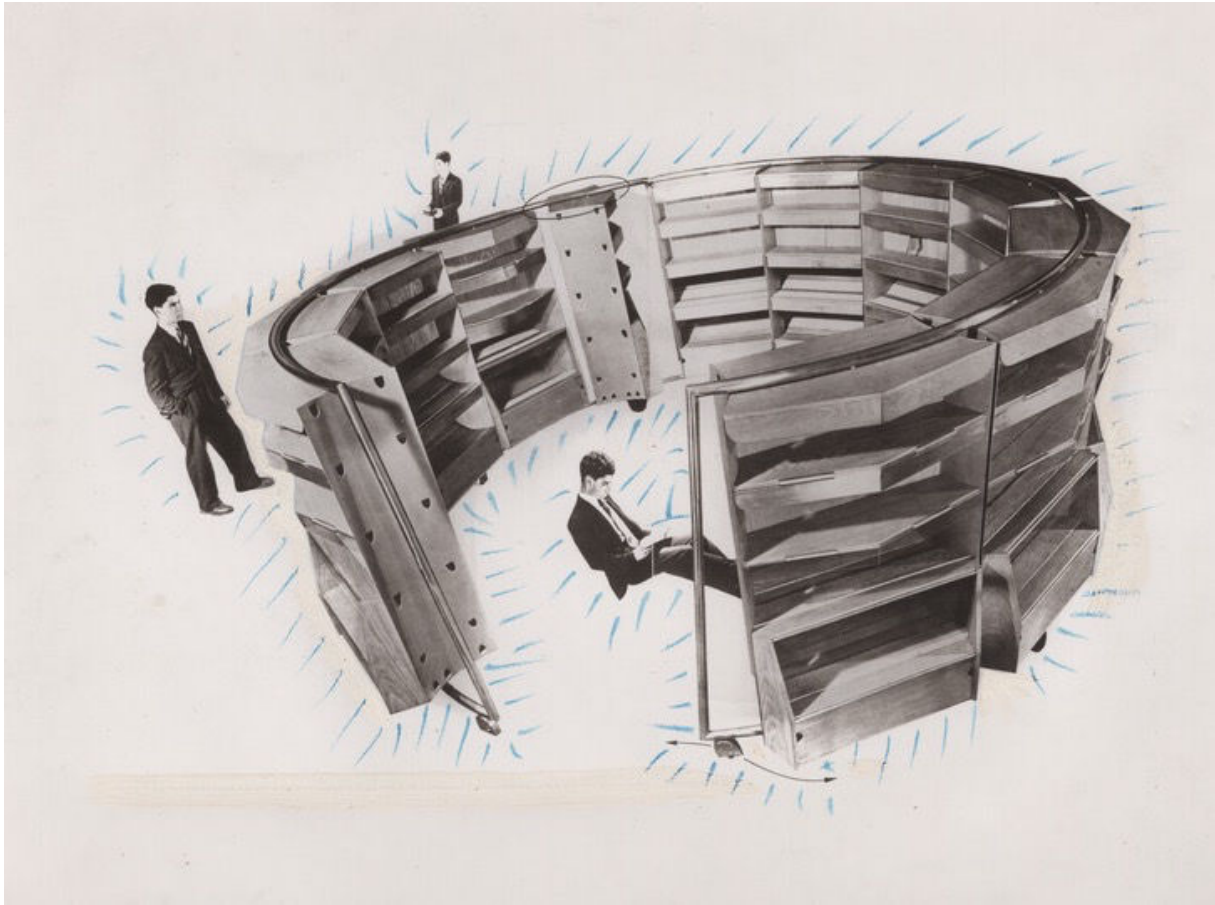


Graham Foundation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Frederick Kiesler. *Mobile Home Library* as represented in his “*Correalism Manifesto*,” 1947. Copyright Austrian Frederick and Lillian Kiesler Private Foundation, Vienna

Frederick Kiesler: Vision Machines

Curated by Mark Wasiuta

October 23, 2024–March 15, 2025

CURATOR TALK: Mark Wasiuta, November 7, 6–8 p.m.

