

Media release  
Zug, 9 February 2024

## Frederick Kiesler *Us, You, Me* Feb 25–May 26, 2024

The Kunsthhaus Zug is presenting two comprehensive exhibitions on Frederick Kiesler (1890–1965), an Austrian-American artist who achieved international renown as an architect, theatre reformer and designer. The first exhibition, *Frederick Kiesler – Us, You, Me*, thematises his artistic exhibition concept for the first time in connection with his innovative oeuvre as a visual artist, namely his *Galaxies*. The second exhibition, *Kiesler today*, will shed light on how he continues to inspire artists today.

Curated by Stephanie Buhmann, Matthias Haldemann and Gerd Zillner.

An exhibition held in collaboration with the Austrian Frederick and Lillian Kiesler Private Foundation of Vienna and The Estate of Frederick Kiesler, New York.

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### Frederick Kiesler

Frederick Kiesler (known in the German-speaking world as Friedrich Kiesler; 1890–1965) was an Austrian-American artist who achieved international renown, primarily as a significant architect, theatre reformer and designer. The exhibition *Frederick Kiesler – Us, You, Me* at the Kunsthhaus Zug is the first-ever exhibition to offer a comprehensive view of his innovative, influential oeuvre of paintings and sculptures – an oeuvre influenced by his many parallel activities. These included the genre of the "art exhibition", which he made into an artistic medium, just as did Marcel Duchamp. Kiesler's groundbreaking exhibitions included one that he realised for the Peggy Guggenheim Collection in New York in 1942 and one that he organised for and with the Surrealists in Paris in 1947, in collaboration with his friends André Breton and Duchamp. These exhibitions are presented at the Kunsthhaus Zug in the form of sketches, models, publications and photos.

This complex exhibition features major works by the artist. Its goal is to emphasise the importance of Kiesler's inspiring oeuvre of the 1950s and '60s, which is barely known in Switzerland. It also aims to foster a broad understanding of this transdisciplinary artist and to offer a differentiated portrait of the latter-day interdisciplinary art history of Europe and the USA. To this end, works from various collections are being brought together for the first-ever time in Europe. These include important loans from the Austrian Frederick and Lillian Kiesler Private Foundation in Vienna, The Estate of Frederick Kiesler, New York, and other collections, alongside the holdings of the Kunsthhaus Zug itself. In tandem with this exhibition, a book will be published by Hatje Cantz in Berlin that will offer the first-ever comprehensive, scholarly portrait of Kiesler's oeuvre as a visual artist.

Frederick Kiesler was born in Czernowitz in what was then Austro-Hungary, but is today in Ukraine. He spent the first part of his life in Vienna and elsewhere in Europe before moving to New York in 1926. From the 1920s onwards he was active on the avant-garde scene, first in Vienna then in New York. He was friends with influential personalities ranging from Josef Hoffmann to Adolf Loos, Egon Schiele, Arnold Schoenberg, Hans Arp, Theo van Doesburg and Piet Mondrian to John Cage, Alexander Calder, Marcel Duchamp, Yves Tanguy, Elaine and Willem de Kooning, Ad Reinhardt, Mark Rothko, Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg and Andy Warhol. Kiesler's interdisciplinary work reflects the intensive, multifaceted dialogue in which he engaged with these contemporaries. His aim was to overcome boundaries, conventional frameworks and genres, and to incorporate his environment in his work. This also makes him relevant to contemporary artists such as the Kiesler Prizewinners Olafur Eliasson, Bruce

# Kunsthhaus Zug

Nauman and Heimo Zobernig. His visual artworks have a keen theoretical basis and mark the beginnings of environmental art.

## **His link to Canton Zug**

Kiesler's extensive, lifelong oeuvre is a perfect fit for the collection of the Kunsthhaus Zug. Thanks to the works of the Kamm Collection Foundation, Viennese Modernism is already an important focus in Zug; Kiesler's links to Surrealism (e.g. to Kurt Seligmann) and to contemporary art (Olafur Eliasson, Heidulf Gerngross, Peter Kogler, Roman Signer, Richard Tuttle and Heimo Zobernig) are similarly important for the Kunsthhaus. In order to consolidate this particular focus, the Kunsthhaus Zug acquired a group of works by Kiesler, and his oeuvre has also repeatedly been contextualised in various exhibitions at the museum. The exhibition *Breton, Duchamp, Kiesler – Surrealist Spaces, 1947* that was presented at the Kunsthhaus Zug in spring 2020 here deserves special mention.

