

Press Release

OTTO PRUTSCHER **Universal Designer of Viennese Modernism**

Press Conference	Tuesday, 19 November 2019, 10:30 a.m.
Opening	Tuesday, 19 November 2019, 7 p.m.
Exhibition Venue	MAK Permanent Collection Contemporary Art MAK, Stubenring 5, 1010 Vienna
Exhibition Dates	20 November 2019 – 11 October 2020
Opening Hours	Tue 10 a.m.–10 p.m., Wed–Sun 10 a.m.–6 p.m.

Seventy years since his death and over twenty years since the last major exhibition in Vienna, the MAK is turning the spotlight on the oeuvre of Otto Prutscher (1880–1949). The exhibition *OTTO PRUTSCHER: Universal Designer of Viennese Modernism* illustrates the manifold roles played by Prutscher as a designer and architect, exhibition designer, teacher, and member of all the arts and crafts movements—from the Secession to the Wiener Werkstätte and the Werkbund—that were essential to the development of Viennese Modernism. Select examples from his complex oeuvre document his decades of influence as a designer for and advisor to the most prominent decorative art companies of his age.

Despite his creativity and versatility, the work of this great decorative artist and architect had not been paid fitting tribute until now. Prutscher's legacy includes over 50 structures (villas, houses, portals), some 50 exhibitions that he (co)designed and (co)organized, approx. 170 interiors, over 300 interior designs, and more than 200 pieces and sets of furniture. A generous donation of 139 designs, objects in silver, glass, and ceramic, as well as furniture, by the collector Hermi Schedlmayer is the MAK's inspiration for this solo show.

Viennese Art Nouveau was the cradle that nurtured Otto Prutscher and allowed him to thrive. Ten years younger than Josef Hoffmann and Adolf Loos, Prutscher belonged to the first generation of students at the Vienna School of Arts and Crafts to profit from the teaching reform under the direction of Felician von Myrbach that aligned the school with the Arts & Crafts movement, as well as from young professors like Josef Hoffmann and Koloman Moser. Prutscher acquired a mastery of materials in the cabinetmaking workshop of his father Johann Prutscher, as well as during a bricklaying apprenticeship and experience as a carpenter, which he completed during the months of the summer vacation.

After being admitted to the Vienna School of Arts and Crafts in 1897, Prutscher attended a course in ornamental drawing under Willibald Schulmeister and later spent two semesters studying in Josef Hoffmann's architecture school. This was followed by two semesters in Franz Matsch's drawing and painting class. Being taught by the Secessionist architect Hoffmann and the pre-Modernist painter Matsch would leave its mark: on the one hand

Prutscher's designs and executed works exhibit high-quality draftsmanship, and on the other they cater for the prevailing trends in architecture.

From 1903 to 1907 Prutscher was an assistant at the Imperial Royal Education and Research Institute for Graphic Art and from 1908 he was a teacher at the Imperial Royal Teaching Materials Bureau in Vienna. He started working for the Wiener Werkstätte from 1907. His teacher Josef Hoffmann successfully nominated him for a professorship at the Imperial Royal School of Arts and Crafts in 1909; there he oversaw the public design drawing room for craftspeople until his mandatory retirement in 1939 due to his wife's Jewish descent.

Prutscher's designs were executed by over 200 companies, above all the Wiener Werkstätte and prominent manufacturing firms like Backhausen, Klinkosch, Augarten, Meyr's Neffe, Schappel, Melzer & Neuhardt, and the Deutsche Werkstätten in Dresden. For Thonet, Loetz Witwe, and Wienerberger he worked as an artistic advisor.

With some 200 designs from the Otto Prutscher estate at the MAK, the Schedlmayer Collection, and Otto Prutscher's family archive in Milan, as well as realized objects and furniture from the collections of the MAK and the Schedlmayer family and from private lenders, the exhibition provides an overview of the oeuvre of this "universal designer." Many of the designs—including those for objects owned by the MAK—are on display for the first time and could be identified in Otto Prutscher's family archive, which is in the hands of his granddaughter Beba Restelli, in Milan in the course of research in preparation for the exhibition. The highlight of the show is the vitrine designed by Otto Prutscher for the "Room for an Art Enthusiast" at the Viennese Kunstschau in 1908, which was gifted to the MAK by Hermi Schedlmayer.

The MAK Library and Works on Paper Collection boasts some 1 200 works on paper (drawings, plans, designs, and photographs) by Otto Prutscher and hence the largest graphic holdings of his work in a public collection. The first 18 sheets entered the MAK Collection in 1955 when the Wiener Werkstätte's archive was transferred to the museum. The first comprehensive partial bequest from Otto Prutscher was donated to the MAK in 1979–1980 thanks to the initiative of his daughters Helly de Kuysler Prutscher and Ilse Restelli-Prutscher, who are both Italian residents. The latest donation was made by Hermi Schedlmayer in 2018 and completed the Otto Prutscher estate at the MAK.

In the context of the large-scale EU project "ART NOUVEAU—Sustainable protection and promotion of Art Nouveau heritage in the Danube Region," the MAK was able to review and digitalize its complete holdings of drawings and designs by Prutscher. The results of this project have been incorporated in the publication to accompany the exhibition: *OTTO PRUTSCHER: Universal Designer of Viennese Modernism* (MAK Studies 26), edited by Christoph Thun-Hohenstein and Rainald Franz. With contributions by Silvia Colombari, Claas Duit, Rainald Franz, Aline Müller, Kathrin Pokorny-Nagel, Beba Restelli, Elisabeth Schmuttermeyer, and Christoph Thun-Hohenstein. German/English, 160 pages with nu-



merous color illustrations. MAK, Vienna/Arnoldsche Art Publishers, Stuttgart 2019.
Available at the MAK Design Shop and at MAKdesignshop.at for € 29.

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

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Press Data

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Curator	Rainald Franz, Curator, MAK Glass and Ceramics Collection
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MAK Admission	€ 12 / Reduced € 9 / Family Ticket € 15 Every Tuesday 6–10 p.m.: admission € 5 Free admission for children and teens under 19
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Vienna, 19 November 2019