

TURNING PAGES Artists' Books of the Present

MAK – Press and PR

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Press Release

Vienna, 30.9.2025

Press Conference

Tuesday, 30.9.2025, 10 am

Books tell stories, convey knowledge and emotions, are windows onto new worlds—and conceptual creativity turns them into autonomous works of art. Since the 1960s, generations of artists have been rethinking the book as medium and using it to imaginatively express new ideas. Some 300 experimental publications in the MAK's *TURNING PAGES: Artists' Books of the Present* exhibition provide insights into the genre's aesthetic variety.

In 1977, American writer Lucy R. Lippard described an artist's book thus: "A book by an artist, not about art, but as art in itself." It is a genre that is especially welcoming to interdisciplinary approaches. Playing with formats, materials, and media, the artists presented here transform drawing, painting, photography, film, and music as they weave archive materials, photographs, fragments, and traces left by printing processes into autonomous book concepts. They thus expand the range of the book as medium—and that in an age flooded by digital content and AI-generated images.

With his *Shrine of the Book* (1965) museum in Jerusalem, Austrian-American architect, designer, artist, and scholar Frederick Kiesler transformed the book into an icon. The only building designed by him that was completed—and to which he also planned a book of the same name—it interprets the book as visionary actional space, functioning both as vehicle for a society marked by migration and as cultural memory.

The works exhibited in *TURNING PAGES* and their titles may be interpreted as humorous or critical commentaries on contemporary history. A maestro in this respect is Martin Kippenberger, whose books here include *O Rio de Janeiro besser (richtig)* [O Rio de Janeiro Better (Right)] (1987). Alluding to Ed Ruscha's iconic 1966 accordion-format book *Every Building on the Sunset*

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Strip, in his 2023 book *Some Buildings on the Streets of Kharkiv* Peter Malutzki documents the destruction caused by the Russian war of aggression in the Ukraine. And in his 1991/92 *The Political Book of Romania*, Ion Grigorescu sketches his personal impressions of Romanian society under the communist regime of the dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu.

Contemporary productions in the exhibition dialog with avantgarde positions. Thus, for instance Michael S. Riedel and Dennis Loesch's 2003 book *Oskar-von-Miller Strasse 16*, on the temporary experimental art space at that address in Frankfurt am Main, alludes to Andy Warhol's 1968 book *a: A novel*. And R. H. Quaytman's 2012 work *1. Chapter 24* recalls Hans Hollein's 1970 cassette catalog *Alles ist Architektur. Eine Ausstellung zum Thema Tod* [Everything is Architecture: An Exhibition on the Theme of Death], both published by the Städtisches Museum Mönchengladbach.

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A striking example of blending media is film-maker Derek Jarman's *A Finger in the Fishes Mouth* (1972), in which short poems and sketches echo the visual language of his Super-8 films. *A House of Dust* (1967) by Alison Knowles is an early example of a computer-generated poem—and is to be understood as a “poem in progress.”

The exhibition also offers insights into the creative processes behind artists' books through a selection of prototypes, photographs, drawings, over-paintings, archival documents, and materials used—such as a tableau consisting of cuttings from a fashion magazine, that Halvor Rønning used in his research for his 2018 book *I Would Button up My T-shirt if I Could*.

Designed by architect Robert Müller, the exhibition presents a colorful, exciting panorama of works by artists including Juliette Blightman, Alighiero Boetti, Christian Boltanski, Marcel Broodthaers, Milena Büsch, Ernst Caramelle, Bernd Cella, Tony Cokes, Ramesch Daha, Heinrich Dunst, Cerith Wyn Evans, Vincent Fecteau, Hans-Peter Feldmann, Heinz Frank, Isa Genzken, Richard Hawkins, Maria Lassnig, Dirk von Lowtzow, Olaf Nicolai, Claes Oldenburg, Henrik Olesen, Yoko Ono, Laura Owens, Florian Pumhösl, Andreas Reiter Raabe, Dieter Roth, Toni Schmale, Daniel Spoerri, Cy Twombly, Nicole Wermers, Tanja Widmann, and Christopher Wool.

Designed by Atelier Dreibholz, Paulus M. Dreibholz & Angelika Mayr, the publication accompanying the exhibition reflects the many-faceted aspects of the book as object and presents exclusively contributions by women artists—in order to set an example, given the fact that in the past women artists have had fewer opportunities to produce artists' books.

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

This project is supported by Creative Europe.





Co-financed by the
European Union

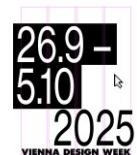
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The exhibition *TURNING PAGES: Artists' Books of the Present*, along with its supporting program and the accompanying publication, is part of the interdisciplinary Creative Europe project *AbeX*, funded by the European Union.

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The opening takes place in the context of the VIENNA DESIGN WEEK.



Press Conference

Tuesday, 30.9.2025, 10 am

Opening

Tuesday, 30.9.2025, 7 pm

Free admission to the opening of the exhibition

Lecture by Diedrich Diederichsen

Tuesday, 30.9.2025, 6 pm

MAK Columned Main Hall

Free admission to the lecture

Registration required at MAK.at/turningpages

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Exhibition Venue

Central Room MAK Design Lab

MAK, Stubenring 5, 1010 Vienna

Exhibition Dates

1.10.2025–22.3.2026

Opening Hours

Tue 10 am–9 pm, Wed to Sun 10 am–6 pm

Curator

Bärbel Vischer, Curator, MAK Contemporary Art Collection

Publication

The exhibition is accompanied by the publication *TURNING PAGES: Artists' Books of the Present*, edited and authored by Lilli Hollein and Bärbel Vischer, graphic design by Atelier Dreibholz, Paulus M. Dreibholz & Angelika Mayr. German/English, 72 pages with numerous color illustrations. MAK, Vienna 2025. Available at the MAK Design Shop and online at MAKdesignshop.at/en for € 21.

Accompanying Program

In the context of the VIENNA ART WEEK

Guided tour *TURNING PAGES: Artists' Books of the Present*

Simultaneously translated into Austrian Sign Language (ÖGS)

Sunday, 9.11.2025, 2.30–3.30 pm

MAK Columned Main Hall

Admission and participation free with registration

Registration requested

Within the framework of the VIENNA ART WEEK

Lecture: *More Than Just Words—Experimentelle Dichtung und bildende Kunst*

Vanessa Joan Müller, Curator and Author

Sunday, 9.11.2025, 4 pm

MAK Columned Main Hall



Registration required at MAK.at/turningpages

MAK Admission

€ 16,50/15,50*; reduced € 13,50/12,50*;
every Tuesday 6–9 pm: Admission € 8/7,50*
Free admission free for children and teens under 19
* Online ticket price

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