

THE  
VIENNA  
FASHION  
OBSERVATORY

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Concept:

The Vienna Fashion Observatory  
Portrait of a city in the here and now.

July 18<sup>th</sup> - September 20<sup>th</sup>, 2009  
An Exhibition about Fashion and the People Who Wear It in Vienna  
MQ Freiraum in the summer of 2009

About:

“La forme d’une ville change plus vite, hélas! que le coeur d’un mortel”  
Charles Baudelaire “Le Cygne” in “Fleurs du mal” Paris, 1857

Based on the principle of internet-fashion blogs, “The Vienna Fashion Observatory” addresses the interrelation between fashion and its urban context - in this case the city of Vienna. As opposed to the usual projects dealing with the subject of fashion, this exhibition is not primarily about promoting fashion designers and their products, but about portraying the people who wear it, the consumers, in their individual approaches to fashion as a form of expressing their personal style. The interplay of pictures shows much more than merely fashion: it deals with human beings, cities, sub cultures, identities, codes, trends, norms, deviations, everyday life, the present moment, and, above all, how all this is exposed to continuous change.

Those who have been portrayed will come to see their portraits. Visitors of the exhibition can easily be portrayed, switching from the position of observers to the one of those being observed. Viennese will recognize their city, and be amazed or astonished at the same time. Tourists will have a different perception of the city after their visit.

This project aims at drawing a differentiated and complex picture of Vienna as a city, without reducing its activities to showcasing exclusively its fashionable sides. In line with this, “The Vienna Fashion Observatory“ focuses on all 23 districts of the city and works with a broad definition of what is to be considered “fashion”.

Parallel to the “in situ” exhibition at the MQ - one of the most popular public spaces of Vienna, functioning as an exemplary urban stage – an internet blog allows to highlight the fashion people in Vienna actually wear “in the streets”. The various kinds of photography employed aim at depicting the fashion wearers as users of the city and in a way that the local environment they are moving in becomes visible in the picture and is marked by an additional clue (district, street name). At the same time, some individual features of both, the wearers (name, age, profession, origin) and the fashion worn (brands, origin), will be identified.

Blogs created the new opportunity not only to observe, but also to comment what they see. In addition to this, “The Vienna Fashion Observatory“ will make use of the new opportunities opened up by networking, search engines and localization, in order to superimpose a polyphonic and multifaceted picture of Vienna upon the portraits of individual contemporaries in its streets which can be compared at a mouse click to similarly created portraits of other cities.

Both, the exhibition and the blog, will reflect how people and the city, fashion and architecture, atmospheric and static aspects, individual and general features, similarities and deviations produce constellations that are characteristic for Vienna.

## Participants:

As the overall message of the exhibition will be polyphony, thus the sum of many different individual perceptions, observers from a wide range of different backgrounds, using a diversity of approaches, are participating in “The Vienna Fashion Observatory”. Flâneur-like they will simultaneously be part of an apart from what they portray, helping to get a better understanding of urban phenomena.

Austrian, as well as international fashion-bloggers, photographers, fashion designers, and artists who share a common interest in fashion and urbanity, are asked to contribute - in line with their individual views and artistic approaches – to the documentation (today’s “archeology”) of this interrelationship’s manifestations and its changes. It is this consistency of conceptual formulation and presentation form which enables the project to show “the judgments of taste” (Pierre Bourdieu) at work – in form of the approaches as well as in the results.

Within the MQ “Artists in Residence Program”, eight international participants will be invited to come to Vienna in order to take for two weeks each a look from outside an to make this outer perspective productive for the project.

This exhibition is dedicated to the memory of Franz Hessel.

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Credits:

Concept & Production:

Sabine Dreher & Christian Muhr

Liquid Frontiers (Vienna)

Set-, Graphic-, and Blogdesign:

Georg Schnitzer & Peter Umgeher

Londonwien (London/Vienna)