

GLANZSTÜCKE

Van Cleef & Arpels High Jewelry × Masterpieces from the MAK Collection

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MAK – Press and PR

Press Release

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The exhibition *GLANZSTÜCKE: Van Cleef & Arpels High Jewelry × Masterpieces from the MAK Collection* creates a dialogue between unique and rarely shown objects from every part of the significant MAK Collection with jewelry art from the 120-year history of High Jewelry Maison Van Cleef & Arpels. The project is the result of an intensive collaboration and inspiring discourse between the two institutions that are united by their shared enthusiasm for outstanding designs, exceptional craftsmanship, and visionary ideas. Some 500 objects spread across six chapters illustrate the principle of excellence that guided this unique exhibition cooperation.

Born from the marriage of Alfred Van Cleef and Esther (known as Estelle) Arpels, Van Cleef & Arpels was founded on Paris' Place Vendôme in 1906. The MAK was established in 1863. As the world's second-oldest museum of applied art, it runs the gamut from design, architecture, and fashion to contemporary art and stands for a productive connection between the past, present, and future.

In *GLANZSTÜCKE: Van Cleef & Arpels High Jewelry × Masterpieces from the MAK Collection*, famous pieces from the MAK Collection—from medieval textiles to ingenious designs by the Wiener Werkstätte—meet highlights from Van Cleef & Arpels' patrimonial Collection, an ensemble which comprises over 3,000 High Jewelry, Jewelry and Watchmaking creations, as well as precious objects. This Collection, exemplifying the Maison's stylistic and technical evolution from its founding to the present day, was initiated in the 1970s. Jacques Arpels began buying back historic pieces representative of Van Cleef & Arpels' style to preserve them for future generations.

When selecting the exhibits—ca. 300 from the Van Cleef & Arpels Collection and ca. 200 from the MAK Collection—six themes emerged: *Wanderlust, Architecture, Rhythmic Design, On Stage, Metamorphosis, and Nature & Cosmos*.

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Conceived by the Atelier Tsuyoshi Tane Architects (ATTA), the scenography reveals these themes in the form of a maze—an impressive way to guide visitors through this dialogue that has uncovered surprising parallels.

The promenade begins with objects inspired by travel. Van Cleef & Arpels designed in 1906 a scale model of the sailing yacht *Varuna*. Made of gold, silver, and jasper, this creation, which renders in precious materials an impression of movement, hides a special function: an electronic bell system has been integrated in the funnel with which the butler can be called.

The *Varuna Yacht* is juxtaposed with the MAK's so-called *Portuguese Carpet* from the early 17th century. The museum's world-famous carpet collection contains rare knotted-pile carpets that used to be owned by the Austrian imperial family. Exceptionally well-preserved, the *Portuguese Carpet* from Central Asia bears ships with passengers in European dress surrounded by sea monsters in rough seas. It was presumably produced for a Portuguese clientele or for Portuguese colonies in India.

The next section turns visitors' attention to the beauty of architectural forms and sculptural elements. Patented by Van Cleef & Arpels in 1933, the *Minaudière* results from a new focus on functionality. The originality of this improved vanity case lies in its clever interior layout: the lid opens to compartments designed to hold personal items, such as a powder box, a watch, a lighter, and a lipstick. The restrained yet refined design resembles an envelope and is typical of the modernist movement of the 1930s.

Impressive details can also be found in the classicistic card table (1775) by the famous ebonist David Roentgen from the MAK Collection. It has various drop leaves and contains boards for playing cards, chess, and backgammon. The uppermost tabletop bears a chinoiserie made of exotic woods and is a spectacular example of what Roentgen was capable of "painting" with wood.

"Rhythmic Design" focuses on geometric fabric patterns from the MAK Collection and dynamically structural creations by Van Cleef & Arpels. Among the pieces on display are the *Silhouette Flower* clips created in the late 1930s. They demonstrate the formal stylization of the late Art Deco period and reinterpret the flower motif in keeping with modernist principles. Having already developed a radically reduced aesthetic idiom around 1900, the Wiener Werkstätte (WW) can be considered a trailblazer of Art Deco. The MAK holds the WW's archive with its thousands of designs and fabric patterns that serve as masterly illustrations of the theme of rhythm.

The fourth section is dedicated to the stage and tells of classic Viennese topics like opera, dance, and music. In the 19th century, Vienna evolved into a center of ball culture, especially in the wake of the Congress of Vienna in 1815. A ball gown in white silk from this period has been preserved at the MAK that is adorned with elaborate sculptural silver embroidery.



Over a century later, in the context of World War II, feminine figures—dancers and fairies—entered Van Cleef & Arpels' repertoire and imparted an aura of poetry and hope into its creation. Fairies, such as the *Little Winged Fairy* clip, embody the Maison's enchanting universe.

"Metamorphosis" is about reinterpretation and transformability as design qualities. A folding screen by Koloman Moser from 1906 and the *Zip* necklace transformable into a bracelet—an innovative creation patented by Van Cleef & Arpels in 1938—are two highlights in this exhibition.

The *Zip* necklace was inspired by the zipper used in aviator suits. Embraced by couturiers as early as the 1920s, it was later highlighted by Elsa Schiaparelli in the 1930s. Created for the first time in 1950, the *Zip* borrows its iconography from the world of couture, a major source of inspiration for Van Cleef & Arpels. Koloman Moser's folding screen is ornamented to great effect with gold leaf and collages and reveals a great deal about Japanese influences and their transformation at the time of Viennese Modernism.

The exhibition closes with an homage to the beauty of nature and the universe and demonstrates that flora, fauna, and cosmos are ever-present themes in both collections. The *Chrysanthemum* clip showcases the Mystery Set, a technique patented by Van Cleef & Arpels in 1933 that consists of setting the gemstones while rendering the gold mount invisible. Exemplifying the 1936 second patent that adapted the first for more complex designs, this creation captures the efflorescence of the flower, evoking its texture and nuance.

Dated 1553, an armillary sphere from the MAK Collection likewise combines aesthetics with technology in a remarkable way. Its rotatable metal rings demonstrate the movements of the celestial bodies and serve to calculate astronomical coordinates, while artful zodiac images are engraved on the outer ring.

Visitors to the exhibition *GLANZSTÜCKE: Van Cleef & Arpels High Jewelry × Masterpieces from the MAK Collection* will embark on a journey of discovery through the entire spectrum of the decorative arts.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a comprehensive catalog with contributions by experts from the museum and the High Jewelry Maison. It will be edited by the MAK and Van Cleef & Arpels and designed by the Viennese graphic design studio Bueronardin.

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



Opening Press Conference

Tuesday, 9.6.2026, 10 am

Opening

Tuesday, 9.6.2026, 7 pm

Free admission to the exhibition opening

Exhibition Venue

MAK Exhibition Hall (ground floor)

MAK, Stubenring 5, 1010 Vienna

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Exhibition Dates

10.6.–27.9.2026

Guest Curator, Van Cleef & Arpels

Alexandrine Maviel-Sonet, Director of Patrimony and Exhibitions

Curator, MAK

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

Exhibition Architecture

Atelier Tsuyoshi Tane Architects

Opening Hours

Tue 10–9 pm, Wed to Sun 10 am–6 pm

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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