

## THE FEST Between Representation and Revolt

MAK – Press and PR  
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**Press Release**  
Vienna, 13.12.2022

**Press Conference**  
Tuesday, 13 December 2022, 10 am  
Please register in advance at [presse@MAK.at](mailto:presse@MAK.at)

With the exhibition *THE FEST: Between Representation and Revolt* (MAK Exhibition Hall, 14.12.2022–7.5.2023), the MAK is inviting visitors to a diverse, opulent course that illustrates cultures and stories of celebrating—throughout the centuries—and makes them come alive. Embedded into an unusual exhibition design by the Austrian sculptor Peter Sandbichler, more than 650 objects in flashlights convey the creative richness of fests on various occasions and throughout time and social development. Whether mundane masquerade balls, political celebrations, subversive artists' fests, or contemporary club events: as varied as the people and occasions for celebrations are and were, normally there is a great creative will behind the scenes.

Fests are ephemeral, they permit a state of exception, celebrate occasions, and create their own realities—the exhibition *THE FEST* brings all of this into the MAK Exhibition Hall: with illustrations, artistic contributions, and various artefacts from parades, banquets, games, masquerade balls, public illuminations of entire streets, fireworks and flags, balls at court, or events on the central squares of a city. Fests do not necessarily equal entertainment, they actually follow serious interests, reflect world history on a larger or smaller scale, and are an expression of changing consumer habits.

Some exhibits like, for example, a masterly executed champagne cork bracelet (2002) represent playful decadence, glamour, self-presentation, loss of control, and exaggeration. Other objects of the exhibition represent strict orders and protocols. We long for exuberance and remember rituals and recurring occasions when we leave everyday life behind.

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Fests have always addressed questions of design. Artists, architects, and designers in all fields of practice have always planned, designed, and implemented fests and realized the need for splendor, sophistication, differentiation, subversion, and propaganda with their contributions and initiatives—and not rarely did they also join the party. Artists' fests and their relics are an essential part of the exhibition. On 13 April 2023, the MAK will conduct a "practical exercise" and celebrate an artists' fest.

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Historical and contemporary objects from the MAK Collection as well as unique loans and contributions convey a lot of what is essential for a fest: commemorative books, invitation cards, posters, flags, mirrors, champagne glasses, chandeliers, "Scherzgefäß" (joke vessels), centerpieces, jewels, fancy dress designs, robes and masquerades, group photos, films, sound, as well as works by contemporary artists in an atmospheric setting. The exploration of the topic of a fest makes the self-concept of an institution that preserves and protects, provides learning opportunities, thinks and plans beyond generations comprehensible.

Guest curated by Brigitte Felderer (Co-Curator: Olga Wukounig) in cooperation with MAK Curator Anne-Katrin Rossberg with the collaboration of all MAK Curators, the wealth of exhibits of the exhibition *THE FEST* merges to topic-related focus points and a narrative that reaches from the fest culture of the 19th century back into Baroque and Rococo and historically spans via the end of the Habsburg monarchy into the present, which has been and is being challenged by artistic avant-gardes and social urgencies.

For the presentation of the exhibition, Peter Sandbichler reused bicycle cardboard boxes and transformed them into a noble as well as environmentally friendly material. Its lightness makes curved horizons, deep-hanging ceiling sculptures, as well as towering cubatures possible and also provides the opportunity of spatially enclosing individual objects, thus creating a somewhat festive atmosphere in the 1,480 square meters large MAK Exhibition Hall and conveying different festive moods, architectures, and occasions.

As an entree to the exhibition, Nicole Six and Paul Petritsch "reflect" festive moods with a portable mirror wall that in turn is reflected in historical mirrors.

A spacious Venetian Murano chandelier by Cerith Wyn Evans transmits a presentation on early star photography by Siegfried Marx in Morse code. Stars and chandeliers as "furniture of the skies" (Peter Rath) have a space- and mood-altering effect.

Richly documented events of opulent fest culture include weddings at court and their decoration. For example, the rarely shown "Halle Jewelry" (16th c.) from the MAK Collection once decorated Maria Christierna's wedding dress, and after the dissolution of the marriage it was reworked as a festive chalice.



The parents of the Habsburg princess got married in 1571 in Vienna. The magnificent commemorative book that documents the festivities over several weeks in descriptions and images is stored in the MAK Library and Works on Paper Collection and is now for the first time again being made accessible to the public.

Since the 1890s, the celebrations for political May Day for the first time in the strictly ruled Habsburg Empire gathered huge masses of people in the squares and boulevards not only of Vienna. Film recordings, photographs, Festschriften, posters, flyers, flags, as well as designs for elaborate festive parades show May Day as an identity-forming event of an urban as well as political fest culture.

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Fests transform people, let them assume unusual roles or appear in masquerade. At the legendary *Bal Oriental* by the Mexican silver mine heir Charles de Beistegui, which took place in Venice in 1951, old nobility met Hollywood aristocracy and young luxury tailors like Christian Dior or Pierre Cardin encountered a class that had fully dedicated itself to the past. Photographs from the archive of André Ostier capture this fest in all its liveliness and irony.

