

SIDEKICKS

Rings and Bags from the MAK Collection

The Opening of the Exhibition Is the Starting Point of this Year's Season at the Geymüllerschlössel

MAK Press and PR

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Press Release

Vienna, 7.5.2025

Press Tour

Friday, 9.5.2025, 10 am

With the *SIDEKICKS* exhibition, the MAK is presenting a selection of the most beautiful and interesting handbags and finger rings from the MAK Collection in a splendid Biedermeier ambience. The exhibition ranges from the charming pouches and embroidered carpet bags of the Biedermeier era to exquisite leather works based on designs by the Wiener Werkstätte and luxury bags by Dior or Gucci to the bizarre object of a piglet with a handle by Carol Christian Poell. The exhibition is the opening of this year's season at the MAK Geymüllerschlössel.

The handbag is a transport container, an accessory, a design object, and a status symbol all in one. Be it as a practical object, a personal style statement, or even as an investment: the handbag is an object of desire.

The pouch—the original form of the handbag—evolved with the fashion of clothing. Initially, it was worn on the outside, later it hid as a garment pocket in wide trousers and skirts, and eventually it was worn on the outside again when silhouettes became slimmer. In the 18th century, a fondness for ancient models and column-like, gauzy dresses arose. The handbag became an indispensable accessory. During the Biedermeier era, the fashion of bags gained significance with its variety of shapes, colors, and materials. The embroidered carpet bag became a “must-have”—and this can be considered the moment the handbag was born.

For centuries, the handbag has played the role of the closest companion. Once intended for the storage and transportation of personal items, it itself has by now become a personal item. Its function, design, and making tell many stories: of fashion and social circumstances, artisanal skills and production conditions, needs and desires.

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Like the handbag, the finger ring, too, is one of a person's most personal objects. Be it as a wedding ring or a friendship ring symbolizing the connection and fellowship between two people, as a signet ring representing authority and power, or as a mourning ring worn in memory of a loved one.

The exhibition at the Geymüllerschlössel showcases rings from the Middle Ages to the present: heavy legate's rings made of gilt bronze, black mourning rings in cast iron, romantic friendship rings with interwoven hands, Art Nouveau rings featuring enchanting decorations from flora and fauna by René Lalique, Josef Hoffmann, or Dagobert Peche, as well as contemporary ring sculptures like those by Michelle Kraemer, Peter Skubic, Petra Zimmermann, and other Austrian jewelry artists.

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On this journey through the centuries, handbags and finger rings form delicate relationships with each other, thus creating a new narrative of the 21st century. They are both objects that are only completed by the body. Therefore, the guest curator, Ulrike Johannsen, chose the hand as a design element connecting both objects as a body part. The central installation of the exhibition is found in the domed hall: a circular pedestal with a cascade of wooden hands, on which luxurious handbags from Gucci to Dior are presented.

Ulrike Johannsen

After her training as a goldsmith and a short visit to the class for product design with Carl Auböck at the University of Applied Arts, artist Ulrike Johannsen finally studied sculpture with Bruno Gironcoli at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna. In her artistic practice, artisanal techniques play an important role, and she consistently addresses the relationship between fine and applied arts. As part of her artistic practice, Johannsen realizes exhibitions in her artist-run space Clubclub.wien or most recently, in 2023, *Pride and Prejudice: Art & Craft – A Love Story* at the Heiligenkreuzerhof, the University Gallery of the Angewandte.

MAK Geymüllerschlössel

The Geymüllerschlössel in Pötzleinsdorf was built after 1808 commissioned by the merchant and banker Johann Jakob Geymüller (1760–1834) as a "summer building." It remained property of the family until 1842. Afterwards, it changed owners several times until it was finally sold by the Austrian National Bank to the Republic of Austria in 1948 and joined the MAK as a branch in 1965. In addition to the permanently exhibited 160 exquisite Old Viennese clocks from the Franz Sobek collection, Empire and Biedermeier furniture from the MAK's furniture collection complement the valuable overall picture of the Geymüllerschlössel.

In the park of the Schlössel, the sculptural ensemble *Der Vater weist dem Kind den Weg* [The Father Shows his Child the Way] (1996/97) by the recently deceased artist Hubert Schmalix as well as James Turrell's Skyspace *The*



Other Horizon (1998/2004) represent a contemporary aspect in the dialogue with the past.

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

PROGRAM

Saturday, 10.5.2025

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2 pm–4 pm, MAK4Mama

More information and tickets at MAK.at

Only in the garden of the Geymüllerschlössel if the weather is good (if the weather is bad at the MAK)

5.30 pm, opening

Of the exhibition

Lilli Hollein, General Director, MAK

Ulrike Johannsen, Guest Curator

Subsequently

Tour of the exhibition with Guest Curator Ulrike Johannsen as well as MAK Curators Anne-Katrin Rossberg and Lara Steinhäußer

2 pm–8 pm

Drinks and music in the garden

Free admission after 5 pm



Press Tour

Friday, 9.5.2025, 10 am

Opening

Saturday, 10.5.2025, 5.30 pm

Exhibition Venue

MAK Geymüllerschlössel

Pötzleinsdorfer Straße 102, 1180 Vienna

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Exhibition Dates

10.5.–2.11.2025

Opening Hours

10.5.–2.11.2025

every Sat and Sun, 10 am–6 pm

Guest Curator

Ulrike Johannsen

MAK Curators

Anne-Katrin Rossberg, Curator MAK Metal Collection and Wiener Werkstätte Archive

Lara Steinhäußer, Curator MAK Textiles and Carpets Collection

Admission

Admission online: € 7,50

Admission on site: € 8

Free admission for children and teens under 19

Free admission with MAK Annual Ticket

MAK Press and PR

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