

'33 — '29 — '36

UM GALLERY — ACADEMY OF ARTS, ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN IN PRAGUE

20.12.2016

– 25.2.2017

CURATED BY LUCY MCKENZIE • ARTISTS AND DESIGNERS: ATELIER E.B, TAUBA AUERBACH, KATJA MATER, LUCY MCKENZIE, BECA LIPSCOMBE, EILEEN QUINLAN • HISTORICAL WORKS: BOŽENA ROTHMAYEROVÁ-HORNEKOVÁ & CIVILISED WOMAN, KATÓ LUKÁTS, MADELEINE VIONNET

In 1929, a project in Brno, Czechoslovakia, tried to produce some answers to a conundrum that Modernism had so far failed to resolve: the so-called 'woman question'. Entitled *Civilised Woman*, this was an exhibition and a book in which its organisers, a group of avant-garde designers including BOŽENA ROTHMAYEROVÁ-HORNEKOVÁ, proposed a functionalist way of living based on the primacy of the trouser suit and short hair. It devised practical outfits for the related spheres of work, leisure and pregnancy, and placed women in the labour-saving 'Frankfurt Kitchen'. But other than advocating chopping off long hair braids and keeping house more efficiently, *Civilised Woman* had little to offer in the way of real emancipation. In the interwar period, the figure of the New Woman, with her exaggerated visibility, was a symbol of Modernity that was both seductive and troubling to society. The doctrine espoused by this exhibition and book was one that equated femininity with the irrational, and adornment with primitivism, very much like Adolf Loos' theories outlined in *Ornament and Crime*. Women, preoccupied and narcissistic, held progress back; their 'womanliness' therefore had to be eradicated. In the project itself, that clash between ideology and reality was encapsulated by ROTHMAYEROVÁ-HORNEKOVÁ's drawings of trouser outfits, which follow the stylistic rules of contemporary fashion illustration to the letter while claiming to reject girlish frivolity. The fundamental inconsistencies in the project's message are most clearly epitomised, however, in the realistic, ultra-feminine mannequins wearing incongruous jumpers and slacks. Clearly, the civilised women they promoted could not exist outside of propaganda.

If the question is about something that appears radical yet is nothing of the kind, then *Civilised Woman* finds its counterpoint in the figures of MADELEINE VIONNET and KATÓ LUKÁTS. Vionnet was an eminent French couturier in the same interwar period. Superficially her work seems to be all about glamorous 'red carpet' gowns, but in terms of defining an emancipated female identity within Modernism she is worth a closer look. She espoused her own rationalism; dress patterns were simplified to geometric abstractions derived from her knowledge of both the behaviour of fabric and the human body in motion, paving the way for the sportswear that transformed dress throughout the 20th century. Her designs were often at odds with the period's insatiable appetite for novelty because she was partial to timeless ideals, such as dynamic symmetry in the natural world and the proportions of Classical antiquity. Her authoritative synthesis of movement and abstraction did not negate femininity; on the contrary, her clothes turned her clients into supple, Futurist goddesses, and it was this, alongside her humane employment practices, that made her an agent of accelerated progress.

Neoclassicism reinterpreted anachronistic forms and combined them with new materials and Modernist ideas. In a similarly experimental way, the graphic designer and illustrator KATÓ LUKÁTS worked with conventional imagery to produce a personal vision within the restrictions of consumer culture that became a great commercial and artistic success. Her compositions, and particularly her use of repeat patterns, depict a seductive kaleidoscope of archaic ideals embodied in such things as religious festivals, childhood games and nostalgia for the Austro-Hungarian Empire. But these sentimental cyphers are so streamlined that they become instrumentalised for her own will and project. She often used hybrid archetypes – in one illustration an elegant 1920s 'flapper' stands in the foreground, while framing her is the silhouette of a historical figure, complete with crinoline skirt and ringlets. Just as in Pauline Réage's classic erotic text *The Story of 'O'*, in which 'O's sexual pleasure is formalised through eighteenth-century costume, LUKÁTS understood that the generation and promotion of pleasure is facilitated by fantasy, and layering the past and the present. Almost completely unknown today outside of her native Hungary, LUKÁTS worked in the Interbellum with commercial packaging, advertising and illustration, and her clients included manufacturers of confectionary, automobiles and underwear, as well as the promoters of fashion and tourism. Collaborating with her husband Gyula Kaesz, she also produced interior decor. After World War II, her work shifted to illustrating children's books, and as private business evaporated under Communist rule, her previous work exposed her to anti-bourgeois criticism.

