



MAK

Press Release

FREDERICK KIESLER: Life Visions

Press Conference	Tuesday, 14 June 2016, 10:30 a.m.
Opening	Tuesday, 14 June 2016, 7 p.m.
Exhibition Venue	MAK Exhibition Hall MAK, Stubenring 5, 1010 Vienna
Exhibition Dates	15 June – 2 October 2016
Opening Hours	Tue 10 a.m.–10 p.m., Wed–Sun 10 a.m.–6 p.m. Free admission on Tuesdays from 6–10 p.m.

Frederick Kiesler (1890–1965) not only fascinated his contemporary generation of artists and architects with his revolutionary, utopian ideas. The transdisciplinary contributions made by this Austrian-American artist, designer, architect, set and exhibition designer continue to influence the European and American avant-garde through today. Realized in cooperation with the Austrian Frederick and Lillian Kiesler Private Foundation, the MAK retrospective *FREDERICK KIESLER: Life Visions* (MAK Exhibition Hall, 15 June – 2 October 2016) illuminates this trend-setting visionary's fascinatingly complex body of work, his out-of-the-box thinking, his theory of Correalism, which he used to thematize the relationship between artwork, human, and environment, as well as his activities as an architect and exhibition designer.

Following the sweeping retrospective *JOSEF FRANK: Against Design*, this reappraisal of Kiesler's oeuvre is integral to the MAK's efforts to take another look at the great visionaries of Viennese Modernism. Born in Chernivtsi, a multicultural city (then in Austria-Hungary, now in Ukraine), Kiesler began studying architecture and painting in 1908 at the University of Technology and at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna, but did not graduate. He celebrated his first big successes with theater and exhibition projects in Berlin, Vienna, and Paris. In 1926, in the hopes of being able to realize his visions, he traveled to New York, where he stayed for the rest of his life. The years he spent in Vienna surrounded by people like Otto Wagner, Josef Hoffmann, and Adolf Loos—and also to a significant degree, the idea of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*—were key influences on all of his artistic and theoretical endeavors.

Since the beginning of the 21st century, the perception of Frederick Kiesler has shifted from a primarily architectonic reception to an artistic interest in his holistic concept. This includes the fusion of artistic and scientific insights and modes of presentation, and particularly his goal of doing away with the separation between autonomous art

and real life. Kiesler innovatively grappled with the newest developments in film and television, just as much as with curatorial concepts and their radically new, pioneering design.

The thematically structured MAK exhibition *FREDERICK KIESLER: Life Visions* affords a view into the complexity of Kiesler’s work from the 1920s to the mid-1960s. The objects—stemming mainly from the extensive holdings of the Frederick and Lillian Kiesler Private Foundation, some of which have never been shown before—span the range from art projects, architectural visions, and exhibition design to store planning, furniture design, and media concepts, and also include poster and book jacket designs. Numerous archival documents give insight into his theoretical deliberations and innovative inventiveness.

During his time in Vienna, Berlin, Paris and his early years in New York, Kiesler was already working on a thoroughly broad range of design possibilities. His intellectual interests found expression in his theory of Correalism, which he developed in the 1930s, building upon what at that time were fresh applications of systems theory to the biological sciences. Kiesler’s empirical scientific deliberations about the sustainable design of the human-nature-technology relationship and its experimental implementation in artistic practice are exceedingly topical nowadays.

In developing the concept of the *Raumbühne* [*Space Stage*] (1924) on the occasion of organizing and setting up the *International Exhibition of New Theatre Techniques* in Vienna, he ultimately dissolved the spatial separation between the spectators and the actors and integrated both in a unified space. At the beginning of the performance, the audience circled around a floating stage. This “correalistic” instrument signaled a radical shift to a biomorphic language of form. By allowing object and person to interact in a shared “living space” and co-developing the concept of environment, Kiesler also radically severed the separation between human being and work of art.

Frederick Kiesler proposed a model for the city of the future with his *Raumstadt* [*City in Space*] (1925), which he developed for the Austrian theater section of the *Exposition internationale des Arts décoratifs et industriels modernes* in Paris upon Josef Hoffmann’s invitation. Representing the central object of the *FREDERICK KIESLER: Life Visions* exhibition, a 1:1 scale reconstruction of this futuristic model of a hovering city will be mounted in a space darkened with black curtains at the center of the MAK Exhibition Hall.

