

MAJOR EXHIBITION SPOTLIGHTS CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE WOMEN OF THE WIENER WERKSTÄTTE AT THE JEWISH MUSEUM IN SUMMER 2026

Modernity and Opulence: Women of the Wiener Werkstätte sheds new light on the role that Jewish women played as artists, designers, patrons, and tastemakers shaping modernist aesthetics in early 20th-century Vienna and beyond

New York, NY, March 30, 2026—Opening in July 2026, the Jewish Museum presents a major cross-disciplinary exhibition showcasing the artistic and cultural legacies of women of the Wiener Werkstätte (Vienna Workshops). On view from July 17 through November 15, 2026, and presented in cooperation with the MAK – Museum of Applied Arts, Vienna, ***Modernity and Opulence: Women of the Wiener Werkstätte*** highlights how women played an underrecognized and yet central role in the workshop's activities, focusing in particular on the many Jewish women who worked as designers and artists, as well as those who supported these efforts as patrons. Featuring a wide-ranging selection of media including fashion, ceramics, graphic design, decorative arts, and painting, the exhibition reveals the breadth and depth of these women's contributions and the lesser-known ways in which they shaped modernist design languages through the platform of the Wiener Werkstätte.

Active from 1903 to 1932, the Wiener Werkstätte was founded by architect Josef Hoffmann, artist Koloman Moser, and industrialist art collector Fritz Waerndorfer as a multidisciplinary collective and commercial enterprise that embraced the synthesis of art and life (*gesamtkunstwerk*) as an essential condition of modern living. The establishment of the Werkstätte, which designed, produced, and sold high-quality goods, coincided in mutually supportive ways with the burgeoning economic opportunities available to women in Vienna during this same period.

Modernity and Opulence reveals recent scholarship, which has identified approximately one quarter of the nearly 200 women artists known to have worked for the Wiener Werkstätte as being of Jewish faith, descent, or having Jewish families. This exhibition marks the first in-depth presentation of the Jewish women—artists and patrons alike—who helped shape the defining modernist ideas and aesthetics of the Wiener Werkstätte.

“Modernity and Opulence: Women of the Wiener Werkstätte brings together art, design, fashion, and Jewish history to illuminate the central role Jewish women played in shaping modernity, both as visionary makers and as influential patrons,” said James S. Snyder, Helen Goldsmith Menschel Director of the Jewish Museum. “Building on the Museum’s long-standing history of presenting design exhibitions that challenge traditional art-historical narratives, this exhibition reflects our commitment to foregrounding Jewish artistic traditions in ways that resonate across world cultures.”

“The Wiener Werkstätte is often celebrated for its role in shaping conceptions of modernism, yet these discourses have presented a complicated relationship to gender, craft, and ornamentation, which has, in turn, neglected a more complete picture of the Werkstätte’s output,” said Kristina Parsons, Leon Levy Assistant

Curator. “In bringing together highlights from the remarkable body of work made by Jewish women for the Werkstätte, this exhibition spotlights their creativity, ambition, and influence, while inviting visitors to explore a group of artists who embraced decoration as a central expression of modernity.”

With more than 200 objects by some 30 Jewish women artists on view, the exhibition is organized thematically to reveal the extraordinary range and technical prowess of the women of the Wiener Werkstätte across mediums. A special emphasis is placed on Vally Wieselthier and Felice Rix-Ueno, whose prolific work, in ceramics and textile design respectively, has had lasting influence on these disciplines. The exhibition also provides a meaningful reintroduction to the work of artists whose work is less well-known today, and a platform for exploring their impact in the context of art and design histories.

A section dedicated to the Werkstätte’s fashions illustrates the design collective’s alignment with progressive notions of reform and burgeoning feminist ideals, as women fought for increased access to education, economic opportunity, and universal suffrage. The sweeping variety of block-printed textiles and garment designs underscore the financial success of this branch of the Werkstätte. Artwork and ephemera, including a painting by Wilhelm List and Rosh Hashanah cards from the Jewish Museum’s collection featuring Werkstätte designs, further illustrate the remarkably widespread influence of these textile designs.

The exhibition also reveals the reach these artists had beyond Vienna, as seen during the 1925 Paris International Exhibition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts, which brought work by Wieselthier, Rix-Ueno, Lotte Calm, and Mizi Friedmann-Otten, among others, to the world stage. The Werkstätte’s relationship with Hollywood is also explored through the inclusion of films such as *The Kiss* (1929), starring Greta Garbo; *Five and Ten* (1931), starring Marion Davies; and *Enemies of Women* (1923), all of which featured Werkstätte ceramics.

Finally, the exhibition demonstrates how Jewish women played a vital role in the success of the Wiener Werkstätte as patrons, clients, and cultural intermediaries who promoted its vision. These clients—including the noted socialite and arts patron Adele Bloch-Bauer and the art critic and writer Berta Zuckermandl—commissioned furniture and interiors, wore Werkstätte fashions, used stationery designed by the Werkstätte in their correspondence, and embodied the spirit of *gesamtkunstwerk* through their generous patronage; a drawing of Bloch-Bauer from the Museum’s collection by Gustav Klimt, who was affiliated with the Werkstätte through its relationship to the Vienna Secession, is a highlight of this section.

Another notable example of these patrons’ intersecting circles is seen through a portrait of Broncia Koller-Pinell, one of the few women artists affiliated with Klimt’s Kunstschau group, and who is depicted in her portrait wearing a reform-style dress and Werkstätte necklace. By integrating these designs into their daily lives as essential tools for self-fashioning an image of modernity, these women not only provided financial support and social legitimacy, but galvanized the avant-garde sensibilities of the collective.



Exhibition Organization and Credits

The exhibition *Modernity and Opulence: Women of the Wiener Werkstätte* is a cooperation between the Jewish Museum, New York, and the MAK – Museum of Applied Arts, Vienna. Curated by Kristina Parsons, Leon Levy Assistant Curator, Jewish Museum, New York with Curatorial Consultancy by Anne-Katrin Rossberg, MAK, Vienna. Exhibition design is by Chelsea Garunay with exhibition graphic design by June Yoon.

Exhibition Support

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About the Jewish Museum

The Jewish Museum explores the vibrancy of Jewish world culture through art. Located on New York City's famed Museum Mile, in the landmarked Warburg Mansion, the Museum was the first institution of its kind in the United States and is among the oldest Jewish museums in the world. The Jewish Museum preserves a unique collection of more than 30,000 works of art, archaeology, and ceremonial objects, while presenting exhibitions that relate to the global Jewish experience over 3,500 years. Bridging past and present, the Jewish Museum explores cross-cultural influences and offers new insights into key narratives that shape the human experience.

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