Chicago, October 18, 2024—The Graham Foundation presents *Frederick Kiesler: Vision Machines*, a concise yet rich examination of Frederick Kiesler’s (1890–1965) experimental design practice through the activities of his Laboratory for Design Correlation at Columbia University from the late 1930s to the early 1940s. Kiesler’s Laboratory included research, design studies, and drawings that probed the possibilities of his theory of biotechnique, while reflecting on the relation between design, energy, and the human body (its posture, respiration rates, and image consciousness). The exhibition highlights two of Kiesler’s most essential and ambitious projects developed at the Laboratory: the *Mobile Home Library* and the *Vision Machine*. Together these projects illustrate the fantastical scope and applications of Kiesler’s correalism: a design approach he conceived to “express the dynamics of continual interaction between man and his natural and technological environments.”

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Central to the exhibition is Kiesler's important but previously unrealized Mobile Home Library, fabricated and presented in its entirety. This dynamic device proposed to improve basic domestic activities, while also radically altering domestic space. In its most iconic form, the library appears as a circular series of bookshelves; the entire piece is ambulatory, with each module also designed to spin within the Library's ring frame. The exhibition also includes Kiesler's drawings and studies for his Vision Machine, an ambitious device intended to visualize human sight—from optics and nerve stimuli to dream content and dream images. The selection of more than 100 drawings, photographs, and research studies of these projects illuminate Kiesler's remarkable attempts to grasp human vision, record dreams, and to correlate libraries, information, images, and consciousness.

Frederick Kiesler was born into a Jewish family in present-day Ukraine in 1890. He first studied printmaking and painting at the Academy of Fine Arts but would later gain a venerable reputation as an inventive and dynamic theater set designer. In 1923, Kiesler joined de Stijl on the invitation of Theo van Doesburg, making him the group's youngest member. After immigrating to the United States and settling in New York City in 1926, among other projects, Kiesler designed store windows for Saks Fifth Avenue, the Guild Cinema, and Peggy Guggenheim's Art of This Century gallery. He was also appointed as the director of scenic design at the Juilliard School of Music as well as director of his laboratory at Columbia University's School of Architecture. Kiesler's experiments with correalism, biotechnique, enveloping space, Magic Architecture, human perception, and energy, underscore the rich multiplicity of his architectural vision.

This exhibition marks Kiesler's return to the Graham Foundation; in 1957 he was awarded one of the inaugural Graham Foundation Fellowships, shortly after the Foundation was established in 1956. Through the fellowship, Kiesler was invited to Chicago in 1958 to present his research and participate in seminars alongside other fellows, including painter Wilfredo Lam, future Pritzker Prize-winning architects Balkrishna V. Doshi and Fumihiko Maki, and sculptor Eduardo Chillida, among others. Beginning November 7, a selection of documents from the Graham Foundation's archive in connection to Kiesler's fellowship and the Graham fellow seminar in Chicago will be on view in the Madlener House library.

Frederick Kiesler: Vision Machines is organized by the Jewish Museum, New York, in cooperation with the Austrian Frederick and Lillian Kiesler Private Foundation, Vienna.

The Austrian Federal Ministry for Arts, Culture, the Civil Service and Sport (BMKOES) supported the preparation of the exhibition with a grant to the Kiesler Foundation, thus making the preparatory work for the exhibition possible.

The exhibition is curated by Mark Wasiuta; designed by Wasiuta, Farah Alkhoury, and Tigran Kostandyan; and fabricated by Powerhouse Arts Makers.

Mark Wasiuta is Co-Director of the Critical, Curatorial and Conceptual Practices in Architecture program at Columbia University's Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation. Wasiuta is recipient of recent grants from the Onassis Foundation, the Asian Cultural Council, NYSCA, and the Graham Foundation, where he was an inaugural Graham Foundation Fellow. His research exhibition practice focuses on architecture's media, politics, and environments through under-examined projects of the postwar period. His work has been exhibited widely, including at the Graham Foundation, LAXArt, Storefront for Art and Architecture, the Venice Architecture Biennale, the Sharjah Architecture Triennale, Het Nieuwe Instituut in Rotterdam, MAXXI, the Deste Foundation, the Luma Foundation, Moderna Museet, and elsewhere. Recent Exhibitions include *Frederick Kiesler: Vision Machines* at the Jewish Museum in New York City and *The*

Machine at the Heart of Man: Doxiadis' Informational Modernism at the Onassis Foundation in Athens, Greece. Wasiuta is coauthor and coeditor of *Rifat Chadirj: Building Index* (Arab Image Foundation, 2018); *Dan Graham's New Jersey* (Lars Müller Publishers, 2012), and author of numerous articles.