Design serves to promote health, and thus the wellbeing of society, is how Kiesler explicated his aesthetic intentions in his essay “On Correalism and Biotechnique. A Definition and Test of a New Approach to Building Design” (1939). By way of example,

Frederick Kiesler developed his vision of the *Endless House*, which he regarded as the “nucleus” (similar to a designer’s “stem cell”) of architectural planning based on the human being.

Kiesler continued the practical implementation of his correalistic theory (“biotechnique”) in the late 1930s and early 1940s in the Laboratory of Design Correlation he founded at Columbia University in New York. With the concept of the *Vision Machine* he developed between 1938 and 1942—and which is also presented in the MAK exhibition—Kiesler visualized the process of art perception. “The Vision Machine,” explained Kiesler, “will enable us to classify the plastic creations of man. Since the Vision Machine tries to demonstrate the different constituents of seeing and imagery, it should facilitate the analysis and understanding of the various psycho-psychological sources which are the origin of plastic arts.”
(lebbeuswoods.wordpress.com)

Kiesler’s characteristic “unity of the arts,” invoked in Vienna by Theo van Doesburg already in 1924, reached its zenith in 1947 in the total ambiance of the *Salle de Superstition* [Hall of superstition] in the exhibition *Le Surréalisme en 1947* mounted by him in the Galerie Maeght in Paris. There, aspects of the “magical” were given a heretofore unknown dimension in Kiesler’s work.

His vision of the relationship between art, space, and spectator is illustrated in no small part in *FREDERICK KIESLER: Life Visions* through the *Galaxies*, wherein he included surroundings in a visual composition. Through this group of works he created in the 1950s and 1960s, Kiesler brought about a synthesis of painting, sculpture, and architecture based on the principles of Correalism. In their entirety they resemble the structure of planetary and stellar systems, which is why Kiesler dubbed them *Galaxies*.

His artistic and theoretical musings lend themselves as multifarious inspiration for contemporary interpretations through the fine arts. At various interfaces in the context of the exhibition, Leonor Antunes, Céline Condorelli, Verena Dengler, Lili Reynaud-Dewar, Apolonija Šušteršič, and Rirkrit Tiravanija enter into a contemporary dialog with Kiesler.

In the role of the *Endless House*, Lili Reynaud-Dewar dances around the model of a city for the future. The staging translates the principle of the *Endless House* into a realm of simple lines and planes of the *City in Space*.

Together with Janina Audick and Sachiko Hara as Black Widows, Verena Dengler developed the performative scenery *Die Geburt des Bucephalus* [The birth of Bucephalus] after an unfinished sculpture of Kiesler’s—herein scenery components

from the art and theater realms are freely, in the manner of Kiesler, fused into a situative entity.

In an imaginary rhythm of handcrafted materials, textures, and forms, Leonor Antunes, echoing a design of Kiesler's for New York retailer Saks Fifth Avenue, developed a model of a show window in the MAK Permanent Collection *Vienna 1900* to illustrate his approach to modernism.

Céline Condorelli reacted to existing structures and let the *The Swindelier* (2015) act—a sculpture that models atmospheric elements under the rubric of the interplay of acoustics, form, and aesthetics.

Invited by Rirkrit Tiravanija, Karl Holmqvist, in the role of the protagonist Kiesler, will read from theoretical writings. In allusion to Kiesler's self-representation, the artists selected the *Floor & Wall Galaxy* (1952) as a stage.

Together with Hild Borchgrevink, Nina Krogh, Linn Lervik, and Ida Uvaas, students at the Kunsthøgskolen i Oslo (KHiO, Oslo National Academy of the Arts), Apolonija Šušteršič initiated the action group *Stefi Kiesler*. The focus is on a calendar entry about a meeting regarding the ultimately not implemented *Magic Show*.

