

# **Connected. Peter Kogler with ...**

28.06.-20.10.2019

Kunsthhaus Graz, Universalmuseum Joanneum

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Peter Kogler transforms the Kunsthaus Graz into a machine, its parts constantly in movement, or producing sound, or changing the view of the space. New images, spatial structures and situations crop up over and over again—the exhibition space becomes a living stage where the audience are themselves sucked into the action. In Space01 it feels as if space has dissolved completely—we are lifted off into an unknown infinity, the ground swept from under our feet. Then in Space02 we take a look at historical connections in art, architectural and design history. Through associations, Peter Kogler's work opens up narratives between art space, staging and images as a language in their own right.

A Kunsthaus Graz project in cooperation with steirischer herbst

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**legero united**  
the shoemakers



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## Space02

As early as 1984, when Apple launched its first 'Macintosh', Peter Kogler became interested in the possibilities of using a computer to produce art. The machine can filter all that is graphical, emotional and gestural, distancing everything from the human-subjective on the surface. For us humans as viewers, the illusion of a utopian architecture or a vastly enlarged tissue has the effect of recontextualising us. Since then, Peter Kogler's work has been defined by the changing of scales and shifting of apparently fixed spaces, now reaching a new level at the Kunsthaus Graz.

Exhibiting within the biomorphic spatial design of Peter Cook and Colin Fournier's 'Friendly Alien' is a demanding exercise—its unique shape challenges art and artists, leading to the creation of something entirely new. In Peter Kogler's work, the issue of how a constructed environment can mould emotions and their expression has above all been shaped by the illusion of spaces in film architecture and stage design. He is mainly interested in the style of

1920s film production: its monumental images, black-and-white contrasts, the skilful use of light and shadow, the importance of perspective and the potential this creates for changing our perception of space.

Taking the Travelator up to Space02, we are already transported directly into another world. As we stand on the escalator, we enter a tunnel mechanically operated by a system of tubes designed by Kogler. These computer-generated tubes were produced by him in 1995 for the Secession in Vienna. Like all of Peter Kogler's large-scale wall-papers, they were made in Graz at the screen-printing studio of Ralph and Petra Schilcher's Galerie & Edition Artelier.

Our first glimpse of the exhibition space reveals a huge montage, transferred into space by Peter Kogler as a logical extension of his image collages. In the same vein as his two-dimensional image layering, here across the exhibition space there evolves a dense network of references that expand and interlace Kogler's ideas and thoughts, meshing them into a cohesive whole.

Digitally printed screens from the Kunstverein Hannover (2004) serve as mobile walls that open up and close off the space. Behind these appear Friedrich Kiesler (1890–1965) and Fernand Léger (1881–1955), whose encounter forms a starting-point for the exhibition. In 1924, Austrian architect Friedrich Kiesler organised the 'International Exhibition of New Theatre Techniques' as part of Vienna's Music and Theatre Festival, inviting a number of progressive artists from all over Europe to present designs for theatre, stage design and costumes, models and posters. These included the French artist Fernand Léger, who for the first time showed his film *Ballet mécanique*, produced with Dudley Murphy.

Friedrich Kiesler is an interesting figure for *Connected ...* in several respects. Firstly there is his 1933 concept for the *Space House*, but primarily his *Endless House* (1950), an early example of biomorphic architectural visions, which were only to become technically feasible in the 2000s—with buildings such as the Kunsthaus Graz itself. Another

point of interest is his exhibition designs—particularly during the first years of the Kunsthaus Graz these were very much a topic of discussion. They are noticeably gaining recognition now. In 1926 Friedrich Kiesler emigrated to the USA, where he first showed the theatre exhibition again, and then in 1942 designed the exhibition *Art of This Century* in New York for gallery owner Peggy Guggenheim. Photos of this ground-breaking show reveal not only the big-name avant-garde artists of the time (who had meanwhile relocated from Paris to New York), but also the very unusual mounting of Fernand Léger's paintings on a concave wall. The impact of this can also be experienced here at the Kunsthaus. Apparently floating freely in space, *Profile with Keys* (1924) occupies the space behind it and so gains tremendous spatial depth. The painting shows tubes and layers laid over the doll-like head of a schematic figure that forms part of this abstract machine. Also quoted from Kiesler's exhibition design are the low, mobile walls and display cases that can be seen in a gouache from 1942.

