

FOLDS

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MAK – Press and PR

presse@MAK.at

Press Release

Vienna, 31.1.2023

Press Conference

Tuesday, 31.1.2023, 10 am

To participate please register at presse@MAK.at

For thousands of years, folds have been a design element in both the applied and fine arts. And as a natural marker of the passing of time, folds—or wrinkles—are also a feature of the human body. The MAK exhibition *FOLDS* traces the multidimensional nature of this phenomenon using 90 objects—for the most part from the MAK's own collection—that reveal the aesthetic, corporeal, philosophical, and cultural dimensions of folds from a range of perspectives encompassing the history of design, culture, and ideas, as well as cultural anthropology. Conceived both transregionally and transmedially, the exhibition presents an extremely diverse range of objects—from textiles to works made of paper, and from furniture to paintings—alternating as it does so between two contrasting thematic fields.

In the first part of the exhibition, creative forms and positions between the 16th and 19th centuries and from the present explore the nature of folds in clothing, paper, and plastic, as well as the art of folding as aesthetic strategy and cultural technique.

Ornamental pleated skirts from China, together with finely folded fabrics by textile artists SUDŌ Reiko and Ursi Fürtler, exemplify folds as a design element in textile art. Also represented is the recently deceased fashion designer Issey Miyake, whose “pleats please” collection possesses outstanding recognition value. Historical photographs from late 19th-century Persia showing fashionable ladies in pleated skirts bear witness to a seminal moment in the transcultural origins of European pleated skirts, thematically broadening the exhibition's scope through this insight into the history of fashion reception.

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A foldable 19th-century brass candlestick, Chinese “needle-thread-bags” made of paper with a multitude of fold-out pockets, and Japanese folding screens show the many ways in which folds can open up new vistas and new spaces.

The second thematic focus of the exhibition explores folds in relation to the human body—to the physical world and human perception thereof—that is to processes generated by nature. Folds constantly accompany the human body through its life cycle—as a biological mass it passes through a range of states and processes involving folding with respect to both its inner organs and its outer skin. Yet our perception of these folds is very diverse, depending as it does on our cultural affinity, the age we live in, and our gender.

This anthropological dimension is elucidated by placing historical 19th-century masks side-by-side with contemporary 21st-century masks. Studies of Chinese physiognomy from eastern Asia in the form of historical ritual and festival masks are juxtaposed with 3-D printed plastic masks based on scanned human faces.

The variety of possible interactions between human beings and folds is also demonstrated by Judith Huemer’s *HEADQUARTERS* series (2021), in which the artist investigates the complex relationships and disparities between the human body and its material envelope, as well as by *VENUS FROM VIENNA* by Viennese artist SONG Jing. This work explores experience and emotion, conceiving of folds as a symbolic trope in which the all-embracing spiritual life of human beings is both revealed and contained, obscured, negotiated, and finally processed.

In her works *Lost Colours* (2021) and *Configuration_30.8* (2018), Japanese artist Aika Furukawa also seizes on entropy as a natural law of the material universe. In portraying our world of superfluity and chaos, her contemporary perspective creates an ironic contrast to the ideals of literati painting, that portrayed a state of harmony between human beings, heaven, and nature.

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



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Tuesday, 31.1.2023, 10 am

Opening

Tuesday, 31.1.2023, 7 pm

Admission free from 6 pm

Exhibition Venue

Central Space MAK Design Lab
MAK, Stubenring 5, 1010 Vienna

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Exhibition Dates

1.2.2023—21.5.2023

Opening Hours

Tue 10 am–9 pm, Wed to Sun 10 am–6 pm

Curator

Mio Wakita-Elis, Curator, MAK Asia Collection

Exhibition Design: Robert Rűf

MAK Admission

€ 15, reduced € 12, every Tuesday 6–9 pm: admission € 7

Admission free for children and teens under 19

MAK Press and PR

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