

Press information

Shedding new light on something special: Zumtobel joins Sagmeister & Walsh on a poetic search for beauty

Visitors to the MAK Vienna will soon be able to discover a very special quality from the unique perspective of renowned New York graphic design agency Sagmeister & Walsh. Opening on 23. October, the appropriately named Beauty exhibition also puts the focus on the whole sensory experience of every to do with beautiful. Right from acoustics to feelings and visual aspects. And as light obviously plays a key role here, experts from Zumtobel have set about creating a series of experience rooms – spaces that stimulate all the senses.

Dornbirn, 25. October 2018 – Beauty is often seen as a rival to function. Especially when the practical form suffers from what some see as the secondary demands of aesthetic design. That certainly explains why beauty does not always have the best image when it comes to discussions about design. Indeed, there is a tendency to think that those who focus mainly on beauty are never likely to be acknowledged as truly accomplished designers. The New York design-duo Stefan Sagmeister and Jessica Walsh want to challenge these assumptions by offering a new way of looking at beauty in design, covering aspects such as architecture, crafts, graphic design and – of course – the arts. The core concept of the exhibition at the Museum of Applied Arts in Vienna (*Museum für angewandte Kunst* or [MAK](#) for short) therefore dovetails perfectly with Zumtobel's areas of expertise. As a true lighting specialist, [Zumtobel](#) constantly uses its work to trigger debate and discussion about design. And architecture. And art. The Austrian company, which combines the design and realisation of sophisticated lighting solutions with tireless support for artistic and architectural initiatives, has already cooperated with [Sagmeister & Walsh](#) on a number of joint projects. Jessica Walsh designed the 2017-18 Zumtobel artistic annual report and the studio was also part of the design team for the Austrian pavilion at the Biennale di Venezia 2018 – a pavilion that was naturally showcased by various Zumtobel solutions.

What is beauty? What are the common factors and which elements are purely subjective? Sagmeister & Walsh reference scientists and philosophers, as well as proven facts – such as the way beautiful things have an effect on the dopamine receptors and can therefore be medically measured in terms of their positive influence on individuals. Visitors to the exhibition will have the chance to compare their own idea of beauty with those of others. And thereby spot trends and patterns, similarities and differences.

"We are very delighted about the cooperation with Zumtobel and the incredible support we have received from the Vorarlberg-based company. Without the lighting experts, Beauty would certainly not have been able to achieve this high quality and we are very much looking forward to the initial

reactions from visitors," says Kathrin Pokorny-Nagel, curator and head of the MAK library and art collection/archive, commenting on the cooperation.

Six exhibition areas with a total of 70 object groups have been shaped by Sagmeister & Walsh to prove that beauty not only stimulates the mind, but can also be effective when it comes to good design.

The *Sensory Room*, designed in cooperation with Swarovski, is a fitting centrepiece. This space demonstrates vividly how Sagmeister & Walsh use light to direct the senses. Seen from the outside, the 5.5-metre-square cube appears to be some kind of crystal ornament. Yet step inside and you can experience the warm light colours of a sunset – a sunset that is carefully crafted by a dynamic Zumtobel LED lighting solution. At the same time, citrus aromas and the sounds of a Malaysian marsh frog provide beauty for the other senses. The fact that colour is also important when it comes to light can be seen – and felt – in the second room: the *Color Room*. A special high-pressure vapour lamp rhythmically projects intense blue-pink patterns onto the walls. Vivid hues morph into grey tones, before neutral white light precedes the return of stronger colours.

Sagmeister & Walsh utilise light in both the exhibition and the experience rooms as a direct facilitator for beauty. And as an effective tool for directing attention. Visual designs are back-lit or framed by LED bands that are placed strategically behind the images. Contrasting strongly with the murky semi-darkness of the rooms, individuals have little trouble identifying the focal point of each space. The Dimensional Shadow Letters work in much the same way. Constructive finesse has been achieved by mounting metal silhouettes of lettering horizontally and then turning these 90 degrees. They first become visible with the help of Zumtobel spotlights – and only when the thoughts on beauty finally materialise on the wall as readable text shadows.

Stefan Sagmeister, Sagmeister & Walsh: "Since the Middle Ages at the latest, lighting has been a central strategy when it comes to achieving the goal of beauty, and we are particularly pleased that we have been able to win one of the world's best partners in Zumtobel".

The reflections of Sagmeister & Walsh on the topic of beauty can be seen in Vienna from 23. October 2018 to 31. March 2019. The touring version of the [Beauty exhibition](#), which is set to make its first stop at the Museum for Applied Art (*Museum Angewandte Kunst*) in Frankfurt am Main, will also feature a lighting installation realised in cooperation with Zumtobel.

Photo captions:

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Fig. 1: A series of joint projects connect Sagmeister & Walsh with Zumtobel. *Beauty* is Stefan Sagmeister's *Beauty* third exhibition at the Vienna MAK. © Sagmeister & Walsh, New York



Fig. 2: Sagmeister & Walsh want to challenge assumptions by offering a new way of looking at beauty in design, covering aspects such as architecture, crafts, graphic design and the arts. © Sagmeister & Walsh, New York; MAK/Mona Heiß



Fig. 3: The LED light installation on the ceiling of the *Sensory Room* imitates the light moods found at sunset, while aromatic and acoustic stimuli further enhance the sensual experience. © Sagmeister & Walsh, New York



Fig. 4: The black boxes of the Voting Walls show different motifs and offer visitors the chance to choose their favourite using a paper coin. Acrylic-glass tubes installed behind the motifs show the latest standings. © Sagmeister & Walsh, New York; MAK/Mona Heiß

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About Zumtobel

We are passionate about designing and producing the highest quality of light. Our work is driven by the knowledge that the right light can create the right environment for people to thrive when tailored to their individual needs. Guided by a unique design approach, we continuously push our boundaries in search for perfection through unique and timeless design. As we develop the next generation of lighting, we build on our family heritage to refine the aesthetics of light and shape the lighting of tomorrow. With a special blend of passion, grace and avant-garde ideas, we turn light in to an experience and remain committed to the goal of improving the quality of life through light. Zumtobel is a brand of the Zumtobel Group AG with its headquarters in Dornbirn, Vorarlberg (Austria).

Zumtobel. The Light.