The **Jewish Museum** is an art museum committed to illuminating the complexity and vibrancy of Jewish culture for a global audience. Through distinctive exhibitions and programs that present the work of diverse artists and thinkers, the Jewish Museum shares ideas, provokes dialogue, and promotes understanding. It is focused on the interplay between artistic practice—contemporary and historical—with a peerless collection reflecting global Jewish identity and tradition, ancient times to present day. Founded in 1904, the Museum has a global reputation for the quality of its collection, exhibitions, and scholarship. Located on Manhattan's famous Museum Mile, the Museum serves more than 200,000 annual visitors of all religious and cultural backgrounds.

The **Austrian Frederick and Lillian Kiesler Private Foundation**, Vienna was founded in 1997, after the Republic of Austria and the city of Vienna, with the help of numerous private benefactors, had acquired the descendant's estate of Frederick Kiesler. It is its objective to explore the heritage of this Austro-American architect (1890-1965) and to ascribe it to the contemporary canon of architectural and artistic practice. In his attempt to achieve a symbiosis of artistic and social domains, Kiesler was oriented towards an interdisciplinary combination of theory and practice. He was active in the various disciplines of architecture, visual arts, design and theatre. The Kiesler Foundation Vienna develops its interdisciplinary and transmedial activities based on this holistic way of thinking. Research projects, symposia and exhibitions examine Kiesler's oeuvre and its historical impact, attending to aspects of historical inquiry, as well as of contemporary cultural discourse.

Special thanks to Gerd Zillner, director of the Austrian Frederick and Lillian Kiesler Private Foundation, Vienna.

The organizers of the exhibition would like to thank Claudia Gould, who developed this project when she was director of the Jewish Museum. Additionally, the Graham Foundation would like to thank James S. Snyder, Helen Goldsmith Menschel Director of the Jewish Museum, as well as Darsie Alexander, Jody Heher, Maureen Merrigan, Kristina Parsons, and Jennifer Roberts.

At the Graham Foundation, the exhibition is organized by Sarah Herda, director, with Ava Barrett, Alexandra Lee Small, and James Pike. Production support by Andrew Kephart, —ism Furniture; Jeremy Gender, Powerhouse Arts; Ron Konow; Michael Savona, and Crozier Fine Arts.

RELATED PROGRAM

Mark Wasiuta, *Frederick Kiesler: Vision Machines*

CURATOR TALK

November 7, 2024, 6 p.m.

[learn more](#), [register to attend](#)

RELATED PUBLICATION

Frederick Kiesler: Vision Machines by Mark Wasiuta (MIT Press with the Jewish Museum and Graham Foundation) is forthcoming in 2025. The publication is made possible by the Graham Foundation and Elise Jaffe + Jeffrey Brown.

ABOUT THE GRAHAM FOUNDATION

Founded in 1956, the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts fosters the development and exchange of diverse and challenging ideas about architecture and its role in the arts, culture, and society. The Graham realizes this vision through making project-based grants to individuals and organizations, and by producing exhibitions, events, and publications. The Graham Foundation was created by a bequest from Ernest R. Graham (1866–1936), a prominent Chicago architect and protégé of Daniel Burnham.

THE MADLENER HOUSE

Since 1963, the Graham Foundation has been located in the Madlener House, a turn-of-the-century Prairie-style mansion designed by Richard E. Schmidt and Hugh M. G. Garden. Built 1901–02, it was later renovated by prominent modern architect Daniel Brenner. The 9,000 square-foot historic home now hosts galleries, a bookstore, an outdoor collection of architectural fragments, an extensive non-circulating library of grantee publications, and a ballroom where the Foundation hosts a robust schedule of public programs.

BOOKSHOP

The Graham Foundation's bookshop, designed by Ania Jaworska, offers a selection of new, historically significant, and hard-to-find publications on architecture, art, and design, many of which have been supported by grants from the Graham Foundation.

