

TYPOMANIA

Curator's Choice by Kathrin Pokorny-Nagel

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MAK – Press and PR

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Press Release

Vienna, 17.3.2025

One of the most important aspects of poster art, typography, is the topic of the first *Curator's Choice* at the MAK Poster Forum. The new format provides the Curators of the MAK Collection the opportunity to present their views and preferences as well as special aspects of poster design. In the first edition of *Curator's Choice*, Kathrin Pokorny-Nagel, Head of the MAK Library and Works on Paper Collection/Archive, is highlighting the key role typography plays par excellence as a means of expression in the design of posters. She does so by using around 100 examples from 140 years of graphic design history.

TYPOMANIA covers a wide design spectrum, illustrating the broad field in which typography operates in poster design. In a deliberately subjective selection, Kathrin Pokorny-Nagel encourages a direct and at the same time random comparison between historical and contemporary graphic design. Arranged alphabetically by the last names of the designers and detached from any chronological or geographical context, posters from one and a half centuries are confronted with one another. On display are works by Jules Chéret, Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, Koloman Moser, Alfons Mucha, Heinrich Lefler, Franziska Harlfinger-Zakucka, Maria Jungwirth, Rudolf Larisch, Hertha Ramsauer, Lucian Bernhard, Mathilde Flögl, Robert Haas, Otto Hurm, Fritz Helmuth Ehmcke, Lawrence Weiner, Melk Imboden, Niklaus Troxler, Jianping He, Anna Haas, Stefan Sagmeister, and other artists.

The quality that all displayed posters have in common is the significance of typography as a design tool. In the 19th century, with the industrial revolution and increasing urbanization, the demand for advertising and the communication of information rose. The poster assumed a central role in visual communication. Typography, still influenced by traditional printing techniques and hand-painted letters, already served the functional purpose of conveying information quickly through good readability and signal effects as well as evoking emotions in the viewers.

With the improvement of printing techniques, typefaces also became more diverse: Grotesque or serif-emphasizing Antiqua typefaces dominated and

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found their place in advertising. The exhibition spans from the first posters that were viewed as artistic signatures and were created in the course of the founding of the Vienna Secession in 1897 by artists such as Alfred Roller, Koloman Moser, and the students of Rudolf Larisch's class at the School of Arts and Crafts to examples of the merging of typography and illustration that arose from avant-garde movements during the interwar period. Examples are posters by Erika Giovanna Klien, Franz Čížek's student at the Viennese School of Arts and Crafts, as well as by Julius Klinger, Friedrich Kiesler, or Joseph Binder.

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In the 1950s to 1970s, Hans Fabigan, Paul Kurt Schwarz, Heinz Traimer, or Hilda Zenegg were strongly influenced by Swiss examples and the aftereffects of the Bauhaus. Their posters were dominated by typography.

Today, typography in poster design is more diverse than ever before. Designers draw on classical typefaces or create new ones and copy handwriting using computer-generated programs such as *Glyphs*. Typography has evolved from an advertising tool to an important part of visual communication.

With more than 30,000 posters, the MAK owns one of the largest poster collections in Austria, which impresses with its unique quality. Already at the 1900 Paris Exposition, 48 posters were purchased. Since then, the MAK has continuously expanded this collection with key works of international poster art.

On the occasion of Johann Strauss' 200th birthday, *TYPOMANIA* will be followed by *JOHANN STRAUSS: FRANTIC EXTASY. Feminist Free Dance in Posters 1900–1933*. The beginnings of expressionist free dance were linked to the Viennese Walz as Peter Klinger's choice of posters will prove (17.6.–2.11.2025).

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



Exhibition Venue

MAK Poster Forum

MAK, Stubenring 5, 1010 Vienna

Exhibition Dates

25.3.–15.6.2025

Opening Hours

Tue 10 am–9 pm, Wed to Sun 10 am–6 pm

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Curator

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

MAK Admission

€ 16.50/15.50*; reduced € 13.50/12.50*; every Tuesday 6–9 pm:

Admission € 8/7.50*

Free admission for children and teens under 19

* Online ticket price

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