



MAK

Press Release

HELMUT LANG ARCHIVE at the MAK An Intervention by Helmut Lang

Exhibition Venue MAK DESIGN LAB
 MAK, Stubenring 5, 1010 Vienna
Exhibition Dates 16 June – 1 November 2020
Opening Hours Tue 10 a.m.–9 p.m., Wed–Sun 10 a.m.–6 p.m.

Until 12 July 2020, the MAK is showing a temporary intervention by Helmut Lang in the HELMUT LANG ARCHIVE, questioning the archive as a simultaneous collection, storage, and exhibition place, as a store of memories, and the potential of its use. Since retiring from the fashion industry in 2005, the 1956-born Austrian has concentrated on his artistic work, and 20 international museums have received his donations. The MAK is the only institution worldwide where the history of Helmut Lang's brand development and identity can be traced. Since 2014 a thematic area in the MAK DESIGN LAB is permanently dedicated to Helmut Lang.

Throughout Helmut Lang's career as a fashion designer, the implementation of artistic strategies—formal deconstruction, the performative aspect of his variant of the fashion show format known as *Séance de Travail*, and frequent artist collaborations with Louise Bourgeois, the Robert Mapplethorpe Foundation, Jenny Holzer, or Juergen Teller—was a recurring aspect of his brand aimed at constantly expanding the modus operandi of fashion and its forms of communication.

In fact, Lang had begun to work as an artist outside of fashion design long before his deliberate resignation from the fashion industry in 2005: He presented work created together with Jenny Holzer at the Florence Biennial in 1996, followed by a joint exhibition with Holzer and Louise Bourgeois at Kunsthalle Wien in 1998. This parallel engagement can thus be viewed as a second stringent commitment to art. After a fire in the building that housed his office and studio in 2010, Lang shredded the remains of his partially charred design archive with the purpose of using it as raw material for a series of sculptures, reflecting on Louise Bourgeois's statement, "materials are just materials, they are here to serve you."

No longer limited by the restrictions of the human body, Lang has been concentrating on textures, materiality, and abstraction in his recent sculptural work, at times also providing the public with something that it had barely seen before: his private persona. For his current intervention at the HELMUT LANG ARCHIVE at the MAK Vienna,

Lang chose to show no garments, instead presenting newly edited material that offers a new approach to the collection. With a special video edit documenting 12 out of 19 years of his *Séance de Travail* collections (1986–2005) and a site-specific installation of excerpts from the *Selective Memory Series*, he is simultaneously abstracting and reinforcing the main qualities of the MAK archive. Oscillating between preserving and reinterpreting his fashion past, his intervention evokes memories without hierarchy. While showing details of some of his well-known advertisements, he reinvents them by overlapping different layers. With this artwork and temporary intervention, Lang makes use of the past in the present, proposing the idea of a “living archive” as an evolutionary extension of the HELMUT LANG ARCHIVE at the MAK.

The HELMUT LANG ARCHIVE at the MAK contains over 9 000 data records, including over 1 400 pieces of clothing, shoes, handbags, and accessories in the form of prototypes, and also one-offs for fashion shows and merchandise from his men’s and women’s collections. The MAK is the sole institution in this network of museums holding archive material, which shows the brand development and identity and represents one of the most remarkable aspects of his creative efforts.

Alongside this intervention five fashion looks by Helmut Lang are currently on display at the MAK exhibition *SHOW OFF: Austrian Fashion Design* (14 Feb – 12 Jul 2020) in the MAK Exhibition Hall (ground floor).

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

Press Data

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MAK Admission	€ 14 / Reduced € 11 / Family Ticket € 15 Tuesdays from 6–10 p.m.: Admission € 6 Free admission for children and teens under 19

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