

## CRITICAL CONSUMPTION

1

MAK – Press and PR

presse@MAK.at

### **Press Release**

Vienna, 29.8.2023

### **Press Conference**

Tuesday, 29.8.2023, 10 am

Please register via [presse@MAK.at](mailto:presse@MAK.at)

Micro trends, fashion giants releasing dozens of new collections every year, precarious conditions for textile workers, luxury brands shredding unworn garments, and ecosystems being destroyed by mountains of textile waste: fashion—and the fashion industry—are increasingly coming under the spotlight for their approach to consumption, production processes, and sustainability. With the exhibition *CRITICAL CONSUMPTION*, the MAK is viewing with a critical eye a sector that is unrivaled in the way it drives consumption, the desire for the new, and rapid change.

For over a year, the MAK Gallery will play host to historical objects, contemporary designs, and artistic approaches that encourage us to contemplate the pressing issues of our age: “What are our clothes worth?” or “Who can afford not to shop?” Our consumption of fashion can be considered a paradigm of the mass consumption of capitalist societies in the Global North.

*CRITICAL CONSUMPTION* motivates visitors to reflect on their own behavior as consumers in a variety of ways. The exhibition is also particularly well suited to teaching this subject to school students. Interactive exhibits with questions on your own buying behavior offer food for thought. Video works and other pieces by international artists—including Celia Pym, Dead White Men’s Clothes, Ines Doujak, Stefanie Moshhammer, Sylvie Fleury, Tenant of Culture, The Nest Collective, and Wang Bing—make reference to the complex way in which consumption and production are interwoven, as well as their global impact. Historical objects from the MAK’s collection illustrate how our consumption of fashion has developed over the past three hundred years.

M

A

K

The value attributed to fashion has changed enormously over the centuries, as has its use, reuse, and repurposing. Antitheses of the utterly insatiable desire for the new are just as much the subject of the exhibition as the critical attitudes to consumption that have developed parallel to our disposable society.

*CRITICAL CONSUMPTION* retraces the history of the mass consumption of fashion in the Global North from the 18th century. With the Enlightenment and the loss of religion as the most important benchmark in society, consumption aimed at public impact was able to develop an increasingly positive image. Prior to this, luxury had had rather negative connotations, being associated with profligacy and the deadly sins. At the latest since Jean-Baptiste Colbert's mercantilist orientation of the French state under Louis XIV, the consumption of luxury goods has been viewed positively in terms of political economy. People were now permitted to express their individuality through fashion in order to strengthen the national economy with their consumption.

This is the moment when our current fashion system—characterized by constant change—is believed to have begun. Technological innovations, global expansion, changing conditions of production, and mass media started to demand permanent acceleration. It has culminated in (ultra) fast fashion, which is only possible in this form thanks to the speed of digital processes. Nowadays, demands for the latest trend can be satiated almost immediately.

In an age when politicians are negotiating superregional regulations (concerning e.g., returning purchases, supply chain law) and in a globally connected society that seems to be inextricably linked with the exploitation of human and natural resources, *CRITICAL CONSUMPTION* sets forth options for individuals to consume responsibly. The exhibition draws visitors' attention to historical parallels that we can learn from, making the case for viewing responsible consumption as a "consumer revolution" and not as a transient trend.

This exhibition project is part of the MAK's engagement with the 10×17 Sustainable Development Goals, an initiative that aims to promote conscious consumerism.

The exhibition is accompanied by a wide-ranging supporting program. On the evening of the opening, the MAK invites you to a panel talk entitled *How can we consume fashion responsibly?* with Alec Leach (author of *The World Is on Fire but We're Still Buying Shoes*), Madeleine Alizadeh (founder of dariadéh, content creator), and Sabinna Rachimova (founder, lecturer, consultant, SABINNA, Fashion Revolution Austria), moderated by the exhibition's curator Lara Steinhäuser (29.8.2023, 6 pm, German and English).

More information on the supporting program and on guided tours of the exhibition can be found at [MAK.at/en](https://mak.at/en).

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



**Press Conference**

Tuesday, 29.8.2023, 10 am  
Please register via [presse@MAK.at](mailto:presse@MAK.at)

**Opening**

Tuesday, 29.8.2023, 7 pm  
Free admission to the opening of the exhibition

**Panel Talk** on Tuesday, 29.8.2023, 6 pm

*How can we consume fashion responsibly?*

with Alec Leach (author of *The World Is on Fire but We're Still Buying Shoes*),  
Madeleine Alizadeh (founder of dariadéh, content creator), and Sabinna  
Rachimova (founder, lecturer, consultant, SABINNA, Fashion Revolution  
Austria), moderated by the exhibition's curator Lara Steinhäuser

**Exhibition Venue**

MAK Gallery  
MAK, Stubenring 5, 1010 Vienna

**Exhibition Dates**

30.8.2023–8.9.2024

**Opening Hours**

Tue 10 am–9 pm, Wed to Sun 10 am–6 pm

**Supporting Program**

Details of the extensive supporting program can be found at [MAK.at/en](https://www.mak.at/en)

**Curator**

Lara Steinhäuser, Curator, MAK Textiles and Carpets Collection

**Exhibition Design**

Robert Rűf

**Graphic Design**

Fuhrer, Vienna

**MAK Admission**

€ 15, reduced € 12, every Tuesday 6–9 pm: admission € 7  
Free admission for children and teens under 19



**MAK Press and PR**

Judith Anna Schwarz-Jungmann (Head)

T +43 1 71136-213, [judith.schwarz-jungmann@MAK.at](mailto:judith.schwarz-jungmann@MAK.at)

Sandra Hell-Ghignone

T +43 1 71136-212, [sandra.hell-ghignone@MAK.at](mailto:sandra.hell-ghignone@MAK.at)

Ulrike Sedlmayr

T +43 1 71136-210, [ulrike.sedlmayr@MAK.at](mailto:ulrike.sedlmayr@MAK.at)