Frederick Kiesler is known above all for his achievements in the fields of architecture, theatre and furniture design. Although much of his oeuvre consists of innovative, multiple paintings and sculptural "environments", these are barely known in Europe in general, and in Switzerland in particular, and have never been shown in their overall context. In the USA, groups of Kiesler's works can be found, for example, in the collections of MoMA, the Guggenheim Museum and the Whitney Museum of American Art (all of which have dedicated exhibitions to him) and also in the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

The exhibition *Frederick Kiesler – Us, You, Me* at the Kunsthhaus Zug takes its title from Kiesler's last environment sculpture and focuses specifically on his visual art, his multiple paintings and his sculptures. Numerous works are being brought together from various museums and private collections in the USA and Europe. The holdings of the Austrian Frederick and Lillian Kiesler Private Foundation in Vienna and The Estate of Frederick Kiesler, New York, will provide a comprehensive selection of his work. This exhibition is being curated by Stephanie Buhmann (the head of the Department of Fine Arts, Architecture and Design at the Austrian Cultural Forum in New York), Matthias Haldemann (Director of the Kunsthhaus Zug) and Gerd Zillner (Director of the Austrian Frederick and Lillian Kiesler Private Foundation, Vienna) and has been carefully developed over several years. It is also designed specifically for the spatial conditions of the Kunsthhaus Zug. It will comprise some three hundred works and documents, and can be seen exclusively in Zug. This exhibition promises to be a real discovery, both for experts and for art-lovers of all ages.

## **Exhibition catalogue**

This exhibition will be accompanied by a catalogue focusing on aspects of Frederick Kiesler's work as an artist that have thus far tended to go unnoticed. It will contain contributions by the curators and by experts in Kiesler's work, but also by Kiesler himself, who wrote theoretical texts on art that offer comprehensive insights into his open manner of thinking and that in many respects can be considered highly contemporary. New photographs of his works will be made and published for the first-ever time, including works that have never before been exhibited. This catalogue is being designed by the Lucerne-based graphic designer Monika Sommerhalder and will be published in English by the renowned art-book publisher Hatje Cantz of Berlin, who will provide worldwide distribution for it.

**Media orientation:** Thu 22 February 2024, 10:00, Kunsthhaus Zug

**Opening:** Sat 24 February 2024, 17:15, Burgbach Hall, Dorfstrasse 12, 6300 Zug

# Kunsthhaus Zug

## **This exhibition is being generously supported by**

Canton Zug, Glencore, Art Mentor Foundation Lucerne, Kamm Collection Foundation, The Estate of Frederick Kiesler (New York), KUMA Foundation, Minerva Art Foundation (Frauenfeld), Zuger Kantonalbank, Otto and Christa Schwarz (Zug) and CROZIER.

## **Accompanying programme & educational offerings**

There is a multifaceted accompanying programme for this exhibition. It will include concerts with the Pacific Quartet Vienna, the Trio Leimgruber-Demierre-Lehn with Alex Huber and the pianist Judith Wegmann. The further offerings will include guided tours, also with the curators, ten events in the *Art at Lunchtime* series, a lecture and a film-showing. The art education programme will include a family workshop, and on International Museum Day (Sunday 26 May 2024), the Kunsthhaus will open its workshop to the public.

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## **Kiesler today**

### ***Artwork dialogues with contemporaries***

**9 June–8 September 2024**

The second exhibition at the Kunsthhaus Zug, *Kiesler today*, will focus on the topicality of Kiesler's artistic oeuvre and the enduring inspiration that it has provided for several generations of contemporary artists in Europe and the USA. Kiesler's works will be placed in a thematic, spatial dialogue with new works by contemporary artists in order to tease out the special topicality of his innovative oeuvre. Important topics here include his art of display, exhibition art, the environment, installations, "archi-sculpture", performance and participation. The artists taking part in this dialogue will include Thomas Schütte and the Frederick Kiesler Prizewinners Olafur Eliasson, Bruce Nauman and Heimo Zobernig. Sara Masüger, Michael Kienzer and Roman Signer will also contribute new works to this exhibition.

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## **Texts and images for the press can be found on our website:**

[kunsthauszug.ch/en/about/media-release-friedrich-kiesler](https://kunsthauszug.ch/en/about/media-release-friedrich-kiesler)

## **Media contact**

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## **General information**

**Opening times:** Tue–Fri 12:00–18:00/ Sat–Sun 10:00–17:00 / Closed on Mondays

**Admission:** CHF 18 / 15 (reduced); see website for those entitled to reductions and free entry

**Address:** Kunsthhaus Zug, Dorfstrasse 27, 6301 Zug

**Accessibility:** Please go online to find information on barrier-free access to the Kunsthhaus Zug

**Contact:** +41 41 725 33 44, info@kunsthauszug.ch

[kunsthauszug.ch](https://kunsthauszug.ch), [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#), [Facebook](#)

[@kiesler\\_foundation](#), [@estateoffrederickkiesler](#)

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