

Friedrich Kiesler Endless House 2

Amid the grey basalt architecture of mumok, a presentation of the architect and multifaceted artist Friedrich Kiesler (1890–1965) can be found on the -1 floor. At its center is the model of his *Endless House* (1959): an organic-looking wire mesh and concrete architectural sculpture in a sonorous gray and an icon of twentieth-century visionary architecture. In 2017, this model, for a house that was never built, found its way alongside numerous sketches, drawings, and plans as well as other works by the artist into the mumok Collection by way of a donation by the collector couple Gertraud and Dieter Bogner.

The museum's bunker-like architecture thus houses a kind of centerpiece of architectural history, an organoid entity that still resonates spiritually to this day. It was originally conceived as a symbolic and de facto disruption to the straightjacket of a rationalized and geometricized living environment. We may recall Adolf Loos's interconnecting spatial relationships in the model's open structure with its flowing transitions between walls, floor, and ceiling, while the interweaving of all art forms in the interior might bring to mind Josef Hoffmann's concept of the total work of art (*Gesamtkunstwerk*). Yet Kiesler was not beholden simply to local tradition; he was an early global player.

As early as the nineteen-twenties, he was in close contact with the architecture and art scene in America. As a crosser of continents, he also ranked among the pioneers of an open concept of art, one in which painting together with architecture supported an expanded function that integrated ways of living. From 1947, he created multipartite pictorial objects with his so-called *Galaxies*, which were conceived as transmitters between painting, sculpture, and architecture and bespoke of his sensitivity to ways of presentation and spatial references. The inspiration and referential subject for Kiesler's *Galaxies* was his theory of Correalism as an expression of his conviction regarding the interrelations between the arts as well as between urban structures, buildings, and their technical and artistic fitments. At the center of his *Endless House* vision lies not only Correalism but also the essence of the *Galaxies*, whose interaction of pictorial elements Kiesler compared to familial structures: "Each painting represents a definite unit in itself just as in one family each member is of distinct individuality. Yet, their firm cohesion (into one) is inborn no matter how heterogeneous the character of the members might be."*

The history of mumok is closely linked to the career of Friedrich Kiesler. As long as thirty years ago, mumok (at the time still the Museum of the 20th Century) presented the exhibition *Friedrich Kiesler: Visionary*, curated by Dieter Bogner and Susanne Neuburger. This exhibition marked a new phase in the international reception and influence of Kiesler's work, which has been and to this day still is so significant for architecture, painting, sculpture, and twentieth-century theory.

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Endless House 2

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Installation view
Friedrich Kiesler
Endless House 2
Photo: mumok
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After the show in Vienna, which included a comprehensive scholarly catalogue, there were large solo exhibitions in the New York Whitney Museum, the Centre Pompidou, Paris, and recently also in MAK Vienna and the Martin Gropius Bau in Berlin. The public presentation of this gift at mumok fulfils the Bogners' wish to show the *Endless House* model, with its importance in both art and architectural history, in connection with further positions from the bequest and also the mumok collection. Now, thirty years after the noteworthy exhibition of 1988, the work of Friedrich Kiesler will be on permanent show at mumok.

Kiesler's Vienna years and circle, with Otto Wagner, Josef Hoffmann, and Adolf Loos, and also the idea of the total work of art, were influential on his entire artistic and theoretical oeuvre. His vision of the relationship between artwork, space, and beholder gained form in his revolutionary exhibition designs and groups of works.

Curated by Dieter Bogner, Rainer Fuchs and Susanne Neuburger

*Dieter Bogner, ed., *Friedrich Kiesler, 1890–1965: Inside the Endless House*, exh. cat. 231st special exhibition of the Historisches Museum der Stadt Wien, 12.12.1997–1.3.1999 (Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 1997).