

## Press Release

**BOOK COVERS OF THE WIENER WERKSTÄTTE**

Press Preview	Tuesday, 7 March 2017, 10:30 a.m.
Opening	Tuesday, 7 March 2017, 7 p.m.
Exhibition Venue	MAK Works on Paper Room MAK, Stubenring 5, 1010 Vienna
Exhibition Dates	8 March – 28 May 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.

Committed to the idea of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* or total work of art, numerous designers and craftspeople at the Wiener Werkstätte (WW) also turned their hand to artistic designs for books. For the first time, the MAK is dedicating an entire exhibition to this aspect of the WW, presenting an overview of these multifaceted book cover designs under the title *BOOK COVERS OF THE WIENER WERKSTÄTTE*. Some 70 books from the private collections of Ernst Ploil, Guest Curator of the exhibition, and Richard Grubman are supplemented by 40 original design drawings and approximately 500 leather stamps and select book covers from the MAK Collection.

In its successful “struggle against the awful, red hardcovers with golden decorations used for our masterpieces,” in the words of the *Wiener Sonn- und Montagszeitung* in 1905, the Wiener Werkstätte found inspiration in the Arts and Crafts movement. It was above all William Morris’ creations that influenced the WW’s founders, Josef Hoffmann and Koloman Moser. They intentionally purchased the same Parisian leather that Morris himself used as a sumptuous protective cover for his books.

As early as 1904, Hoffmann and Moser hired the famous Viennese bookbinder Carl Beitel as the manager of their bookbindery. His technical skills measured up to the WW’s demand for the highest artisanal quality. Not just manual production of the books, but also their original designs were praised both nationally and internationally, with Berta Zuckerkandl among their known admirers.

Some WW book cover designs made direct reference to the books’ content. For example, a cover designed by Hoffmann for Alexandre Dumas’ *The Three Musketeers* reflects the book’s title by using three parallel lines. Also on display is a dust jacket commissioned by Max Morgenstern for Dante Alighieri’s *Divine Comedy*, whose gold starry sky refers to the plot of this literary classic.

In keeping with the credo of the Wiener Werkstätte—“good materials and perfect technical execution”—the bookbindery drew on a broad technical repertoire. Among other things, they used leather inlaying, embossing, hand-gilding, and leather weaving. Carl Beitel assumed a particularly important role in the production of paste and marbled papers. Marbled paper was used in 1904 to create bindings after designs by Koloman Moser: Adele Bloch-Bauer is named as the WW’s first customer in the catalog of works. The most common material used was kid leather, so-called “morocco.” Occasionally fabrics—and more rarely exotic types of leather such as crocodile, snake, undulate ray, lizard, or even frog skin—were also used.

Stylistically, geometric forms and abstract floral elements dominated the early designs by Hoffmann and Moser. For several years after Moser’s departure from the WW in 1907, Hoffmann acted as the sole designer of book covers until Eduard Josef Wimmer-Wisgrill came to support him from 1910.

The post-1918 era partly saw a more playful and opulent design style: in addition to Dagobert Peche and Julius Zimpel, female artists such as Irene Schaschl-Schuster, Anny Schröder, Hilde Jesser, Fritzi Löw, Gudrun Baudisch, Kitty and Felice Rix, Mathilde Flögl, and Maria Likarz-Strauss also designed book covers. Naturalistically figurative motifs as well as bouquets or vases of flowers were typical of the dust jackets designed and hand-painted, partly embossed or stamped by women.

In contrast, Hoffmann’s ideas from the same period stand out for the extremely refined simplicity of their decoration. From 1924 he used rhythmically concatenated undulating profiles as a decorative element. This wave profile can even be identified in his buildings, including the Austrian pavilion for the *Exposition internationale des Arts décoratifs et industriels modernes* in Paris in 1925.

From 1927 another variety of book covers emerged on which profiled geometric and subsequently leather-covered wooden grids were applied. An example of this is a guest book for one of Hoffmann’s companions, the librarian of the Austrian Museum of Art and Industry, Hans Ankwickz-Kleehoven.

With their wealth of ideas and professional artisanal execution, the book covers of the Wiener Werkstätte were a considerable source of inspiration for Austrian book art.

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

**For their generous support we would like to thank**

Richard Grubman  
Ernst Ploil

Press Data Sheet

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Guest Curator	Ernst Ploil
Curators	Elisabeth Schmuttermeier, Curator, MAK Metal Collection and Wiener Werkstätte Archive Maria-Luise Jesch, MAK Metal Collection and Wiener Werkstätte Archive
MAK Admission	€ 9.90 / Reduced € 7.50 / Family Ticket € 13 Free admission for children and teens under 19
Guided Tours	Tuesday, 14 March 2017, 6:30 p.m., Ernst Ploil, Guest Curator
	Tuesday, 4 April 2017, 6:30 p.m. Maria-Luise Jesch, MAK Metal Collection and Wiener Werkstätte Archive, Curator
	Tuesday, 16 May 2017, 6:30 p.m. Elisabeth Schmuttermeier, Curator of the exhibition and the MAK Metal Collection and Wiener Werkstätte Archive
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Vienna, 7 March 2017