

sheets mounted on a wall in chronological order documented Scamozzi's preferences as a draftsman and a designer. The selection included a working drawing, showing the different phases of a project's elaboration; a rare example of "conversation drawing," that is, an illustrated letter sent to a patron to explain a problem on the building site; two presentation drawings, one for a funerary monument and one for a kneeler, both lavishly executed with pictorial effects; two preparatory drawings for the engravings of an unpublished volume of *Idea*; and a unique "territorial drawing," a site survey illustrating the taxonomy of public spaces as formulated by Scamozzi in his architectural theory. Even though the relationship of these sheets to the theories expounded in *Idea* could have been underlined more clearly, the captions were commendably effective in explaining their manufacture, function, and destination. Thanks to the interaction with three-dimensional models and photographs by Vaclav Sedy, these explanatory texts also succeeded in communicating technical material to an audience unfamiliar with the peculiar vocabulary and representational conventions of early modern architecture.

Before leaving the room, every visitor was able to pick a sheet from a block of stacked colored paper featuring excerpts from Scamozzi's theoretical writings, thus enacting a playful allusion to a major subject of the exhibition: the combinatorial technique of "commonplacing" used by the architect, born out of a reading practice conditioned by the inherent mobility of such portable objects as modern printed books.

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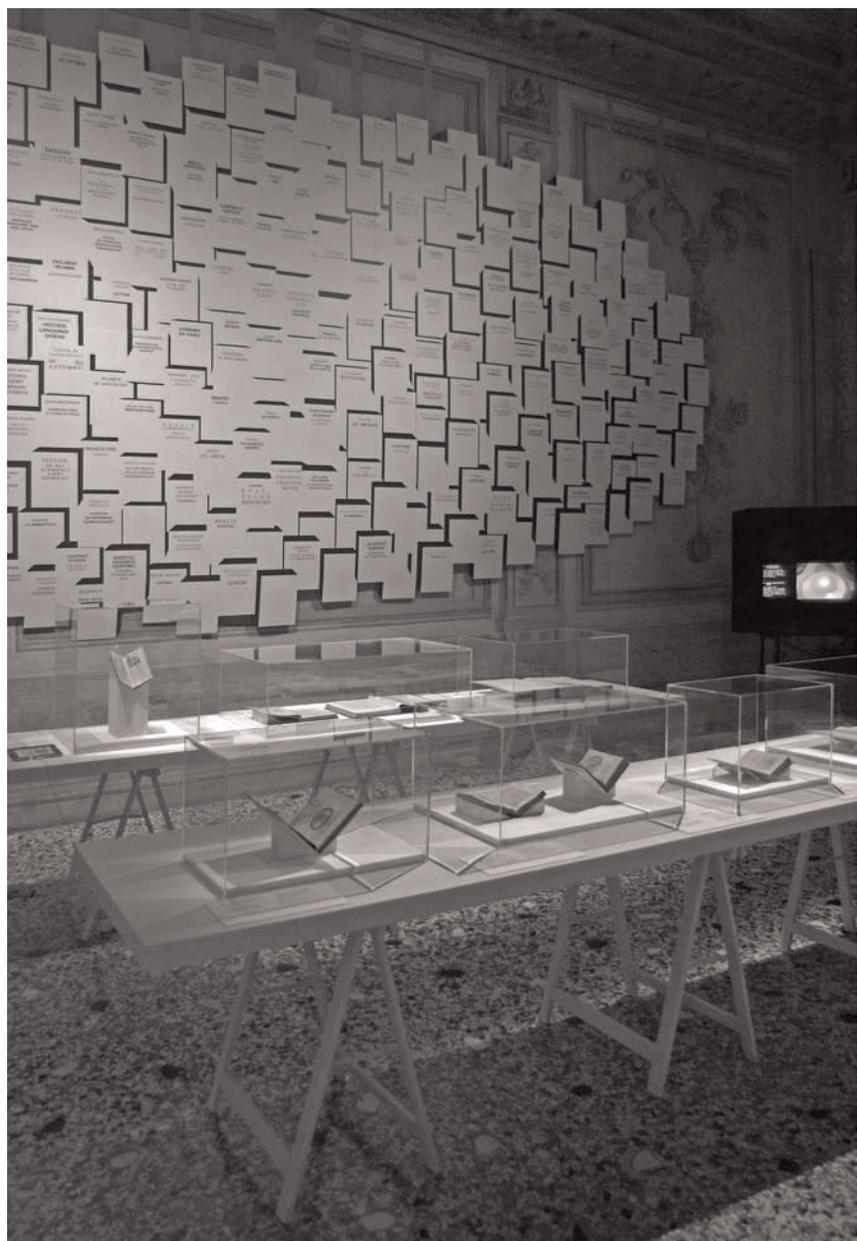
*Kunsthistorisches Institut in  
Florenz–Max-Planck-Institut*

