

Press Release

## **JOSEF HOFFMANN** **Progress Through Beauty**

Exhibition Venue      MAK Exhibition Hall  
                                 MAK, Stubenring 5, 1010 Vienna  
Exhibition Dates      15 December 2021 – 19 June 2022  
Opening Hours        Tue 10 a.m.–9 p.m., Wed–Sun 10 a.m.–6 p.m.

The MAK is honoring the impressive work of architect, designer, teacher, exhibition organizer, and cofounder of the Wiener Werkstätte, Josef Hoffmann (1870–1956), with the so far most comprehensive retrospective of his entire oeuvre. Originally planned to open in December 2020 on the occasion of Josef Hoffmann’s 150th birthday, the exhibition was delayed by one year due to the COVID pandemic and will now be shown from 15 December 2021 to 19 June 2022 at the MAK Exhibition Hall. Hoffmann cultivated an exemplary modern lifestyle model and focused on aesthetics and beauty as the central parameters of modern design. The exhibition *JOSEF HOFFMANN: Progress Through Beauty* revisits every facet of the almost 60-year creative output produced by this influential global pioneer in architecture and design around 1900 and enriches the systematic research into and dissemination of his legacy.

With an initially puristic design vocabulary, Josef Hoffmann carved out his position as one of the protagonists of Viennese Modernism. His ideal of the Gesamtkunstwerk—or total work of art—and his outstanding buildings like Stoclet House in Brussels (1905–1911), now a UNESCO World Heritage Site, left a mark on the architectural and artistic landscape both nationally and internationally. Although this all-round designer has featured in every important exhibition on Viennese Modernism, only sections of his oeuvre have been analyzed in full.

To mark this year’s anniversary the exhibition’s team of curators—Matthias Boeckl, Rainald Franz, and Christian Witt-Döring—set themselves the task of closing the gaps that still exist in the research by using at times unknown sources and by updating his catalogue raisonné. According to the curators, the perception of Hoffmann’s creative work as an architect and designer is incomplete in terms of the sources used, oversimplified in terms of design aspects, and limited in terms of his geographical and historical sphere of influence.

In 20 chapters and with over 1 000 exhibits, the exhibition *JOSEF HOFFMANN: Progress Through Beauty* introduces visitors to his prodigious lifework, which covers every single aspect of daily life, including architecture, interior design, fashion, and practical objects. Originally from a wealthy middle-class family in Brtnice, now in the Czech Republic, Hoffmann lived through five different political regimes, from the Habsburg Monarchy to the Second Austrian Republic. He was considered a creator of taste and identity and lived an exemplary modern lifestyle as a teacher of many years, as an influential designer in the decorative arts, and as cofounder of the Vienna Secession, the Wiener Werkstätte, and the Werkbund. In his groundbreaking mindset he united an artistically ambitious architectural approach with an artisanally inspired product culture.

The exhibition covers every stage of his life from his youth and studies at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna to his death in 1956. The focus of the exhibition is his work's lasting impact on architecture, the decorative arts, and design, starting with his most prominent projects and buildings: Sanatorium Westend in Purkersdorf (1904/05), Stoclet House in Brussels (1905–1911), the Kunstschau in Vienna (1908), the Austrian pavilion for the Werkbund exhibition in Cologne (1914), the pavilion for the International Exposition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts in Paris (1925), the Werkbundsiedlung [Werkbund Estate] in Vienna (1931), and the pavilion for the Venice Biennale (1934). A multimedia timeline guides visitors through Hoffmann's life and draws attention to forgotten projects and texts.

A reconstruction of the *Boudoir d'une grande vedette* [Boudoir for a Big Star] (1937), designed by Josef Hoffmann for the Paris World's Fair, makes it possible to instantly experience Hoffmann's sense of space. On public display for the very first time will be, among others, furnishings from the villa for Sonja Knips (1924) and the International Exposition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts in Paris (1925) as well as never-before-shown designs by Josef Hoffmann from the years of National Socialism and from the archives of the companies J. & L. Lobmeyr, J. Backhausen & Söhne, and the Vienna Augarten Porcelain Manufactory.

