

Press Release

## RELAX

**Christoph Meier, Ute Müller, Robert Schwarz, Lukas Stopczynski**

Opening	Tuesday, 18 January 2022, 10 a.m.–9 p.m.
Exhibition Venue	MAK DIREKTION MAK, Stubenring 5, 1010 Vienna
Exhibition Dates	19 January – 6 March 2022
Opening Hours	Tue 10 a.m.–9 p.m., Wed–Sun 10 a.m.–6 p.m.

As a further variation in their series on Adolf Loos’s American Bar, artists Christoph Meier, Ute Müller, Robert Schwarz, and Lukas Stopczynski present their minimalistic spatial installation *RELAX* in the former MAK Director’s Office (MAK DIREKTION), starting on 18 January 2022. The installation is based on the dystopian scenario that the legendary Loos Bar has been closed, and the three doorways of its entrance portal have been replaced by beverage vending machines. *RELAX* is the first project to be realized in the former MAK DIREKTION, that will be open to the public as a location for interventions, discussion events, exhibitions, and performances.

The bar as a social space—a temporary counter-universe in which everyday cares can be left behind with animated discussions or exuberant celebrations—has almost entirely disappeared during the pandemic. Social life has come to a stop or has moved outdoors. As far as the Loos Bar is concerned, the fictive scenario in *RELAX* could not be bleaker: The architectural icon designed by Adolf Loos in 1907/08, also known as “Kärntner Bar” and “American Bar,” is only 27.36 m<sup>2</sup> in size and one of Vienna’s most renowned locales. In place of the three welcoming doorways of the original entrance portal, *RELAX* presents three self-service machines, which quote the Loos Bar’s familiar outer façade in scale.

*RELAX* presents a bar without barkeepers, without guests or music; there is not even anywhere to sit down. In this unstructured space, the historical coffered ceiling of the MAK DIREKTION enters into dialogue with a suspended ceiling illuminated by fluorescent tubes and decked out with infinity mirrors, in the original dimensions of the historical bar, where space is also extended *ad infinitum* by reflecting mirrors. The beverage vending machines are the last remaining allusion to the bar’s former function. The noise

they make is amplified, creating an omnipresent body of sound in the otherwise empty room. As the pinnacle, or rather nadir, of social interaction, each time visitors use the machines the sound and lighting effects in the room are turned up even more—recalling visits to bars in pre-pandemic days.

Christoph Meier, Ute Müller, Robert Schwarz, and Lukas Stopczynski developed the initial idea for their common art project on the historic Loos Bar in 2015, during their residency at the MAK Center for Art and Architecture in Los Angeles as Schindler scholarship holders. For their first project, entitled *LOS BAR*, they built a smaller-scale version of the Vienna Loos Bar, using cheap DIY materials, in a garage of the Mackey Apartments of R. M. Schindler, one of Adolf Loos's disciples.

Another version was created in 2017 in Brussels: for *STROOKOFFER* the artists reconstructed the Loos Bar's interior décor using straw mats—an allusion to the “Strohkoffer” [Straw Suitcase], an exhibition room, active in the 1950s and located beneath the Loos Bar. In 2019, in the framework of Wiener Festwochen, they created the *LAX BAR*—tiled in white from floor to ceiling—in a record store in the Laxenburger Straße. The *LAX BAR*'s ceiling, decked out with fluorescent tubes and mirrors, replicated the infinity mirrors of the original.

A fragment of this bar—namely this ceiling—that corresponds exactly to the floor plan of the original interior, makes an appearance as a relic in *RELAX*. It was staged in the MAK Columned Main Hall for the exhibition poster. The artists were inspired by a historical photograph showing the reconstructed exterior façade of the Loos Bar, that was presented in 1986 in the MAK Columned Main Hall as part of the exhibition *VIENNESE CONSTRUCTION SITES: Forgotten Dreams—Applied Programs*.

The installation fictively complements the two architectural fragments, creating a dematerialized space and closing the conceptual circle between reconstruction, copy, and variations on the Loos Bar—culminating in its utter deconstruction.

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

Press Data

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Curators	Marlies Wirth, Curator, Digital Culture and MAK Design Collection; Antje Prisker, Assistant to the General Director/Special Projects
Supporting Program	For details see <a href="http://MAK.at/en/relax">MAK.at/en/relax</a>
MAK Admission	€ 15/Reduced € 12 Every Tuesday 6–9 p.m.: admission € 7 Free admission for children and teens under 19
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Vienna, 13 January 2022