GALLERY HOURS AND VISITOR INFORMATION

The galleries and bookshop are open to the public Wednesday through Saturday, 12–5 p.m. Admission is free. Group tours are available by request. The second-floor galleries and the third-floor ballroom, where events are held, are only accessible by stairs. The first-floor galleries and bookshop are accessible via outdoor lift. Please call ahead to make arrangements.

MEDIA CONTACT

A selection of high-resolution digital images are available on the press section of the Foundation's website; email Ava Barrett for the press login. Press tours welcome by appointment.

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abarrett@grahamfoundation.org

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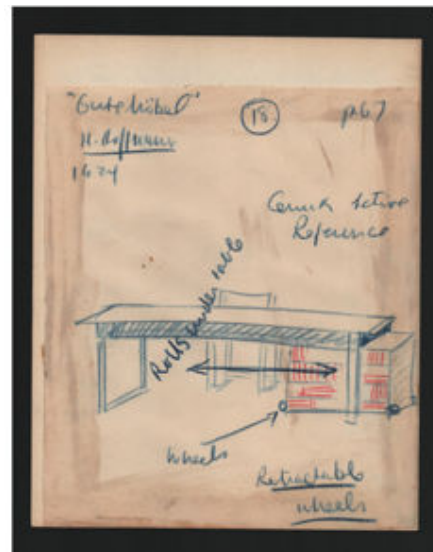
Frederick Kiesler, *Mobile Home Library* as represented in the "Correalism Manifesto," 1947. Copyright Austrian Frederick and Lillian Kiesler Private Foundation, Vienna



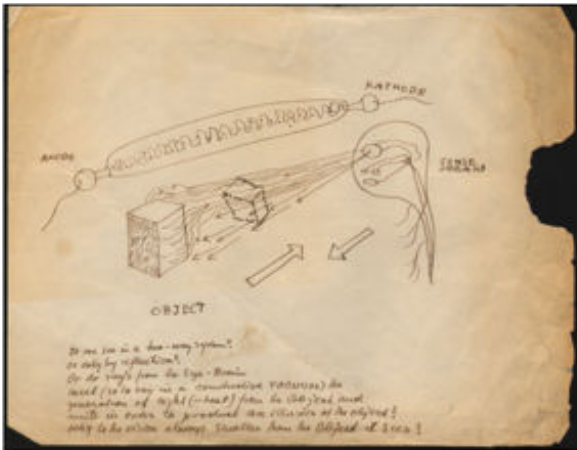
Photographer unknown, *Frederick Kiesler's Mobile Home Library hinge*, 1938. Photograph, 7.97 x 5.07 in (20.2 x 12.9 cm). Copyright Austrian Frederick and Lillian Kiesler Private Foundation, Vienna



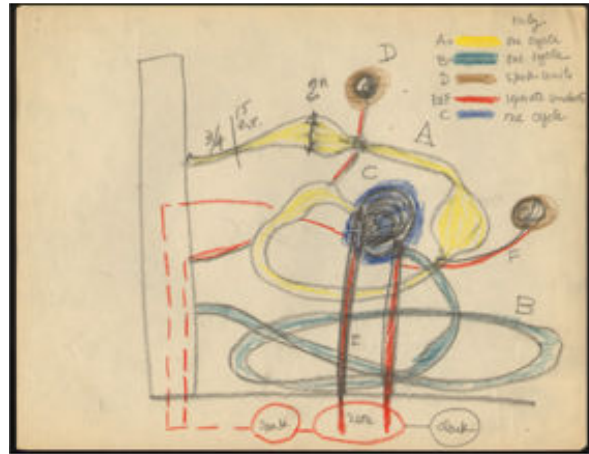
Laboratory of Design Correlation, *Information storage study (Wydesteel Busses)* from presentation boards for the book storage teaching project, 1938. Collage on card and pencil, 9.68 x 8.07 in (24.6 x 20.5 cm). Copyright Austrian Frederick and Lillian Kiesler Private Foundation, Vienna