## Related Publication

Franco Barbieri, Guido Beltramini, Katherine Isard, and Werner Oechslin, eds., *Nella mente di Vincenzo Scamozzi: un intellettuale architetto al tramonto del Rinascimento* (Vicenza: Palladio Museum, 2016), 16 pp., 10 illus. (supplement to *Annali di architettura*, no. 27, €45, ISBN 9788831725729)

## Notes

1. Vincenzo Scamozzi, *L'idea della Architettura Universale* (Venice, 1615).
2. Katherine Isard, "The Practice of Theory in Vincenzo Scamozzi's Annotated Architecture Books" (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2014);



**Figure 1** Installation view of *Nella mente di Vincenzo Scamozzi: un intellettuale architetto al tramonto del Rinascimento*, Palladio Museum, Vicenza, Italy, 2016 (author's photo).

Katherine Isard, "Architectural Criticism in Late Sixteenth-Century Italy: Vincenzo Scamozzi's Annotations to Pietro Cataneo's *L'architettura* (1567)," *Annali di architettura*, no. 25 (2015), 135–54; Katherine Isard, "Vincenzo Scamozzi in the World of Books: The Materials of Architectural Knowledge," *Annali di architettura*, no. 27 (2016), 31–40.

3. Franco Barbieri and Guido Beltramini, eds., *Vincenzo Scamozzi, 1548–1616* (Venice: Marsilio Editori, 2003).

4. See Charles Davis, "Architecture and Light: Vincenzo Scamozzi's Statuary Installation in the Chiesetta of Palazzo Ducale in Venice," *Annali di architettura*, no. 14 (2002), 171–93; Charles Davis,

"Vincenzo Scamozzi architetto della luce," in Barbieri and Beltramini, *Vincenzo Scamozzi*, 33–45.

## Friedrich Kiesler: Lebenswelten/ Life Visions

Austrian Museum of Applied Arts/  
Contemporary Art (MAK), Vienna  
15 June–2 October 2016

This exhibition focusing on the Austrian American Friedrich (Frederick) Kiesler (1890–1965) was the latest in a series at the MAK devoted to protagonists of the



**Figure 1** Lili Reynaud-Dewar, *Monsieur Kiesler I am wearing your Endless House. How does it suit me?*, 2016 (HD-video; courtesy of the artist and Galerie Emanuel Layr).

*Wiener Moderne*; it followed exhibitions on Josef Frank and on the relationship between Josef Hoffmann and Adolf Loos.<sup>1</sup> Kiesler has become a familiar figure in the Viennese museum scene. In 1997 his estate was purchased by the Austrian state and the city of Vienna. The same year saw the establishment of the Austrian Friedrich and Lilian Kiesler Foundation, which has since undertaken exemplary research, resulting in exhibitions and a growing awareness of Kiesler's relevance to contemporary discourse. The last significant exhibition, *The Scenery Explodes—Frederick Kiesler, Architect and Visionary Theater Designer*, was mounted by the Austrian Theater Museum in 2012–13.<sup>2</sup> In 2015, Birkhäuser published *Endless Kiesler*, a comprehensive account of Kiesler's spatial innovations.<sup>3</sup> Thanks to the foundation's efforts, Kiesler is now one of the best-known figures of Viennese modernism.

