

GALERIE MARTIN JANDA

ADRIANA CZERNIN

FRAGMENT

MUSEUM OF APPLIED ARTS, VIENNA

18.04.–30.09.2018

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Adriana Czernin



Adriana Czernin, *Untitled*, 2016

Adopting motifs from non-Western cultures requires more caution—and imagination—than Western artists usually exhibit. While there are undoubtedly affinities toward forms and designs that cross cultural, geographical, and historical divides, and which are of legitimate artistic concern, unreflective engagement with them or naive claims of human universality risk mirroring the motives of colonial appropriators.

In this exhibition, Adriana Czernin performs an intellectual tightrope act, balancing the fraught history of an object from MAK's collection and her own aesthetic interests. She presents a group of works whose genesis lies in the pattern of the elaborate wooden decoration of stairs from a minbar, or pulpit, from the Mosque of Ibn Tulun in Cairo. Parts from this masterpiece of Islamic art were taken from Egypt and shown in the International Exposition of 1867 in Paris. For the installation, copies of the minbar's pieces were added and arranged in an ensemble deemed more accessible for Western audiences. The minbar was then dispersed to several museums, along with the copies. Czernin displays several fragments, from both the original and the nineteenth-century additions, combining them with a wall drawing to create a visually and historically complex tableau (Fragment, 2018).

Other works in the exhibition focus on the formal system of the minbar's design, providing a dynamic interaction with the history-specific mural. While older works are faithful to the symmetry of Islamic ornament, recent works expand the pattern, as though unfolding origami. Two *Untitled* geometric configurations (2017 and 2018) channel the tension between the seemingly arbitrary compositions and the strict system that generated them by maintaining the faint echoes of forms like the Islamic girih in their interlaced designs. At its core, this tension can be seen as one between an artist's aesthetic impulse and the weight of history. It's a weight Czernin shoulders well.

Yuki Higashino: Adriana Czernin

<https://www.artforum.com/picks/adriana-czernin-76163> (23.08.2018)



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INSTALLATION VIEW, MAK, VIENNA 2018



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