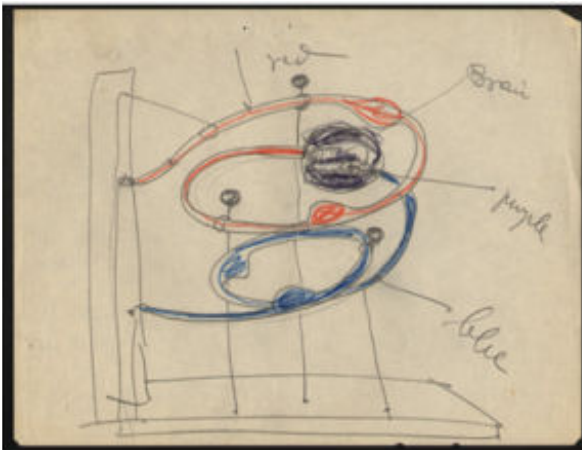
Laboratory of Design Correlation, *Shelf and Desk study (Retractable Wheels)* from presentation boards for the book storage teaching project, 1937-41. Pencil on paper, 10.9 x 8.5 in (27.7 x 21.7 cm). Copyright Austrian Frederick and Lillian Kiesler Private Foundation, Vienna



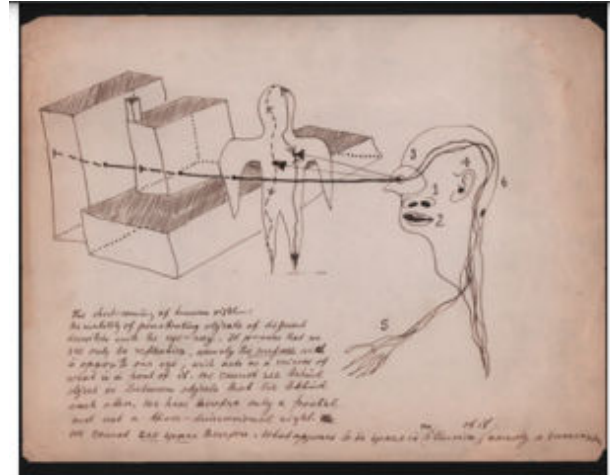
Frederick Kiesler, *Human cognition study (Do we see in a two-way system?)*, 1938. Ink on paper, 8.4 x 10.94 in (21.4 x 27.88 cm). Copyright Austrian Frederick and Lillian Kiesler Private Foundation, Vienna



Frederick Kiesler, *Detail study of the Vision Machine (Tubes)*, 1938. Pencil on paper, 8.46 x 10.86 in (21.5 x 27.6 cm). Copyright Austrian Frederick and Lillian Kiesler Private Foundation, Vienna



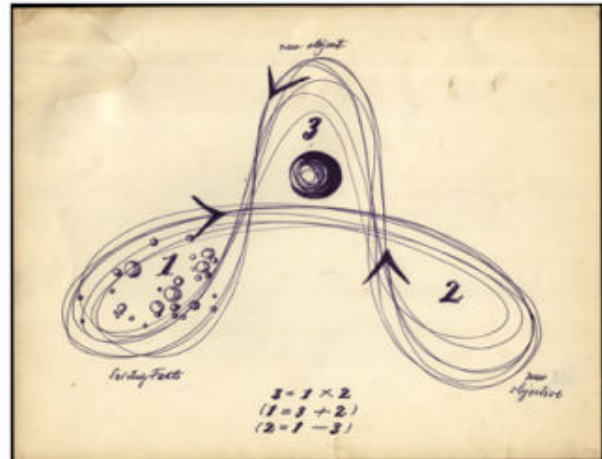
Frederick Kiesler, *Detail study of the Vision Machine (Tubes/Biolite)*, 1938. Pencil on paper, 8.46 x 11 in (21.5 x 28 cm). Copyright Austrian Frederick and Lillian Kiesler Private Foundation, Vienna



Frederick Kiesler, *Study for Vision Machine (The Shortcoming of Human Sight)*, part 1 of 2, 1938. Ink on paper, 8.4 x 10.94 in (21.4 x 27.88 cm). Copyright Austrian Frederick and Lillian Kiesler Private Foundation, Vienna



Frederick Kiesler, *All physical radiation (...)*, 1938-41. Ink on paper, 8.26 x 5.5 in (21 x 14 cm). Copyright Austrian Frederick and Lillian Kiesler Private Foundation, Vienna



Frederick Kiesler, *Study for the development chart "Creation Mutation,"* from the "Correalism Manifesto," 1947-50. Ballpen on paper, 10.8 x 13.9 (27.5 x 35.4 cm). Copyright Austrian Frederick and Lillian Kiesler Private Foundation, Vienna

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