

URSI FÜRTLER Textile—Abstract

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MAK – Press and PR

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Press Release

Vienna, 17.3.2026

Press Conference

Tuesday, 17.3.2026, 10 am

Pleated fabrics, screen prints, abstract geometric forms in the tradition of Classical Modernism, and a fascination for Japanese and African decorative arts make Ursi Fürtler's (* 1939) artistic work unmistakable. Titled *Textile—Abstract*, the MAK is, for the first time, dedicating a solo exhibition to this renowned, award-winning Austrian textile artist, which will be opened on her birthday. The exhibition will present a cross-section of her entire oeuvre, ranging from textile designs on paper from the 1970s and 1980s and folding screens to textiles at the intersection of sculptural objects and wearable garments.

Fürtler's most famous pieces include wearable textile objects made from synthetic fiber, silk, and wool, which she began creating in the 1980s. They often play with printed and unprinted sections along the creases of complex pleating arrangements. The pleats are reminiscent of Mariano Fortuny or Issey Miyake. At the same time, the surface design of the textiles reveals—most prominently in movement—esthetic effects that bring the iridescent plumage of birds of paradise and gallinaceous birds or the scaly patterns of reptiles to mind.

The artist achieves her characteristic patterns through stencil screen printing, using a combination of three to five stencils that generate abstract shapes, such as circles, rectangles, triangles, or zigzags, through small dots and narrow as well as wider stripes. Tube-like objects can be worn on the body as wrist or shoulder warmers, or even as skirts and dresses, while other pieces that are either rectangular or sewn from symmetrical wings are multi-functional and can be used as scarves or belts.

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Her oeuvre also includes folding screens and carpet designs, which, with their geometric patterns and contrasting primary colors, very clearly reference the modernist textile art of Art Deco and the Bauhaus. Alongside textiles from the Arts and Crafts movement and the Wiener Werkstätte, these belong to her most important sources of inspiration.

Fürtler's canon of forms is also shaped by her engagement with Japanese stencil techniques such as "Katazome" and "Katagami," as well as with traditional symbols, especially the "mon" family emblem. Time and again, she also draws inspiration from the woven Kente textiles of the Akan and Ewe people, which in the past were only reserved for important people in West Africa.

In addition to the pleats, some of the tube-shaped objects feature hand-frayed ends or stiffened, rolled ridges that lend them swinging or crimped effects. These, as also some hats or headpieces, were created in collaboration with the artist and milliner Walli Jungwirth.

Not all of Ursi Fürtler's textiles follow this characteristic set of rules. Occasionally, they are unprinted or crease-free, feature perforated patterns, or are crafted from transparent materials. Her broad oeuvre impressively demonstrates how vital an experimental approach to material and its diverse possibilities is to Ursi Fürtler's entire creative practice.

After studying printmaking at the Hetzendorf Fashion School and the Academy of Applied Arts (today's University of Applied Arts Vienna), Ursi Fürtler worked in Sweden as a porcelain designer for one year. In the 1970s, she began designing textile patterns that were produced and sold in Austria (Josef Otten, Backhausen, Rueff Textil), Germany, Switzerland, England, the USA, and West Africa. As a woman, the femininely connotated medium of textiles, which at the time was primarily associated with design rather than art, offered her the opportunity to generate an income through her creative skills. Starting in 1983, she worked in her own studio in Mödling. In addition to scarves and home textiles, she also produced folding screens and garments, which were presented at the MAK as part of the "U-Mode Messe" (U-Fashion Fair) in 1986/87 as well as at other venues.

In addition to her artistic practice, Ursi Fürtler was also active in teaching: in 1987 and 1989, she served as the Austrian representative for textiles at the Seminar Bauhaus Dessau. She also taught at the Hetzendorf Fashion School and at the Burg Giebichenstein University of Art and Design in Halle an der Saale.

In 2003, she was awarded the Bavarian State Prize, and in 2016, the Decoration of Honour in Gold for Services to the Republic of Austria.

Press photos are available for download at [MAK.at/en/press](https://www.mak.at/en/press).



Press Conference

Tuesday, 17.3.2026, 10 am

Opening

Tuesday, 17.3.2026, 7 pm

Free admission to the exhibition opening

Exhibition Venue

MAK Forum

MAK, Stubenring 5, 1010 Vienna

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Exhibition Dates

18.3.–9.8.2026

Opening Hours

Tue 10 am–9 pm, Wed to Sun 10 am–6 pm

Curator

Lara Steinhäuser, Curator, MAK Textiles and Carpets Collection

MAK Admission

€ 19/18*

reduced € 15,50/14,50*

every Tuesday 6–9 pm: Admission € 9,50/8,50*

Free admission for children and teens under 19

* online ticket price

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