Taken together, the achievements of ROTHMAYEROVÁ-HORNEKOVÁ, VIONNET and LUKÁTS form a complex set of intersecting aesthetic concerns, with the dualisms of Feminism and the feminine, pattern and repetition, antiquity and the ultra-Modern lying at their heart. They show how radicalism can be hiding in plain sight when measured by the usual narrative standards, and how representations of emancipation and oppression can be misleading. They also provide a compelling illustration of how fashion and the applied arts can act as a kind of double agent, oscillating freely going between opposing forces.

For this exhibition LUCY MCKENZIE has invited a number of contemporary artists and designers to respond to these issues. These include practitioners working with geometry and abstraction, who were asked to consider how such concerns relate to their sense of female identity, and whether they regard these seemingly 'timeless' structures as relevant to contemporary discourse. Similarly, the designers were invited to respond to the complex and conflicting messages of *Civilised Woman*. After all, we still operate in a culture in which notions of femininity act as a controlling force on women's behaviour, while at the same time fashion and consumer culture can themselves be a major site of feminist agency.

ATELIER E.B is a design company that was set up to facilitate a creative collaboration between the designer BECA LIPSCOMBE and the artist LUCY MCKENZIE. For '33 – '29 – '36 they have focused on the display techniques that make *Civilised Woman* such a fascinating project, exploiting the resonance between their own fashion collections and the spirit of Božena Rothmayerová-Horneková by including, for example, capsule wardrobes of practical workwear onto which more complex elements have been layered. Outfits include workcoats, outerwear and adaptations from sportswear, such as polo shirts and jogging bottoms. Their designs are shown on the same kind of anti-Modern mannequins used in *Civilised Woman*, and by bringing different styles and periods into confrontation they expose how hierarchies of taste are formed and enforced. BECA LIPSCOMBE has produced a series of printed posters responding to elements of *Civilised Woman's* ideology, exploring what happens when practicality and adornment meet.

TAUBA AUERBACH's *Mobius and Ziggurat* pop-up sculptures work with the same kinetic potentiality that typifies Vionnet's use of flat patterns, and are activated by the same combination of movement and tension. The set of digitally printed Meander Helix sculptures are three-dimensional extrapolations from the repeat structure of the Classical Greek 'meander' ornament. Each sculpture tests the base pattern with a new dynamic or conceptual twist, subjecting it to gestures like extrusion or rotation. Also on show is *A Partial Taxonomy of Periodic Linear Ornament — Both Known and Speculative — Arranged by Symmetry, Dimension and Iteration*. In its entirety her work is presented with custom-made display elements that extend her study of the structures of decorative pattern, assimilating historic research into her practice.

To produce her repeat pattern photographs KATJA MATER superimposes multiple exposures documenting the manipulation of physical space. The space, in this case the gallery, has been transformed with a systematically painted mural, and the resulting photograph is then transformed further with its repetition to produce a pattern composition. In this way she creates abstraction from the material, fully integrates painting and photography, and uses time as a fourth dimension. The unique procedure employed to create her images, and the fact that the construction is ultimately disguised, echo the work of fashion couturiers, in which hours of labour and years of experience produce gowns that appear effortlessly blown together.

LUCY MCKENZIE explores how reproduction painting and drawing can function as historical research. Like photography today, line drawing was a primary form of documentation and dissemination in the fashion world of the Interbellum, and was 'read' by professionals and the public in a way that seems inaccessible to us now. Looking at Vionnet, Lukáts and Rothmayerová-Horneková, the artist inhabits the style of each, replicating the way they used line drawing to transmit both facts and ideas. In the same way that taking a dress apart can unlock its secrets, repainting and drawing historic works can reveal aspects of the artist's motivation that would otherwise remain hidden. McKenzie has interpreted the murals that decorated Madeleine Vionnet's Paris salon, painted in 1923 by Georges de Feure. They depict Assyrian, Egyptian, Byzantine and Roman figures wearing Vionnet's own designs. She has also made fashion illustrations for Atelier E.B in the *Civilised Woman* style, and *Elle Cigaretta*, a counterfeit Lukáts package design.

EILEEN QUINLAN presents a selection of the polaroid prints that she uses as part of the working process for her final still-life photographs. These images are unstable in several ways. Usually shot on out-of-date stock, their chemical composition changes as they age, while as works in progress they expose the mechanics of her methodology as it approaches the refinement of the final image. Quinlan is often inspired by fashion and beauty advertising, and by Modernist photographers such as Lee Miller and Florence Henri, who worked professionally in the field to support their artistic practice. The works here, with their miniature scale and vivacious colours, draw one in to decipher the scenes in the way one wishes to shrink and inhabit the lyrical compositions of Kató Lukáts. The work recognises the complex personal and gendered narratives that lie behind the perfection of commercial advertising images.