Accompanying the exhibition *FREDERICK KIESLER: Life Visions* will be an eponymous catalog published by the Birkhäuser Verlag (edited by Christoph Thun-Hohenstein, Dieter Bogner, Maria Lind, and Bärbel Vischer; German/English, 224 pages with numerous color illustrations; MAK Vienna/Birkhäuser Verlag, Basel 2016; available in the MAK Design Shop und at MAKdesignshop.at for € 39.95) with contributions by Dieter Bogner, Peter Bogner, Almut Grunewald, Barbara Lesák, Maria Lind, Megan R. Luke, Vanessa Joan Müller, Spyros Papapetros, Hani Rashid, Christoph Thun-Hohenstein, Bärbel Vischer, and Gerd Zillner.

As part of the outreach program, the MAK launched innovative, participation-based projects with Viennese schoolchildren that thematize their connection to their surroundings and their perception of space as an environment that can be actively transformed. These adolescents engaged intensively with Frederick Kiesler and created contributions that will be shown in the context of the MAK exhibition. The idea for this is based on the exhibition *Frederick Kiesler: Visions at Work Annotated by Céline Condorelli and Six Student Groups* (11 February – 3 May 2015) at the Tensta Konsthall, Stockholm.

Initiated in the framework of “Programm K3—Cultural Education with Apprentices” as a collaboration of the MAK with KulturKontakt Austria, the project of an integrated

class at the Berufsschule für Frisur, Maske und Perücke [Vocational school for stylists and make-up artists] was conceived and implemented by the mediation team toikoi. KulturKontakt Austria (through the “culture connected” initiative of the Federal Ministry of Education and Women's Affairs) sponsored the contribution of a class at the Bundesgymnasium Wien 9 (Wasagasse 10, 1090 Vienna). A class at the BORG for music and art (Hegelgasse 12, 1010 Vienna) realized a project sponsored by the Ministry's 2015/16 cultural budget for federally funded public schools.

Press images are available for download at MAK.at/press.

PREMIUM SPONSOR



For their generous support, we wish to thank
Richard Grubman and Caroline Mortimer

Thanks go to
Gallery Meyer Kainer, Vienna
for supporting Verena Dengler's project

Sponsor of the student projects



SUPPORTING PROGRAM OF THE EXHIBITION

GUIDED TOURS

Sat, 2 p.m.

Sun, 3 p.m.

CURATOR-GUIDED TOURS

Thu, 7 Jul and 8 Sep 2016, 4 p.m., with MAK Curator Bärbel Vischer

Tue, 6 Sep 2016, 4 p.m., with Guest Curator Dieter Bogner

ARTISTS' TOUR through the exhibition (in English)

Wed, 15 Jun 2016, 11 a.m., MAK Exhibition Hall

with Guest Curator Maria Lind, Curator Bärbel Vischer, and the artists

PANEL DISCUSSION

Wed, 15 Jun 2016, 4 p.m., MAK Lecture Hall

Frederick Kiesler: The Open Future (in English)

with Dieter Bogner (moderator), Beatriz Colomina, Maria Lind, Hani Rashid, and Benedetta Tagliabue

TALKS

Tue, 12 Jul 2016, 7 p.m., MAK Columned Main Hall

Meant To Be Lived In

Dieter Bogner, Guest Curator

Thu, 1 Sep 2016, 4 p.m., MAK Columned Main Hall

Stefi Kiesler: Künstlerfrau, Bibliothekarin, Netzwerkerin

[Stefi Kiesler: artist's wife, librarian, networker]

Jill Meißner

Sun, 4 Sep 2016, 4 p.m., MAK Lecture Hall

Frederick Kiesler's *Magic Architecture* (in English)

Spyros Papapetros

Sun, 11 Sep 2016, 4 p.m., MAK Columned Main Hall

Friedrich Kieslers *Endless House. Eine unendliche Geschichte*

[Frederick Kiesler's *Endless House: a never-ending story*]

Gerd Zillner

Thu, 15 Sep 2016, 4 p.m., MAK Columned Main Hall

Friedrich Kiesler und die architektonische Erneuerung des Theaters: von der Raumbühne zum *Endless Theatre*

[Frederick Kiesler and the architectural renewal of the theater: from the *Space Stage to the Endless Theatre*]

Barbara Lesák

SUPPORTING PROGRAM OF THE STUDENT PROJECTS

Frederick Kiesler and me (?)

