



EUROPÄISCHE UNION



Press Release

## **SHOWROOM WIENER WERKSTÄTTE A Dialogue with Michael Anastassiades**

Press Conference	Tuesday, 5 October 2021, 10 a.m. Registration required at <a href="mailto:presse@MAK.at">presse@MAK.at</a> The “2.5G” rule is to be observed for participation: vaccinated, recovered, tested (PCR, not older than 48 hours) Wearing a FFP2 mask is obligatory during the entire visit to the museum.
Exhibition Opening	Tuesday, 5 October 2021, 7 p.m., Free Admission
Exhibition Venue	MAK Permanent Collection Contemporary Art MAK, Stubenring 5, 1010 Vienna
Exhibition Dates	6 October 2021 – 2 October 2022
Opening Hours	Tue 10 a.m.–9 p.m., Wed–Sun 10 a.m.–6 p.m.

In the exhibition *SHOWROOM WIENER WERKSTÄTTE: A Dialogue with Michael Anastassiades*, the Cyprus-born London-based designer focuses our attention on the many-faceted design work of the Wiener Werkstätte (WW). In the room above the MAK Permanent Collection Vienna 1900, Anastassiades combines objects from Ernst Ploil's comprehensive collection with exhibits from the MAK Collection. Through the display he creates a fascinating presentation and reveals new contemporary perspectives on the groundbreaking era of Viennese Modernism. With its rich inventory of design- and craft-work from this epoch—to include the entire archive of the Wiener Werkstätte and the generously sized Permanent Collection Vienna 1900—the MAK is recognized as the international epicenter for Viennese Modernism.

With this exhibition the MAK continues a decades-long tradition of inviting artists and designers to engage with the museum and its collection. As a starting point of his presentation, Anastassiades has chosen the sphere, a design element that was already popular in the Biedermeier era and frequently formed the feet on WW cabinets. Two huge pedestals balanced on brass spheres serve to display the exhibits, that Anastassiades ingeniously highlights using spherical lights of his own design.

Michael Anastassiades' design practice oscillates between sculpture and applied art. With his chandeliers, tables, and other furniture constructed in a precise language of materials, he shares not only the absolute commitment to quality of the Wiener Werkstätte—founded in 1903 by artists Josef Hoffmann and Koloman Moser, and patron of the arts Fritz Waerndorfer—but also their language of forms, especially that of the early WW. Even before 1903, Hoffmann and Moser had developed a strictly geometrical and yet extremely elegant style, recognizable for instance in the Ploil Collection's furniture—shown in public for the first time in the MAK exhibition—made for the Villa Waerndorfer. Its minimized décor, consist-

ing of blue lines on a white background, is reminiscent of the Constructivist style, which first emerged in the 1920s.

Anastassiades is particularly fascinated by the WW's famous lattice objects—flower vases, fruit baskets, and centerpieces made of perforated sheet iron and painted white—that likewise originate from the Ernst Ploil Collection. Their characteristic grid and square motifs were considered the hallmark of the early WW style. Such lattice objects were much sought after and were manufactured in large numbers between 1904 and 1915, initially by the WW itself and later commissioned by the WW from the firm of Christoph Cloeter. Their hybrid appearance—located somewhere between objects of everyday use and works of architecture—demonstrates once more the WW's playful approach to design, one that Michael Anastassiades has adopted for his presentation here.

In *SHOWROOM WIENER WERKSTÄTTE* Anastassiades deliberately calls into question familiar perspectives on this celebrated era—Vienna around 1900: armchairs are placed on stilts, thus appearing to be anthropomorphic objects, and the backs of cabinets mirrored, creating unusual perspectives. With his spherical lamps—at once playful and severe—Anastassiades illuminates the objects from all sides in a revealing, almost magical, light—true to his motto: “The element of illumination is the most important thing. ‘The glow,’ as I refer to it, is where all the magic starts.”

A curatorial focus of Anastassiades—besides earlier WW objects—is the later form language of designers such as Dagobert Peche. A hanging lamp by Peche with an abstract vine leaf pattern is a further highlight of the exhibition.

Anastassiades' selection also makes clear the democratic nature of the WW's concept of the Gesamtkunstwerk. Houses, apartments, even kitchens and workshops, had to meet the highest design standards. A kitchen chair on display in the exhibition from the Purkersdorf Sanatorium, built in 1904 to Hoffmann's design, is made with the same care as the furniture in the public rooms there. A toolbox painted in blue lacquer also exemplifies the color scheme for the WW headquarters' workshops at Neustiftgasse 32–34 in Vienna's 7th district. The scheme was intended to simplify organizational procedures: in the metal workshops, everything was in red, in the bookbinding in grey, and in the carpentry workshop in blue.

The choice and processing of their materials were particularly important to the WW founders—a cheap article should never be passed off as something valuable. That is also Anastassiades' conviction: “I don't like materials that are trying to be something they're not, such as plastics that are sprayed in finishes and made to look like metals.”

Trained in industrial design at the Royal College of Art in London, Anastassiades is primarily known as a designer of lighting fixtures, but he also works in many other sectors. He has created glassware for J. & L. Lobmeyr and, recently, furniture for Gebrüder Thonet Vienna. In addition, he is active in exhibition and interior design. As early as 2012 he was invited by the MAK to redesign the Biedermeier interior of the Geymüllerschloss. There he created

an especially poetic intervention by assembling the numerous grandfather clocks from the Sobek Collection into one room, making them covert inhabitants of the Schlüssel.

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

The exhibition is a part of the project “ARTNOUVEAU2” (2020–2022) and is co-funded by the European Union (EFRE, IPA II), INTERREG Danube Transnational Program.

Press Data

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Guest Curator/ Exhibition Design	Michael Anastassiades
Curator	Anne-Katrin Rossberg, Curator, MAK Metal Collection and Wiener Werkstätte Archive
Technical Coordination	Michael Embacher, Christoph Wirth
MAK Admission	€ 14 / Reduced € 11 / Family Ticket € 15 Every Tuesday 6–9 p.m.: admission € 6 Free admission for children and teens under 19
MAK Press and PR	Judith Anna Schwarz-Jungmann (Head) Sandra Hell-Ghignone Ulrike Sedlmayr T +43 1 711 36-233, -212, -229 <a href="mailto:presse@MAK.at">presse@MAK.at</a> <a href="http://www.MAK.at">www.MAK.at</a>

Vienna, 5 October 2021