The exhibition produced by the Academy of Arts, Architecture and Design in Prague and Are | are-events.org in association with the Museum of Applied Arts (Iparművészeti Múzeum) in Budapest and the Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague.

Historical works loaned by the Moravian Gallery in Brno, the Moravian Library in Brno, the Museum of Applied Arts (Iparművészeti Múzeum) in Budapest, the Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague, and private collections.

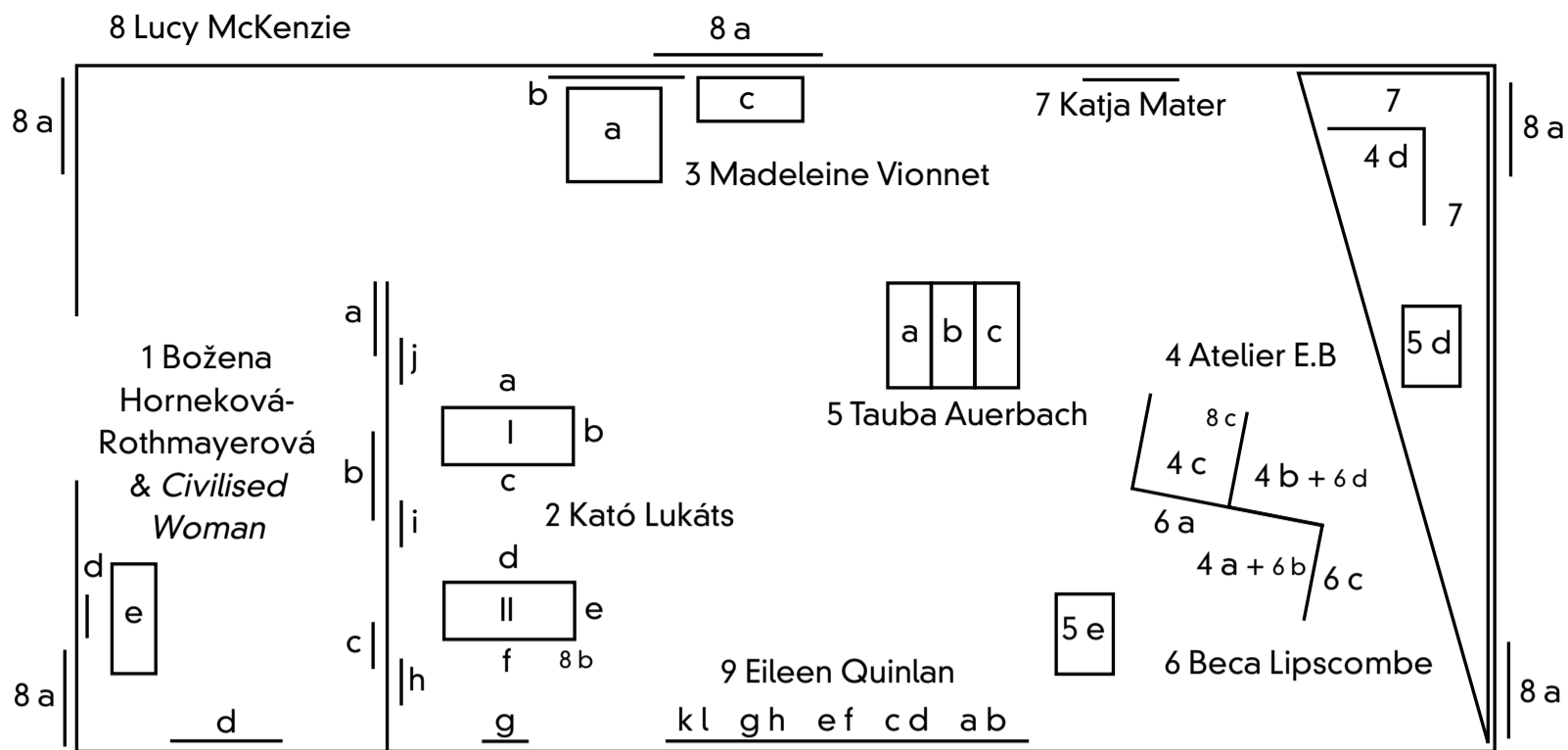
In cooperation with Mili Vávrová – Art Deco Gallery, Jana Baierová, Pavla Dundálková, Martina Chadimová, Edit Darabos, Tereza Kanyzová, Jan Kolský, Ágnes Naszlady, Dóra Reichart, Markéta Vinglerová
Installation team: Jan Boháč, Josef Frühauf, Jan Paleček
Graphic Design: HIT, Berlin
Photography: Katja Mater, Martin Polák
Special lighting for photography: Jiří Šmirk – Institute of Lighting Design
Lighting: ETNA iGuzzini

