

20 Years of VIENNA DESIGN WEEK

A City Full of Posters

A collaborative exhibition between the MAK and the
VIENNA DESIGN WEEK

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MAK – Press and PR

presse@MAK.at

Press Release

Vienna, 17.9.2026

Opening

Tuesday, 29.9.2026, 7 pm

Free admission to the opening of the exhibition

The VIENNA DESIGN WEEK, Austria's largest curated design festival, celebrates its 20th anniversary this year. Every autumn, the image and public perception of this initiative, which was founded by Lilli Hollein, Tulga Beyerle, and Thomas Geisler and is now internationally renowned, have been significantly shaped by its poster campaigns. With the exhibition *20 Years of VIENNA DESIGN WEEK: A City Full of Posters*, the MAK honors the designers responsible for the visuals.

In autumn 2006, the announcement of a new design week in Vienna still seemed like a bold experiment in the shadow of the major, established design metropolises such as Milan or London. Starting out with the aspiration to liberate design from the niche of elitist luxury consumption and purely decorative object fetishism, the founders—calling themselves the “Neigungsgruppe Design” – launched the VIENNA DESIGN WEEK (VDW). The MAK has been a close partner of the festival since its first regular event in 2007. With this comprehensive exhibition of all VDW posters, the MAK now highlights the themes explored by the participating designers. In this anniversary year of 2026, the festival can look back on two decades of continuous transformation.

The success of the festival, which has been led by Gabriel Roland since 2021, has from the beginning been based on adopting the city as a living laboratory. Instead of relying on commercial exhibition halls, the VDW has embraced the principle of urban discovery. Through its deliberate avoidance of a fixed museum-based location, the festival has ensured that it constantly reinvents itself. Other key elements of success have been original formats such as the “Passionswege” (paths of passion), which combine international design studio

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concepts with Viennese craftsmanship, or “Stadtarbeit” (urban work) which uses design as a kind of tool for social urban planning.

Visual manifestos: the poster as a seismograph

Anyone looking for traditional product photography, perfectly lit design classics, or the appealing aesthetics of a furniture catalog on the VDW’s promotional posters will be very much disappointed. This metamorphosis in content is reflected with remarkable consistency in the visual identity and annual poster campaigns of the VIENNA DESIGN WEEK.

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The festival campaigns, designed by progressive graphic design studios such as Bia Grabner and Rudolf Zündel, Bueronardin, Fredmansky, and Studio Sirene, have always acted as visual statements in public spaces. Each poster design navigates a permanent, productive tension between a rigid, recognizable institutional framework and maximum creative freedom for each year’s corporate identity. The striking logo “VIENNA DESIGN WEEK (VDW)” acts as a visual anchor, though nonetheless regularly deconstructed or reinterpreted typographically.

The fact that VDW’s posters transcend the boundary between applied graphics and autonomous art is proven by regular accolades: Christof Nardin and Pascal Magino (Bueronardin) shaped the graphic identity of the VIENNA DESIGN WEEK from 2011 to 2024. Their striking 2020 campaign was recognized at the prestigious *100 Best Posters: Germany, Austria, Switzerland* competition. One of their posters also reached the final of the coveted European Design Awards in 2013.

Within the context of historical retrospectives, the posters from the past two decades have themselves become subjects of archival research and museum exhibits. They provide enduring evidence that the visual communication of the VIENNA DESIGN WEEK has long since crossed the boundary between applied graphic design and standalone poster art. Like the festival itself, the campaigns reveal their multilayered nature, generating fascinating discussions, as well as encouraging passersby to stay for a while and enhancing viewers’ appreciation of good design in public spaces.

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

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**VIENNA
DESIGN
WEEK**



Opening

Tuesday, 29.9.2026, 7 pm

Free admission to the opening of the exhibition

Exhibition Venue

MAK Poster Forum

MAK, Stubenring 5, 1010 Vienna

Exhibition Dates

29.9.–1.11.2026

Opening Hours

Tue 10 am–9 pm, Wed to Sun 10 am–6 pm

Curators

Peter Klinger, Deputy Head, MAK Library and
Works on Paper 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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