The curators of the exhibition at the MAK, Dieter Bogner, Maria Lind, and Bärbel Vischer, set themselves the challenge of developing a new approach to Kiesler's career. Using a transdisciplinary methodology, they made Kiesler's transgression of boundaries their focus.

Specifically, they stressed the interaction Kiesler achieved between aesthetic and empirical-scientific practices and their reflection of the environment and lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*). The *Lebenswelten* of the exhibition title refer to a central concept from Edmund Husserl's phenomenology, aimed at the undermining of the tendency within modern science to objectify daily life. The *Lebenswelt*—which Husserl sets in opposition to positivism—is a pretheoretical, subjective world of experience, tending toward the antirational, and developed further by Husserl into a phenomenological “universal philosophy.”<sup>4</sup>

Transdisciplinary frameworks have been popular for a number of years now, and the curators interpreted Kiesler's work as a contribution to the solution of concrete social problems through collaboration across various disciplines. But they undermined this ambitious approach by beginning the exhibition with an auratic object, the posthumously published 1966 book *Inside the Endless House*.<sup>5</sup> With its evocative photograph of Kiesler by Duane Michals on the black front cover, the book, in which Kiesler reflects back on his artistic life, not only embodied Kiesler as talented

dramaturge of his own self-image but also set the tone for an exhibition that was in fact monographic in the narrative it constructed and monocausal in its interpretive impulse. The work of Kiesler the “visionary” was shown in its full material variety; the 560 objects presented were almost exclusively from the Kiesler Foundation, and visitors were acquainted with Kiesler's life-work by way of eight thematic threads.<sup>6</sup> The first section addressed Kiesler's preoccupation with the *Gesamtkunstwerk* by introducing his designs from the 1920s for the “electro-mechanical” stage set for Karel Čapek's play *R.U.R. (W.U.R)* and his design for an exhibit at the 1924 International Exhibition of New Theater Technology in Vienna. The objects were reanimated by being presented on a 1:1 reconstruction of the system of planes and supports that Kiesler conceived for the 1924 exhibition (a design that cemented his position in the history of exhibition display techniques). Giving visitors the lived experience of these innovative presentation techniques was a major contribution of the MAK exhibition. The reenactment of his design for the Austrian contribution to the 1925 Exposition Internationale des Arts

Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes in Paris was a high point. In contrast to its use in Paris, the floating structure functioned here not as a support for models or plans; rather, it rendered visible Kiesler's idea of a floating *Raumstadt*. The radicalness and elegance of the design still enchants, though the spell was broken by the projection onto part of the structure of a video by the artist Lili Reynaud-Dewar, who filmed herself moving around the structure while wearing the Endless House (Figure 1).<sup>7</sup> The exhibition also featured interventions from five other artists—Leonor Antunes, Céline Condorelli, Verena Dengler, Apolonija Šušteršič, and Rirkrit Tiravanija—engaging in dialogue with Kiesler.

Confronting historical themes with contemporary positions—and thus offering a presentist interpretation of historical sources—is a feature of today's curatorial practice. But it is also evident in the shift (which has been happening for some time now) toward seeing Kiesler's architectural work in an art context. His life with and in art, which was evident from the 1930s onward in his use of a biomorphic vocabulary, culminated in the Art of This Century gallery designed for the collector Peggy Guggenheim. However, Kiesler's intensive engagement with the phenomenon of perception, his study of human physiognomy and modes of behavior, and his interest in new materials and technologies (pursued in the Laboratory for Design Correlation, among other places) cannot be explained only as an artistic fascination with technological innovations or as an outcome of his interest in universalizing concepts of life. If we break out of monocausal interpretations and place his work in a social and political context, new questions emerge. During World War II, new university-based research units were established that co-financed future-oriented research, a development that continued into the Cold War years. In 1961, Kiesler received a grant from the Ford Foundation for the development of an ideal theater. After 1945, through its philanthropy, the Ford Foundation pursued political goals in the competitive context of the Cold War. Alongside future-oriented research, it supported behaviorist approaches in the social sciences that could prepare Western societies and democracies for rapid technical and social change. Kiesler, like his

colleagues Bernard Rudofsky, Ray and Charles Eames, and George Nelson, was deployed by American governmental agencies to propagandize for the "American way of life." Objects and documents from Kiesler's design for the 1945 Moscow exhibition *U.S. Housing in War and Peace*, organized by the National Council of American–Soviet Friendship, were shown in the exhibition, but minimal effort was made to offer a critical contextualization of his work in its sociopolitical milieu or alongside the activities of his contemporaries.