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UM Gallery – Academy of Arts, Architecture and Design in Prague
nám. Jana Palacha 80, Prague 1, umprum.cz
Opening hours: Mon – Sat 10 am – 6 pm
Free admission

1 BOŽENA ROTHMAYEROVÁ–
HORNEKOVÁ & CIVILISED WOMAN

Women who have the same education as men, and still dress themselves always according to the quirks of fashion, must be considered exotic beings ... together with colourful parrots, or decoratively adorned savages.

—Jan Vaněk, *Civilised Woman* quoted by Martina Pachmanová in *Civilised Woman: Czech Functionalism and the Cultivation of “Femininity”* (2004)

1 a
Zdeněk Rossmann, Božena Rothmayerová–Horneková, Jan Vaněk, enlarged detail from photograph of the exhibition *Civilised Woman*, Brno 1929–30 (Courtesy of the Moravian Gallery in Brno)

1 b
Zdeněk Rossmann, Božena Rothmayerová–Horneková, Jan Vaněk, original photographs from the exhibition *Civilised Woman*, Brno 1929–30 (Collection of the Moravian Gallery in Brno)

1 c
Zdeněk Rossmann, poster for the exhibition *Civilised Woman*, 1929 (Collection of the Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague)

1 d
Božena Rothmayerová–Horneková, drawings for the exhibition *Civilised Woman*, 1929 (Collection of the Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague)

1 e (Vitrine, from left to right)
– Jiřina Vydrová, *Božena Rothmayerová and Modern Textile Practice*, Arts and Crafts Magazine, Number 3, published by Center for Folk Art, Prague, 1981
– Zdeněk Rossmann, Božena Horneková, Jan Vaněk, *Civilised Woman / How should cultivated woman dress*, Jan Vaněk, Brno, 1929 (Loaned by the Moravian Library in Brno)
– Maria Szadkowska ed., *Villa Rothmayer in Prague*, published by City of Prague Museum, Prague, 2016
– Eva Uchalová, *Czech Fashion 1918–1939 / Elegance of the Czechoslovak First Republic*, Olympia in cooperation with Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague, 1996 (Loaned by the UMPRUM Library in Prague)

2 KATÓ LUKÁTS

Charm is the distinctive feature of this artist’s work, a feminine charm, Hungarian charm which is that very delightful mixture of primitive strength and “super-fineness” as one might call it ... And yet in the world of this woman-artist there is no trace of sugariness which so easily creeps into the designs for packages containing perfumes and sweets, which is the artist’s special domain.
—From *International Advertising Art*, Number 12 (1938)

2 a—c (Vitrine I, from left to right)

2 a
– Design for wrapping paper, around 1935
– Design for wrapping paper, 1930s
– Sketches and designs for logos, 1930s
– Sketches and designs for logos, 1930s
– Illustration design, 1930s

2 b
Altmann & Kuehne chocolate box, date unknown (Private collection)

2 c
– Design for swim cap, 1930s
– Design for swim cap, 1930s
– Advertisement, around 1938
– Package design, 1940s
– Endpaper, 1960s
– *International Advertising Art*, Number 12, 1938 (Private collection)

2 d—f (Vitrine II, from left to right)
2 d
– Magazine cover, 1933
– Design for New Year greeting card, 1932
– Greeting card, 1940s
– Advertisement card with envelope for fashion house of Mária Gráff and Tercsi Berger, at the end of the 1930s
– Invitation card, 1934
– Design for wrapping paper, 1930s
– Altmann & Kuehne chocolate box, date unknown (Private collection)
– Design for Christmas postcard, 1963

2 e
Sketch, 1950s

2 f
– Advertisement, first half of the 1940s
– Package design, 1952
– Sheet of paper, envelope and visiting card with the artist’s own logo, 1930s
– New Year Greeting Card, 1946
– Design for Christmas greeting card, 1963
– Lucy McKenzie, *Elle Cigaretta*, 2016 (Property of the artist)

2 g
Design for wrapping paper, 1935

2 h
Design for wrapping paper, around 1935

2 i
Design for an advertisement, 1940s

2 j
Design for wrapping paper, around 1935

* Works by Kató Lukáts loaned by the Museum of Applied Arts (Iparművészeti Múzeum) in Budapest – if not stated otherwise.

