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Fresh Perspective on Style and Materials

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At the MAK, independent fashion and design invite a more thoughtful understanding of luxury—one shaped by craftsmanship, individuality, and the potential of materials to live beyond their first purpose. Running until 8 November at the MAK—Museum of Applied Arts, the fair brings together approximately 160 independent labels from more than 15 countries, spanning fashion, jewellery, furniture, and home accessories.

With its opening on 6 November, BLICKFANG Vienna brings a welcome alternative to the anonymity of mass-produced style. Its appeal lies not simply in discovering something beautiful, but in meeting the people responsible for its creation. Viewed through a fashion lens, this emphasis on personal connection is particularly compelling. A garment or accessory becomes more interesting when its designer can explain the choice of fibre, the construction, and the intention behind its silhouette. BLICKFANG places these conversations at the centre of the experience: designers present their own work, while many pieces can be customised and purchased directly.

Here, individuality is not merely an aesthetic effect; it is part of the relationship between maker and wearer. The most thought-provoking perspective through which to approach this year’s fair is circularity: the ambition to keep materials useful rather than treating them as disposable. The organiser’s presentation offers a striking example in the Hungarian label ECONOR Design, which transforms industrial production waste—specifically polyurethane foam—into furniture. According to the fair’s press materials, local production and the development of long-lasting objects are central to its approach.

Although this example belongs to interiors rather than clothing, its relevance to fashion is unmistakable: what has been discarded can become the starting point for a desirable new object. From a fashion-critical perspective, this reverses a familiar hierarchy. Instead of regarding reclaimed material as a compromise, we can recognise it as a creative constraint capable of generating character. The question becomes not simply whether an object looks new, but whether its design gives existing resources a convincing new purpose.

Precision, however, matters. Reused, recycled, and renewable materials are not interchangeable concepts. ECONOR’s recycled foam should therefore be distinguished from the renewable-source PLA used by lighting label hayush, whose made-to-order, 3D-printed lamps also feature in the organiser’s presentation. These represent different material strategies, not a single universal sustainability solution. Their value at the

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fair lies partly in opening a more informed conversation about how objects are made.

Fashion's contribution to this conversation is also expressed through craftsmanship. Swiss label Sutras, highlighted in the fair's press materials, combines natural fibres including pashmina and yak wool with traditional craft and contemporary aesthetics. This is not evidence of recycled content; rather, it introduces a complementary consideration: the relationship between material quality, skilled making, and enduring appeal. BLICKFANG's opening consequently offers something more persuasive than another declaration of what is "in."

Its curatorial emphasis on independent design, consciously chosen materials, and direct encounters with makers encourages visitors to consider what deserves to remain. The most elegant proposition is also the simplest: style need not depend on constant replacement. It can emerge from recognising potential—in an overlooked material, a carefully constructed garment, or an object worth keeping. At its best, this is fashion expertise extended beyond appearance: an appreciation not only of how things look, but of how thoughtfully they enter our lives.

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