

Press Release

handiCRAFT **Traditional Skills in the Digital Age**

Press Conference	Tuesday, 13 December 2016, 10:30 a.m.
Opening	Tuesday, 13 December 2016, 7 p.m.
Exhibition Venue	MAK Exhibition Hall MAK, Stubenring 5, 1010 Vienna
Exhibition Dates	14 December 2016 – 9 April 2017
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.

The MAK exhibition *handiCRAFT: Traditional Skills in the Digital Age* invites visitors to reflect on the significance and status of handicraft as an integral component of material culture and cultural identity. In six sections, this comprehensive MAK exhibition encompasses handicraft from historical times to current European perspectives, examines how handicraft can help preserve natural resources, explores interfaces to digital technologies, and presents masterpieces from a range of craft disciplines.

Currently the terms “handicraft” and “handmade” are used with inflationary frequency in advertising and lifestyle media. The Maker Movement and DIY culture are enormously successful, creating a worldwide hype. Globally operating luxury labels explicitly foreground handicraft as a mark of quality and distinction, in contrast to the reality of locally operating craftspeople struggling for recognition and a fair wage.

The introductory exhibition section, “Past and Present,” is devoted to diverse aspects of handicraft, whose status has always alternated between high and low esteem. From Hephaestus, the god of blacksmiths, to the *Encyclopédie* of Denis Diderot (published between 1751 and 1772), to the Chanel outfits of the 2014/15 *Metiers d’Art* Collection, the exhibits discursively illustrate the social status of handicraft over the centuries.

It was Diderot who published an eloquent defense of handicraft in his *Encyclopédie*: “The poet, the philosopher, the orator, the minister, the soldier, the hero would be running around naked with no bread to eat, were it not for those craftspeople whom

they make the butt of their terrible scorn.” Historical guild insignia and personal objects owned by the Hapsburgs later provide evidence of an extraordinarily high regard for handicraft that persisted into the 20th century. This section also examines the redefinition of the relationship between craftspeople and designers by such key movements as Arts & Crafts, the Wiener Werkstätte, the Werkbund, and the Bauhaus, as a reaction to the fundamental crisis in handicraft sparked by the Industrial Revolution.

Under the title “Perspectives,” the second exhibition section presents European initiatives and institutions that are opening up new opportunities for dialogue between handicraft and design in the fields of apprenticeship and marketing. These include the Crafts Council, committed to the worldwide promotion of British handicraft; the Werkraum Bregenzwald in Austria and its “Handwerk + Form 2015” competition; and the Compagnons du Devoir from France, whose apprenticeship system features elements of the journeyman tradition, and whose graduates have access to 45 countries worldwide. The Academies of Design and Craft, based in Germany and Switzerland, focus intensively and with great success on the training of young craftspeople in design.

The exhibition section “Materials and Tools” presents a wide range of material samples and 99 work tools. These unique implements, to include yarning tools, shoemaker’s awls, sugar scissors, sharpening steels, cleavers, grape harvester’s knives, pastry wheels, nipper pliers, and goldsmith’s hammers, mostly originating from the 16th and 17th centuries, are part of the Albert Figdor Collection, acquired by the MAK in 1930. A walk-through installation offers visitors the haptic experience of handling different samples of natural materials, such as fabrics, leather, wood, metal, and ceramic.

In a “Live Workshop,” the fourth exhibition section, a total of 20 craftspeople demonstrate their skills to the public daily. The section presents a broad spectrum of craftspeople, from shoemakers, upholsterers, milliners, weavers, carpenters, and ceramicists, to a violin maker, a tinsmith, and a dirndl maker. The schedule of live presentations will be available in the exhibition and at MAK.at.

The fifth exhibition section, “Quality and Excellence,” juxtaposes historical objects from the MAK collection with contemporary handicraft products from 18 European countries. A total of 160 exhibits are presented—to include furniture, wallpapers, tiles, carpets, clothing, hats, gloves, glasses, cutlery, and tableware—made by 50 craftspeople, some of whom are award-winning masters of their craft.

The final exhibition section is devoted to the key factor of “Sustainability,” divided into the topic areas “Product Biographies,” “Heirlooms,” and “Restoration Work.” To raise

consumers' awareness of product biographies, five handcrafted products made in Vienna are presented, together with comprehensive information on the materials used and the manufacturing process. The products include wedding rings made of fair trade gold from the workshop of Alexander Skrein and the porcelain series RAW, created by Sandra Heischberger using recycled porcelain paste.

Complementing these exhibits, MAK staff members share with visitors some of their personal heirlooms, objects that they still take great pleasure in using. Two films, created with the support of craftsmen Bernhard Gritsch and Peter Fröch, show the public how to restore old plasterwork and wooden window frames professionally and sustainably. This section is complemented by a research lab set up by the Vienna University of Economics and Business. Under the direction of Prof. Martin Schreier, and with the assistance of exhibition visitors, the lab examines the impact of handicraft on consumer purchasing habits—here too visitors are invited to join in. A video interview with the sociologist Richard Sennett, whose book *The Craftsman* (New Haven 2008) provided significant inspiration for the exhibition, concludes the presentation.

Supplementing the exhibition *handiCRAFT: Traditional Skills in the Digital Age*, a publication with the same title makes handicraft experts' knowledge accessible to a broad public. The publication includes contributions by Rainald Franz, Elisabeth Schmuttermeyer, Christoph Thun-Hohenstein, and Tina Zickler; interviews with research experts and craftspeople Ludwig Kyril, Annette Pechtl, Roman Sandgruber, Martin Schreier, Richard Sennett, Akio Tanaka, Sandra Thaler, Christian Witt-Döring, and Peter Zumthor; and introductions to all the craftspeople and institutions participating in the exhibition.

Photo Competition

Prior to the opening of the exhibition *handiCRAFT: Traditional Skills in the Digital Age*, starting on 1 October 2016 a MAK photo competition invites (amateur) photographers to search out handicraft motifs in the Viennese cityscape: countless sculptures, symbols, house signs, and street names document the degree to which handicraft is rooted in the life of the city. A jury consisting of Christoph Thun-Hohenstein, Mirjam Angerer-Geier, Matthias Koslick, Lisa Rastl, and Tina Zickler will select the best 20 photographs. These will be displayed, concurrently to the exhibition *handiCRAFT: Traditional Skills in the Digital Age*, in a special presentation on the first floor of the MAK Columned Main Hall. Deadline for entries is 6 November 2016. Further details on the competition and how to submit entries are available at MAK.at.

Press photos on the exhibition are available for download at MAK.at/press.

Press Data Sheet

handiCRAFT
Traditional Skills in the Digital Age

Press Conference	Tuesday, 13 December 2016, 10:30 a.m.
Opening	Tuesday, 13 December 2016, 7 p.m.
Exhibition Venue	MAK Exhibition Hall MAK, Stubenring 5, 1010 Vienna
Exhibition Dates	14 December 2016 – 9 April 2017
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.
Guest Curator	Tina Zickler
Curator	Rainald Franz, Curator, MAK Glass and Ceramics Collection
Publication	In preparation
Accompanying Program	In preparation
Lecture	Richard Sennett: <i>Craftsmanship</i> Sunday, 9 October 2016, 4 p.m. MAK Lecture Hall
MAK Admission	€ 9.90 / Reduced € 7.50 / Family Ticket € 13 Free admission for children and teens under 19
MAK Press and PR	Judith Anna Schwarz-Jungmann (Head) Sandra Hell-Ghignone Veronika Träger Lara Steinhäuser T +43 1 711 36-233, -229, -212 presse@MAK.at www.MAK.at

Vienna, 15 September 2016