Interactive tour of their exhibition contributions with students from the Berufsschule für Frisur, Maske und Perücke
Tue, 21 Jun 2016, 6 p.m., MAK Columned Main Hall

DISPLAYING KNOWLEDGE 07: Applied participation, a progress report

Conversation with project participants, moderated by schnittpunkt
Tue, 13 Sep 2016, 6 p.m., MAK Exhibition Hall

Thought space | School space | Future space

Project presentation with discussion
Thu, 22 Sep 2016, 6 p.m., Main Hall (Festsaal), BG Wien 9, Wasagasse 10, 1090 Vienna

From the vision to the reality

Project presentation followed by a panel discussion
Thu, 29 Sep 2016, 6 p.m., Main Hall (Festsaal), BORG für Musik und Kunst, Hegelgasse 12, 1010 Vienna

PROGRAM FOR KIDS AND FAMILIES

MAK Design Kids: Building your dream house for beginners

Sat, 18 Jun, 3 Sep and 1 Oct 2016, 2–4 p.m.

Whether Tiny House, tree house, or dream house—was does a house require? We will consider Frederick Kiesler's insights and ponder what a house of the future might look like. Guided by an architect, you can develop ideas, draw a floor plan, and realize your own dream house.

Workshop for 8- to 12-year-olds

Participation fee: € 7.50

Limited number of participants. Please register (by the Thursday before your preferred date):

T +43 1 711 36-297, designkids@MAK.at

MAK4FAMILY

Sat, 25 June and 10 Sep 2016, 2–4 p.m.

The endless house

Who knows Frederick Kiesler? There is much to see and even more to discover about him at the MAK—he was an artist, architect, set designer, and designer. An endless house (without corners), floating structures (without supports), and scenery (of all sorts of shapes) will show us his world, the way he liked it. Using different materials, the workshop will be as exciting as never before.

Workshop for the whole family (ages 4 and older)

Fee for materials: € 2 per child

Accompanying adults: € 7.50

Please **register** in advance: T +43 1 711 36-298, education@MAK.at

SUMMER VACATION ACTIVITIES

Tue, 5 Jul – Fri, 8 Jul 2016 and Tue, 12 Jul – Fri, 15 Jul 2016, 10:15 a.m.–12:30 p.m.

Corners away! (for 6–10-year-olds)

That's what architect and designer Frederick Kiesler was thinking when he designed a round house without corners—an endless house: cave dwelling was the idea behind it. And he had lots of other ideas that MINI MAK wants to explore with you. This summer everything is different—everything is “topsy-turvy.” Using the most diverse materials, the workshop afterwards will be as exciting as never before.

The endless house (for 10–13-year-olds)

Who knows Frederick Kiesler? There is much to see and even more to discover about him at the MAK—he was an artist, architect, set designer, and designer. An endless house (without corners), floating structures (without supports), and scenery (of all sorts of shapes) will show us his world, the way he liked it. Using different materials, the workshop will be as exciting as never

KINDERUNIKUNST

The endless house

Wed, 6 Jul and Thu, 7 Jul 2016, 2–4 p.m.

Inspired by the exhibition *FREDERICK KIESLER: Life Visions*, kids get the chance to realize their own dreams of perfect living quarters.

MINI MAK Tour

The endless house

Sun, 18 Sep 2016, 11:00 a.m.

Guided tour for the whole family (ages 4 and older)

Admission for accompanying adults: € 7.50

Please **register** in advance: T +43 1 711 36-298, education@MAK.at

MAK SENIORS

Wed, 21 Sep 2016, 3 p.m.

Guided tour through the exhibition, followed by further discussion at the restaurant

Salonplafond im MAK, total price € 15

Please **register** in advance: T +43 1 711 36-298, education@MAK.at

Press Data Sheet

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Guest Curators	Dieter Bogner and Maria Lind
Curator	Bärbel Vischer, curator, MAK Contemporary Art Collection
Technical Coordination	Christine Schwaiger, Philipp Krummel
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MAK Admission	€ 9.90 / Reduced € 7.50 / Family Ticket € 13 Free admission for children and teens under 19
MAK Press and PR	Judith Anna Schwarz-Jungmann (Head) Sandra Hell-Ghignone Veronika Träger Lara Steinhäuser T +43 1 711 36-233, -229, -212 presse@MAK.at www.MAK.at

Vienna, 14 June 2016