figure in the picture an unencumbered space for action. Action stands for all human, purpose-driven or motivated activity and can signify both action and abstention. Whatever action is undertaken—if any—remains invisible in *OBRIGADoDE-NADA*, 2011/2015. The figure's hands are hidden by the second canvas. "OBRIGADo" (which means "thank you" in Portuguese) signals an expression of thanks in large letters, followed by "DE NADA" in small script: "you're welcome."

As an alternative model to financial capitalism and the constant availability of digital resources, action informed by communication and empathy in its immateriality cannot be definitively evaluated in terms of performance. It attains the status of timelessness with which human beings are inscribing themselves 24/7 in the cultural narrative of the Anthropocene, the age of man.

The *Datadrawings* by Peter Jellitsch (\* 1982, lives and works in Vienna) are based on what has become an indispensable component of our modern-day (work) life: the Internet and the constant availability of a wireless connection to it. In the *Datadrawings* (29–33), 2015, which were realized on site on the front wall of the MAK GALLERY, the artist repeatedly translates measurable data from Wi-Fi connections into formally complex drawings reminiscent of landscape topographies in pencil and acrylic. He lends form to the invisible digital processes around us and declares them the starting point and necessary basis of his work as an artist.

With the slogan "The personal is political," the women's movement of the 1960s and 1970s expressed its demand to abolish the gender hierarchy through public awareness of it. Traditionally, the domestic space has been a feminine domain. In concepts such as Adolf Loos's *Design for a House for Josephine Baker*, 1927, the private nature of the residential building becomes a stage through the voyeuristic gaze of the architect and is thus made partially public.

Lili Reynaud-Dewar (\* 1975, lives and works in Paris and Grenoble) sees the artist's studio as a place that combines the ambiguity of private and public space. In *What a pity you're an architect, Monsieur. You'd make a sensational partner (After Josephine Baker)*, 2011, the artist in her studio becomes an embodiment of Josephine Baker. Reynaud-Dewar adopts the skin color and choreography of the famous African-American dancer, and thus simultaneously hides and reveals her nakedness.

In her work *Stroller 1–3*, 2006–2008, Carola Dertnig (\* 1963, lives and works in Vienna) addresses the obstacle course parents face with strollers in public places in a tragicomic choreography between clumsi-

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ness and mental disturbance. Parenthood as labor (with its double meaning of childbirth and work) has many dimensions. Aside from social and societal adjustments as well as often vexing financial and professional considerations, the urban area and architectural circumstances of metropolitan transit zones also present a challenge.

In conjunction with the exhibition manifesto *The Art of Working: Agency in Digital Modernity* developed by the Vienna Biennale Circle (VBC), the exhibition *24/7: the human condition* shown as part of the VIENNA BIENNALE 2015: IDEAS FOR CHANGE is conceived as an impetus to engage with the potentials of human creativity, communication, and self-determined action.

Artists:

Ben Thorp Brown (New York)  
Verena Dengler (Vienna)  
Carola Dertnig (Vienna)  
Harm van den Dorpel (Berlin)  
Andreas Duscha (Vienna)  
Andreas Fogarasi (Vienna)  
Franz Graf (Vienna/Waldviertel [Forest Quarter], Austria)  
Kathi Hofer (Vienna/Berlin)  
Peter Jellitsch (Vienna)  
Lazar Lyutakov (Vienna)  
Mahony (Vienna/Berlin)  
Christian Mayer (Vienna)  
Ulrich Nausner (Vienna)  
Danica Phelps (New York)  
Lili Reynaud-Dewar (Paris/Grenoble, France)  
Valentin Ruhry (Vienna)  
Seth Weiner (Vienna)  
Anna Witt (Vienna)

Curator: Marlies Wirth, MAK

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