



EUROPEAN UNION



Press Release

## **KOLOMAN MOSER** **Universal Artist between Gustav Klimt and Josef Hoffmann**

Press Conference	Tuesday, 18 December 2018, 10:30 a.m.
Opening	Tuesday, 18 December 2018, 7 p.m.
Exhibition Venue	MAK Exhibition Hall MAK, Stubenring 5, 1010 Vienna
Exhibition Dates	19 December 2018 – 22 April 2019
Opening Hours	Tue 10 a.m.–10 p.m., Wed–Sun 10 a.m.–6 p.m.

To commemorate the centennial of his death, the MAK is honoring Koloman Moser (1868–1918), one of the great visionaries of Viennese Modernism, with one of the most comprehensive solo shows on his diverse oeuvre to date. The MAK exhibition *KOLOMAN MOSER: Universal Artist between Gustav Klimt and Josef Hoffmann* delves deep into the creative work of this exceptional artist and demonstrates just how instrumental Moser was in influencing the search for a new, modern language of form in fin-de-siècle Vienna. This is the first time that many of the 600 or so exhibits, largely taken from the MAK Collection, have been made accessible to the public. Structured chronologically, the MAK exhibition recalls every step of Moser’s unusual career: from painter to all-round designer and finally back to painting.

His oeuvre holds an enduring attraction that continues to this day. As a universal artist, Moser demonstrates mastery of the disciplines of painting, graphic art, arts and crafts, and interior design as well as fashion and scenography. Moser is an impressive living example of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* or total work of art that is propagated by the Vienna Secession. He is considered one of the most important pioneers of Viennese Modernism, one of the most influential artists of Viennese Art Nouveau, and is—alongside Gustav Klimt and Josef Hoffmann—one of the leading proponents of Vienna’s artistic renewal.

Divided into five chapters, the MAK exhibition—curated by Christian Witt-Döring, Guest Curator, and Elisabeth Schmuttermeier, Curator, MAK Metal Collection and Wiener Werkstätte Archive—contextualizes Moser’s work against the backdrop of the development in art theory in Vienna from 1860 to 1918.

Entitled “Vienna as a Stage for the Arts,” the introductory chapter of the exhibition is dedicated to the milieu that leaves its mark on the young Moser. From 1860 to 1890 Vienna experiences rapid social and economic development. A strengthened upper

class enables artists to venture into new fields of activity. Moser grows up with a vibrant generation of artists who can build on a fine artistic tradition. Particularly influential on Moser is Historicism's claim to *Gesamtgestaltung* or total design, which brings together architecture, painting, and sculpture to realize furnishing projects. Works by Hans Makart and the Viennese "Künstler-Compagnie" (Franz Matsch, Gustav and Ernst Klimt) among others hang at the entrance of the MAK exhibition alongside early oil paintings and graphic works by Koloman Moser that are still very much modeled on Naturalism.

The second chapter, "The Unity of Form and Function" (1889–1895), is dedicated to the architect and "father of Modernism" Otto Wagner as well as his influential role in Moser's career. Wagner criticizes the use of historical styles and coins the so-called *Nutzstil* (utility style). The unity of form and function—"form follows function"—becomes the credo of Modernism. Wagner's ideas have a great impact on the founding members of the Secession, Gustav Klimt, Koloman Moser, Carl Moll, Josef Hoffmann, and Joseph Maria Olbrich among others. It is also Wagner who recommends Moser along with Josef Hoffmann for a professorship at the School of Arts and Crafts at the Imperial Royal Austrian Museum of Art and Industry. Ultimately, however, the Secessionists align themselves with the Arts and Crafts movement, which gives the realization of the artistic idea precedence over function.

"Koloman Moser's Early Years" (1886–1896), the third section of the exhibition, presents the young Moser as a freelance artist. To finance his painting degree under Franz Matsch at the School of Arts and Crafts (1893–1895), Moser works intensively as an illustrator of books and newspapers from 1888. Together with fellow young artists who are increasingly dissatisfied with the Viennese art world's commitment to Naturalism, he joins forces with the Siebener-Club, which later gives rise to the Secession. A drawing by Gustav Klimt of the *Allegory of Sculpture*, which he produced for Martin Gerlach's pattern book for producers of arts and crafts, *Gerlach's Allegorien. Neue Folge* [Gerlach's Allegories: New Instalment], inspires Moser to adopt a new, curvilinear mode of expression, from which he ultimately develops the so-called Viennese *Flächenkunst* (planar art) influenced by Japanese art.

The fourth chapter, "The Unity of the Arts," shows Moser as a founding member of the Secession and universal artist. Inspired by the Secession's concept of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, Moser now dedicates himself exclusively to exhibition, scenic, and interior design as well as fashion. In collaboration with Josef Hoffmann, he produces interior concepts that achieve international fame as Viennese *Raumkunst* (interior design, literally "room art"). One famous example are the furnishings designed by artists for the city palace of the industrialist Nikolaus Dumba. Hans Makart furnishes the study (1871–1873), Gustav Klimt the music salon, and Franz Matsch the dining room (1897/98).

Around 1900 there is a marked stylistic caesura. A planar, geometrically reduced mode of expression now dominates Moser's designs; the square ornament becomes one of his

trademarks. The so-called Viennese style is born. Together with Josef Hoffmann and the patron Fritz Waerndorfer, Koloman Moser finally founds the Wiener Werkstätte (1903), which enables the uncompromising realization of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*. As a highlight of the exhibition, this exhibition area immerses visitors in the staggering abundance of timelessly beautiful interior designs, furniture, metal objects, leatherwork, and jewelry created in the Wiener Werkstätte.

The increasing dependency on a small circle of patrons induces Moser to leave the Wiener Werkstätte in 1907. He starts a new stage of his artistic career, dedicating himself almost exclusively to painting until his death in 1918. The final chapter of the exhibition, “Farewell to the Unity of the Arts,” presents an overview of Moser’s late painted work, with which he returns to the starting point of his creative career. Like a thread running through the show, a richly illustrated chronology of Moser’s creative work supplements the exhibition.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a comprehensive catalog.

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

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For his generous support we would like to thank  
Richard Grubman

Press Data

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Curators	Christian Witt-Döring, Guest Curator Elisabeth Schmuttermeier, Curator, MAK Metal Collection and Wiener Werkstätte Archive
Publication	The exhibition will be accompanied by a publication in German and English.
Supporting Program	In preparation
MAK Admission	€ 12 / Reduced € 9 / Family Ticket € 15 Every Tuesday 6–10 p.m.: admission € 5 Free admission for children and teens under 19
MAK Press and PR	Judith Anna Schwarz-Jungmann (Head) Sandra Hell-Ghignone Lara Steinhäuser Veronika Träger T +43 1 711 36-233, -212, -229 <a href="mailto:presse@MAK.at">presse@MAK.at</a> <a href="http://www.MAK.at/en">www.MAK.at/en</a>

Vienna, 8 August 2018