

# Studio and Workshop

## Frederick Kiesler as a Master of Self-fashioning

In cooperation with eyes on – Monat der Fotografie

November 7, 2014 – January 11, 2015



**Opening:**

**Thursday, November 6, 2014 at 7 p.m.**

Frederick Kiesler Foundation

Mariahilfer Strasse 1b, 1060 Vienna

Opening hours: Mo–Fr 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.,

Sat 11 a.m. – 3 p.m.

Free entry!

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At the drawing desk, the foundry or the carpenter's workshop – Frederick Kiesler was a master of self-fashioning. The exhibition shows pictures by the most renowned photographers in his day, for example Arnold Newman, Hans Namuth and Irving Penn, who documented the artist at work.

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Special events:

**Lecture in the course of the Vienna Art Week:**

**Céline Condorelli, „To supply with the moveable parts of necessity and delight“**

Wednesday, November 19, 2014 at 7 p.m.

**Guided tours with the curator:**

Thursday, December 4, 2014 at 6 p.m.

Thursday, January 8, 2015 at 6 p.m.

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Press photos in high resolution as [download](#) at [www.kiesler.org](http://www.kiesler.org)

**eyes on**  
Monat der Fotografie Wien

**VIENNA  
ART  
WEEK  
2014**

## Studio and Workshop

### Frederick Kiesler as a Master of Self-fashioning

Exhibition at the Frederick Kiesler Foundation

Curator: Gerd Zillner

The Austrian-American architect, artist, designer, stage decorator and theorist Frederick Kiesler (1890-1965) was a master of self-fashioning. Deeply rooted in theatre, he transformed the whole world into a stage and put himself into the spotlight. This applied to public appearances at exhibition openings and lectures as well as to interviews, autobiographic texts and photo shootings.

His estate, which is administered by the Frederick Kiesler Foundation, contains more than 5,000 photographs including numerous portraits. Kiesler especially enjoyed being portrayed at work: together with assistants or with craftsmen, in solitary immersion in the design in front of him, facetiously directing his team in a moment of high spirits in his studio. Kiesler turned his atelier, the intimate space of production, into a theatrical scene. The process of creating his art, the making of, was recorded for the public eye. Apparently casual snapshots complement meticulously staged pictures. On the one hand, these photographs help us understand how Kiesler saw himself as an artist; on the other hand, many of them shed light on how certain projects came into being.

Of particular interest in this regard is the work on the *Endless House* models in the winter of 1958–59. The large number and artistic quality of the photographs documenting this process suggest that the creative act, the labour of modelling the objects out of wire mesh and cement, matters as much as the finished products. The impressively staged portraits of Kiesler with his large *Endless House* model taken by the photographers Hans Namuth and Irving Penn were published in the glossy magazines *Harper's Bazaar* and *VOGUE* and still belong to the best-known images of the artist. In comparison the exhibition also shows a series of snapshots that give a realistic and unadorned insight into Kiesler's New York studio.

In the 1960s Frederick Kiesler devoted himself more and more to sculpturing. He created large groups of sculptures, including *US-YOU-ME*, a 12.5 x 5 metre environment consisting of 37 single bronze and aluminium sculptures. He invited a photographer to his studio to take pictures of him trying out the exact arrangement of the single parts. Many of the pictures give the impression of a theatre play with the sculptures as actors and Kiesler as director. To a large extent the photos were shot by Adelaide de Menil and demonstrate an exceptional intimacy and familiarity with the aging artist. She also accompanied him to the Modern Art Foundry where he had several sculptures cast. The resulting photographs show Kiesler in spite of his advanced age cheerfully joking with the workers and discussing the texture of the sculptures.

Kiesler's assistant of many years, Len Pitkowsky, still gladly remembers the crowded atmosphere in the studio. He describes how the artist enjoyed working simultaneously on several projects and how the studio resembled a large family. This impression is confirmed by a photo series by Alex J. Langley documenting the work on the sculpture *The Arch as a Rainbow of Shells*. Wearing a white shirt and a black fly Kiesler stands in the centre of the artistic chaos, comparing the models with the plans and appearing once again as conductor or also as the "lion tamer" that his fellow artist Hans Richter affectionately described him as.