

VIENNA DESIGN WEEK

FOKUS: ORNAMENT

For around a century, the notion of ornament has been synonymous with the ultimate crime, the antinomy of modernity and intellectualism. Today, however, contemporary designers seem to be increasingly liberated from this taboo and to the degree that we can happily reevaluate its status.

– Liv Vaisberg, Guest Curator

Design has both embraced and rejected nothing as fervently as ornaments. As purely decorative elements they serve no functional purpose, yet in many other ways – social, ritual, commercial – they are indispensable. While some reduce the role of design to making our lives more beautiful, others envision its capacities free from the duty to make everything pretty.

Ornaments can not only create relationships between aesthetics and function. Through their playfulness and wealth of narratives, they can also be the primary driving force of an object. Often, however, they are superficial attachments applied to a carrier they are not related to. The tool best suited to navigate this contentious zone is design itself.

And where better to engage with ornaments than in Vienna, ground zero of the clash between Gründerzeit, Jugendstil, and Modernism, where mediated by psychoanalysis the opulence of historically inspired ornaments, their Avantgarde counterparts and the anti-ornaments facing them propelled us into the 20th century. In Vienna ornaments are part of the urban substrate.

The group exhibition “FOKUS: Ornament” aims to bring together contemporary design pieces that explore which parts ornaments play in design and in our lives. Building on the history and looking towards the future, the show wants to demonstrate how design can utilise ornaments as ways of joyous, critical, functional – meaningful! – expression.

FOKUS is a curated group exhibition shown in the main festival venue of VIENNA DESIGN WEEK framed by an extraordinary scenography. As one of the festival's core formats it receives particular attention from PR and the audience.

To apply send images as well as dimensions of one object, a brief text covering its concept including the relevance for the topic and a CV to fokus@viennadesignweek.at

Guest Curator: Liv Vaisberg

Scenography: Easy-Center

Cost per accepted piece: € 300,- (excluding shipping)

Application Deadline: 31.5.2022

Festival Duration: 16. – 25.9.2022 (preview and opening: 15.9.)

Special programme and networking opportunities for FOKUS designers in attendance.