Especially for the exhibition, architect Ben James programmed an artificial intelligence algorithm that applies Hoffmann's typical form language in a combinational way for new design tasks, thus also serving as a source of inspiration for architects and designers today as a "digital assistant."

The exhibition is accompanied by the publication *JOSEF HOFFMANN 1870–1956: Progress Through Beauty. The Guide to His Oeuvre*, edited by Christoph Thun-Hohenstein, Matthias Boeckl, Rainald Franz, and Christian Witt-Dörning, with articles by Matthias Boeckl, Elisabeth Boeckl-Klamper, Rainald Franz, Anette Freytag, Sebastian

Hackenschmidt, Otto Kapfinger, Markus Kristan, Christopher Long, Klára Němečková, Andreas Nierhaus, Jan Norrman, Eva-Maria Orosz, Adrián Prieto Fernandez, Ursula Prokop, Lara Steinhäüßer, Valerio Terraroli, Wolfgang Thillmann, Christoph Thun-Hohenstein, and Christian Witt-Döring. English, 448 pages with numerous color illustrations. MAK, Vienna/Birkhäuser Verlag, Basel 2021. Available at the MAK Design Shop and via [MAKdesignshop.at](http://MAKdesignshop.at) for € 69.95.

With this exhibition and its accompanying catalog, the MAK is helping to paint a much richer and more detailed picture of Josef Hoffmann as a creator and teacher and to show his role—from Modernism to the present day—in a different light. As a competence center of Viennese Modernism, the MAK is home to the world's most comprehensive holdings of furniture, objects, and designs by Hoffmann. The MAK and the Moravian Gallery in Brno run a joint branch in the house where Josef Hoffmann was born in Brtnice, Czech Republic.

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

A cooperation between the MAK and the University of Applied Arts Vienna

Press Data

**JOSEF HOFFMANN**  
**Progress Through Beauty**

Exhibition Dates	15 December 2021 – 19 June 2022
Opening Hours	Tue 10 a.m.–9 p.m., Wed–Sun 10 a.m.–6 p.m.
Guest Curators	Matthias Boeckl, Christian Witt-Döring
Curator	Rainald Franz, Curator, MAK Glass and Ceramics Collection
Publication	<i>JOSEF HOFFMANN 1870–1956: Progress Through Beauty. The Guide to His Oeuvre</i> , edited by Christoph Thun-Hohenstein, Matthias Boeckl, Rainald Franz, and Christian Witt-Döring, with articles by Matthias Boeckl, Elisabeth Boeckl-Klamper, Rainald Franz, Anette Freytag, Sebastian Hackenschmidt, Otto Kapfinger, Markus Kristan, Christopher Long, Klára Němečková, Andreas Nierhaus, Jan Norrman, Eva-Maria Orosz, Adrián Prieto Fernandez, Ursula Prokop, Lara Steinhäuser, Valerio Terraroli, Wolfgang Thillmann, Christoph Thun-Hohenstein, and Christian Witt-Döring. English, 448 pages with numerous color illustrations. MAK, Vienna/Birkhäuser Verlag, Basel 2021. Available in the MAK Design Shop and via <a href="http://MAKdesignshop.at">MAKdesignshop.at</a> for € 69.95.
Exhibition Architecture	Gregor Eichinger
Graphic Design	Maria Anna Friedl
Supporting Program	For details please see <a href="http://MAK.at">MAK.at</a>  At <a href="http://Guide.MAK.at">Guide.MAK.at</a> you can find audios on the highlights of the exhibition for free and without download.
MAK Admission	€ 15 / Reduced € 12 Every Tuesday 6–9 p.m.: admission € 7 Free admission for children and teens under 19



MAK Press and PR

Judith Anna Schwarz-Jungmann (Head)  
Sandra Hell-Ghignone  
Ulrike Sedlmayr  
T +43 1 711 36-233, -229, -212  
[presse@MAK.at](mailto:presse@MAK.at)  
[www.MAK.at/en](http://www.MAK.at/en)

Vienna, 14 December 2021