

**(CON)TEMPORARY FASHION SHOWCASE:  
JOJO GRONOSTAY  
MAGIC CANNOT CROSS THE SEA**

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MAK – Press and Public  
Relations

**Press Release**

Vienna, 9 August 2022

presse@MAK.at

**Press Tour**

Friday, 2 September 2022, 10 am

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

As the third position in the context of the *(Con)temporary Fashion Showcase* series, Jojo Gronostay will provide the MAK Geymüllerschloßel with an artistic work relating to the so-called sapeurs of Brazzaville, the capital of the Republic of the Congo. The sapeurs, mostly men living under precarious circumstances, whose fetish for brand name fashion has taken on a spiritual dimension, fashion themselves like dandies in expensive suits and make the streets their catwalk with performative movements. In his video installation entitled *MAGIC CANNOT CROSS THE SEA*, Gronostay contextualizes video recordings of the sapeurs with objects of clothing from museums, thus commenting the Eurocentric understanding of fashion with which the costume collections of classic museums of applied arts have been created.

The installation comprises five vertical format screens, on which recordings originating in Brazzaville in 2022 are shown. In 25-minute loops, Jojo Gronostay superimposes vestimentary photographs of objects from the collections of international museums like the V&A, London, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, and the MAK onto the videos. The video installation is accompanied by a soundtrack by Sofie Fatouretchi, adapted to the atmosphere of the Geymüllerschloßel.

Characteristic for the sapeurs are colorful and high-contrast outfits and their exaggerated, seemingly choreographed presentation. The sapeurs are said to spend the salaries of several months for their luxurious self-fashioning. In addition to elegant designer suits, they also carry the appropriate accessories, such as walking sticks or cigars. Visually, they are reminiscent not only of

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dandies and gentlemen of the early 20th century, but also forge an undeniable link with the world of jazz, which was defined by black musicians.

Besides Brazzaville, the capital city of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kinshasa, which is separated from Brazzaville by the Congo River, is known as the second center of the sapeurs. As of the 1970s, a similar scene developed there, which was interpreted as a response to the anti-Western clothing policy of President Mobutu. In the meantime, satellites of the movement are also found in the Congolese diaspora in Paris and Brussels, as well as in Morocco, and the Swenka movement in South Africa is to some extent linked with the phenomenon.

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The origins of this street style phenomenon, addressed internationally, for example, by a Guinness ad (2014) or music videos from, for example, Solange or Kendrick Lamar, extend back into the early 20th century and are understood as a conscious reflection upon the clothing of the (Belgian and French) colonial rulers. The sapeurs also served as a clear visual reference for, among others, the British designer Paul Smith for his *Ready to Wear* spring/summer collection for women in 2010.

With the pictorial language of the work *MAGIC CANNOT CROSS THE SEA*, which, in its black and white contrasts, reversed in the photo negative, reminds us not only of ghosts, but also of hunted subjects, Gronostay emphasizes the exoticizing of the sapeurs, which becomes evident in their perception by Europeans and Americans. The superimposing of items of clothing from museum collections and the contrast between “dead” museum objects and performatively worn “living” clothing explicitly underlines the question of the objectification of the sapeurs.

Jojo Gronostay (\*1988 in Hamburg, Germany) lives and works in Vienna. The focus of his artistic work and of his DWMC (Dead White Men’s Clothes) label, located at the interface of fashion and art, with which he is also represented in the MAK collection, is on identity and its representation, economic cycles, as well as political and economic interdependencies between Europe and Africa. Gronostay studied art at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna and at the École nationale supérieure des Beaux-Arts de Paris. His works are found in the collections of the mumok Vienna, the Museum der Moderne Salzburg, and the GRASSI Museum Leipzig. His latest solo exhibitions include *RECREATION* in the Galerie Hubert Winter in Vienna (2022).

On the occasion of the exhibition opening of *(Con)temporary Fashion Showcase: Jojo Gronostay* on 3 September 2022, presuming fair weather, the MAK, in cooperation with the Tanzquartier Wien, will present a performance of the dancer and choreographer Camilla Schielin, who often examines the phantasmal recurrence and persistence of the past in her work. In her performance, she deals with pop-cultural movement material, post-Internet dances in particular, and moves within the field of tension between activity and passivity, legible gestures and insinuation, as well as occupation and the state



of obsession. Thanks to the outfit from Gronostay's DWMC label, the performance will at the same time become a kind of fashion show.

The exhibition *(Con)temporary Fashion Showcase: Jojo Gronostay* concludes the season in the MAK Geymüllerschloß following *(Con)temporary Fashion Showcase: Julia Koerner* (7 May – 5 June 2022) and *(Con)temporary Fashion Showcase: Susanne Bisovsky* (11 June – 28 August 2022).

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

Continually updated details on the program at: [MAK.at/contemporaryfashion](https://www.mak.at/contemporaryfashion)



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

**Opening and Performance**

Saturday, 3.9.2022, 6 pm

**Exhibition Venue**

MAK Geymüllerschloß  
Pötzleinsdorfer Straße 102, 1180 Vienna

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**Exhibition Dates**

3 September – 4 December 2022

**Opening Hours**

Saturdays and Sundays, 10 am–6 pm  
Open until 8 pm on the opening day (until 9 pm in the park)

**Curator**

Lara Steinhäuser, Curator, MAK Textiles and Carpets Collection

**Admission**

€ 7  
Free admission for children and teens under 19  
Free admission with MAK Annual Ticket

**MAK Press and Public Relations**

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)