Fests demand performance in many details. Which subtleties the planning of a fest could imply is shown by the “Zwettl Centerpiece,” which is more than four meters long and bears 60 groups of figures. It was made on the occasion of the golden anniversary of the perpetual vows of Abbot Rainer Kollmann in 1768. Nobody less than Joseph Haydn had been commissioned with accompanying the fest at the Zwettl Cistercian monastery with music.

A Benedictine monk would influence the development of the party drink par excellence: champagne flows at fests and parties. Champagne glasses are an almost essential accessory of an elegant as well as fancy fest culture—as a selection of glasses documents that was designed by different manufactories, architects, designers, and artists.

Further highlights of the show are items of clothing by Helmut Lang, Fred Adlmüller, or Demna Gvasalia for Balenciaga. As exemplary designers, they stand for festive dress codes that represent neither masquerade nor status, neither national affiliation nor determined sexiness. They conceive clothing as a kind of “gear,” the festive assertiveness of which is ultimately manifested by the self-esteem of a person.

During the time of the lockdown, collective dancing became an endangered urban reality, its loss became painfully evident both for those celebrating as well as for the democratic structure of an urban society. A sound installation lets visitors experience contemporary club culture in the exhibition.

General Director Lilli Hollein: “With *THE FEST*, the MAK is showing an exhibition that, just like the museum’s collection, spans a wide range, from



Baroque until the present, from grand balls via the May Day demonstrations to Berghain in Berlin. Therefore, all curators of the museum with their fields of responsibility for the collection were involved in this exhibition curated by Brigitte Felderer, and thus the MAK is also celebrating itself a bit.”

On the occasion of the exhibition, an eponymous, richly illustrated publication designed by OrtnerSchinko in Linz will be released, which will enlarge upon the topic of the fest with contributions by international experts.

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### **Participating Contemporary Artists**

Astro Polygon, Petra Bacher, Bogomir Doringer mit Rafael Kozdron, eSeL, Cerith Wyn Evans, Marcus Geiger, Gelatin, Sampo Hänninen, Thomas Hörl, Elke Krystufek, Kris Lemsalu, Markus and His Flowers, Haruko Maeda, Michèle Pagel, Patrick Pulsinger, Philipp Quehenberger, Patrick Rampelotto, George Rei, Liddy Scheffknecht, Christian Schwarzwald, Yinka Shonibare, Nicole Six und Paul Petritsch, Crazus Synapsus, Philip Topolovac, Anna Vasof, Herwig Weiser, Wiener Times, Anna Wukounig, Maria Ziegelböck, Siegfried Zaworka, Heimo Zobernig, Matthias Zykan.

### **Program**

Fests will be celebrated to accompany the exhibition *THE FEST*. You are invited to a carnival party and an artists' ball. We will host a ball dress exchange, will dance at the (young) MAK Rave. We organize mask and costume workshops, talk about revolt, celebrate moments together, and recycle from the remains of the party. You can find out more about the extensive accompanying program with workshops for families, schoolchildren, and adults, as well as discussions in the context of the new *Conversation Pieces* series at MAK.at/thefest  
Guided Tours (in German) every Saturday, 4.30 pm

Image material is available for download at [MAK.at/en/press](http://MAK.at/en/press).



**Press Conference**

Tuesday, 13.12.2022, 10 am

**Opening**

Tuesday, 13.12.2022, 7 pm

Free admission starting 6 pm

**Exhibition Venue**

MAK Exhibition Hall

MAK, Stubenring 5, 1010 Vienna

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**Exhibition Dates**

14.12.2022–7.5.2023

**Opening Hours**

Tue 10 am–9 pm, Wed to Sun 10 am–6 pm

**Guest Curator**

Brigitte Felderer

**Co-Curator**

Olga Wukounig

**MAK Curator**

Anne-Katrin Rossberg, Curator, MAK Metal Collection and Wiener Werkstätte Archive, with the collaboration of all MAK Curators

**Catalog**

*THE FEST: Between Representation and Revolt*, published by Lilli Hollein, Brigitte Felderer, Anne-Katrin Rossberg, with contributions by Chiara Baldini, Bogomir Doringer, Brigitte Felderer, Rainald Franz, Sebastian Hackenschmidt, Lilli Hollein, Werner Oechslin, Kathrin Pokorny-Nagel, Anne-Katrin Rossberg, Peter Sandbichler, Lara Steinhäußer, Bärbel Vischer, Mio Wakita-Elis and Marlies Wirth. German/English, ca. 432 pages with numerous illustrations. MAK, Vienna/Birkhäuser Verlag, Basel 2023. Available at the MAK Design Shop and at MAKdesignshop.at for € 49.

**MAK Admission**

€ 15, reduced € 12, every Tuesday 6–9 pm: admission € 7

Free admission for children and teens under 19



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