It is misleading to see Kiesler's engagement with new constructional and spatial concepts as an isolated phenomenon. Included in the exhibition was an interview for the CBS program *Camera Three*, in which Kiesler was asked about his conception of the Endless House. The interviewer was comfortable connecting the design with four contemporary buildings: Le Corbusier's Notre Dame du Haut at Ronchamp, Le Corbusier and Iannis Xenakis's Philips Pavilion, Frank Lloyd Wright's Guggenheim Museum, and Eero Saarinen's TWA terminal. These connections remain unexplored. The curators of *Friedrich Kiesler: Lebenswelten/Life Visions* succeeded in presenting a panorama of Kiesler's multilayered work, but the task of liberating the architect, artist, designer, stage designer, and theorist from his role as "visionary" remains.

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## Notes

1. *Ways to Modernism: Josef Hoffmann, Adolf Loos and Their Impact* (17 Dec. 2014–19 Apr. 2015); *Josef Frank, Against Design* (6 Dec. 2015–12 June 2016).
2. The exhibition premiered at the Theater Museum (25 Oct. 2012–25 Feb. 2013) and then traveled to the Villa Stuck, Munich (21 Mar.–23 June 2013), and to La Casa Encendida de Obra Social Caja, Madrid (3 Oct. 2013–5 Jan. 2014).
3. Klaus Bollinger, Florian Medicus, and Österreichische Friedrich and Lillian Kiesler Privatstiftung, eds., *Endless Kiesler* (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2015).
4. Edmund Husserl, *Phänomenologie der Lebenswelt* (Stuttgart: P. Reclam, 1986).
5. Frederick Kiesler, *Inside the Endless House: Art, People and Architecture—A Journal* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1966).
6. The eight themes were "Theater as a Social Interaction Space," "Biomorphic Transformation/Functional Metamorphoses," "Perception, Magic, and the (Surrealists') New Mythos," "Life with/in

Art," "The Dream of the Floating City," "Design as Life Science," "The Future House," and "Myth and Religion."

7. Lili Reynaud-Dewar, *Monsieur Kiesler I am wearing your Endless House. How does it suit me?* (2016), HD-video.

## Radical Design

Vitra Design Museum, Weil am Rhein, Germany

4 June–13 November 2016

*Radical Design* was the latest in a number of shows, including a special exhibition at the 1996 Architecture Biennale in Venice, devoted to the "radicals" of the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>1</sup> That exhibition made clear that the "radical" approach did not concentrate on objects exclusively, but was in fact rather expansive: "from the spoon to the city."<sup>2</sup>

In the beginning, Radical Design was an informal network, consisting primarily of young Italian architects who had forged friendships over their shared interests.<sup>3</sup> Lacking building contracts, they began experimenting on a 1:1 scale, producing objects in practices that straddled the lines between design, art, and theory. This plainly adhered to the Italian tradition of architects who are active as designers and intellectuals as well. But in contrast to the representatives of earlier generations, these new Italian radicals came of age during a period of crisis. Graduates of architecture schools were extremely hard-pressed to secure building contracts in the 1960s.<sup>4</sup> Their predicament was exacerbated by an increasing disillusionment with the "great masters" of modernism. Additionally, consumerism and mass production had become facts of life. The young Italians could not tolerate the idea of simply producing attractive objects that would then be absorbed by the systems of unfettered capitalism. Instead, they endeavored to develop designs that would resist mass consumption. Groups like Archizoom and Superstudio, and architects like Gaetano Pesce, Ugo La Pietra, and Ettore Sottsass, sought to challenge the limits of "good taste." Their designs traded in the banal and the trivial, the absurd and the provocative, the fantastical and the contradictory. What emerged were a number of projects. Of these, only seven were on display in Weil am Rhein.