3 MADELEINE VIONNET

What happens at the waistline determines what happens at the hemline. To correct the problem of hang-out, the number of threads in each ripple has to be the same, then the weight—gravitational pull—is the same... By cutting down slightly and further manipulating the waistline by expanding the warp and weft threads of the cloth at the true bias and compressing the warp and weft direction of the cloth, the number of threads in each ripple could be equalized.
—From *Madeleine Vionnet* by Betty Kirke (1991)

3 a
Bias-cut chiffon tri-colour evening gown, attributed to Madeleine Vionnet, Spring-Summer 1933, unlabelled. Transparent ivory chiffon bodice with cowls front and back and flounces to the armholes, with coral chiffon V-shaped front panel and ‘Mobius’ bands which criss-cross the bodice and tie at the waist, the skirt of layered black over ivory chiffon.

3 b
Paper pattern executed by Juliet Dearden

3 c (Vitrine, from left to right)
– Commercial Invoice, 20th May 1926, 50 Avenue Montaigne, Paris
– Business Card with illustration by THAYAHT, around 1919
– Model depot photographs, Spring-Summer 1932 and Autumn-Winter 1931 (Courtesy of the Phototheque of the Museum of Decorative Arts in Paris)
– *Madeleine Vionnet* by Betty Kirke, published by Chronicle Books, San Francisco, 1998
– Pages documenting the Vionnet salon murals by Georges de Feure, unknown magazine, France, 1924
– Book presenting the House of Vionnet, 50 Avenue Montaigne, published by Coquemer, Paris, around 1925

* Historical works and items of Madeleine Vionnet loaned by private collection.

4 ATELIER E.B

4 a
Look 1: *Nan* workcoat, *Saville* jumper, *Imelda* skirt from *Ost End Girls* Collection, 2013 and *IOTII* Collection, 2016 + *Lips Combe* mirror/comb tool by Beca Lipscombe, 2016

4 b
Look 2: *Manet* polo shirt, *CHF* necklace from *Ost End Girls* Collection, 2013 + *Lips Combe* cagoule by Beca Lipscombe, 2016

4 c
Look 3: *Bosquette* workcoat, *Pieter* poloneck, *Phillipa* trousers from *Ost End Girls* Collection, 2013 and *IOT* Collection, 2011

4 d
Look 4: *Cap* from *Ost End Girls* Collection, 2013

* Atelier E.B.’s garments displayed on mannequins from 1920s and 1930s, loaned by the Art Deco Gallery in Prague.

5 TAUBA AUERBACH

5 a
– *Final Small Meander Helix*, 2015, 3D printed nylon
– *Meander Helix Fat*, 2015, 3D printed nylon
– *Meander Helix Extruded*, 2015, 3D printed nylon
– *Final Small Meander Helix*, 2015, 3D printed nylon

5 b & c
– *A Partial Taxonomy of Periodic Linear Ornament—Both Known and Speculative—Arranged by Symmetry, Dimension and Iteration*, 2016, four prototypes of a book
– *Square Meander Helix*, 2015, four iterations, 3D printed nylon
– Book weights, 2016

5 d
MOBIUS from [2,3], 2011, pop-up book

5 e
– *ZIGGURAT* from [2,3], 2011, pop-up book
– Interlaced collapsible book stand, 2016

6 BECA LIPSCOMBE

6 a
Alpha Beta Gamma Delta, 2016, screen printed wall paper

6 b
Lips Combe, 2016, mirror/comb tool

6 c
Regram #1, 2016, Instagram poster

6 d
Lips Combe, 2016, cagoule

7 KATJA MATER

Site Specific Tiled, 14/12/16 Prague, 2016, mural & multiple moments during the making of the mural

8 LUCY MCKENZIE

8 a
Vionnet Salon Murals after Georges de Feure (North East, North West, South East, South West), 2016, oil on canvas

8 b
Elle Cigaretta, 2016, oil on canvas on wood

8 c
Civilised Atelier (1), 2016, pen and pencil on paper

9 EILEEN QUINLAN

9 a—b
Starsisters, 2011, polaroid
Highland Rape, 2010, polaroid

9 c—d
Alba (Goya), 2011, polaroid
Tripod Grasp, 2014, polaroid

9 e—f
Kotex (for Lee), 2011, polaroid
Eileen Agar, 2011, polaroid

9 g—h
Imperial Orchid, 2006, polaroid
Total Fitness, 2011, polaroid

9 i—j
Pennyroyal, 2011, polaroid
Leatherette, 2006, polaroid

9 k—l
Instant Magic, 2009, polaroid
St John’s Bay Rum, 2009, polaroid