The notion of theatre and the stage as a space for reflection, or as the theme of an exhibition, seems to lead quite naturally to a synthesis of the arts, which has its roots in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century with the formative conception of the 'Gesamtkunstwerk'. The merging of life and art and the detailed design of the entire living environment, not leaving anything to chance, is central to this idea. Peter Kogler continues and expands on this line of thinking. His designs for carpets, curtains and items of clothing should be understood in this light. Apart from Friedrich Kiesler, the exhibition also offers a historical view by presenting the axis between Fernand Léger and Charlotte Perriand (1903–1999), who began her career as a prominent designer at the studios of Le Corbusier (1887–1965) and Pierre Jeanneret (1896–1967) in Paris. Many of the studio's most famous furniture designs, today considered classics, were actually Perriand's work while she was still young. She found inspiration in the bicycles and cars of the modern city, as Paris already was back then. She saw glass, steel tubing and aluminium as the basic mate-

rials for making comfortable, aesthetically sophisticated furniture, also intended to be affordable. During the 1930s, Perriand designed metre-high spatial collages that clearly demonstrate her political and social commitment. Together with Fernand Léger she created the 'Pavilion of the Ministry of Agriculture, International Exposition of Art and Technology in Modern Life' at the World Exhibition in 1937 in Paris. Against the background of the economic crisis of the time, her activism should be seen as evidence of a desire for social global improvement.

As co-founder of the Vienna Circle, Otto Neurath (1882–1945) is a significant figure known for his role in the Social Democrats' educational and social policies for 'Red Vienna' from the 1920s onwards. He worked on social housing, designed exhibitions, and collaborated with well-known names such as Adolf Loos, Le Corbusier and Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky, promoting participative forms of democratic coexistence. His famous 'amount pictures' and cartograms had their roots in the 'Vienna Method of

Pictorial Statistics' and from the mid-1930s on conquered the USA as 'Isotype' (= International System of Typographic Picture Education). Otto Neurath—who was persecuted by the National Socialists—developed his statistical diagrams into a universal pictorial language, an international language of signs and symbols that shaped (traffic) control systems worldwide and continues to do so today. The icons that have, since the first 'Macintosh' in 1984, above all revolutionised digital development can also be traced back to Otto Neurath.

Sign systems and semiotics have interested Peter Kogler since the early 1980s. The possibility of a universal language of images is employed in his *Untitled (Chronology)*. 1984–2019. Developed over many years, this series connects his own work with images that are important to him and which in retrospect become a personal, work-related contemporary chronicle. The extent to which technical possibilities drive forward developments and transform opportunities becomes obvious in Kogler's timeline. It is mainly, however, his ability to think in images that

runs counter to a linear sequence of letters and words, generating instead a multidimensional movement in space. Without words we can see, recognise and enter into a heavily subjective narrative, such as we now take for granted in surfing the internet. Perhaps this is why the brain plays such a key role in Peter Kogler's work. Thoughts are free and can evolve in an alinear pattern, condensing, dissolving and reassembling—visually, acoustically, verbally or even abstractly. His joint work with Viennese artist Franz West (1947–2012), *Brain with Egg (Viennese Cuisine)* from 1994, could provide the chance to figure it out, on the Freudian couch.

The relationship between man and machine—one of the central themes of this exhibition—plays a special role in the *Ballet mécanique*. This piece was created in 1924, both as a film by Fernand Léger and Dudley Murphy (1897–1968) and as a musical composition by George Antheil (1900–1959). The original plan was to accompany this first film 'without action' with an orchestra, which Antheil initially envisaged as having 16 pianolas performing

automatically with a piano roll (extremely modern at the time) in complete synchronisation. The addition of a siren, propellers, drums and xylophones was intended to reflect the metropolitan sounds of the big city. An innovation of the piece was that Antheil composed it specifically for automated instruments, instead of transferring traditional pieces played by pianists onto piano rolls. However, in 1924 it was still technically impossible even to get only two automated pianos to play in synchronisation. The development of remote control advanced our capacity to synchronise two devices, particularly thanks to the invention of communication by frequency shifting. The latter was devised by Hedy Lamarr, an Austrian who went down in cinema history as an actress and the 'most beautiful woman in the world'. Her lifelong passion, however, was for technical innovations. In 1937, a year after Antheil had moved to Hollywood to work as a film score composer, the two discussed the potential for the Secret Communications System, which they submitted for a patent, and which is today considered a precursor to

all wireless technologies. Antheil's experience of composing with piano rolls played an essential role here.

Today at the Kunsthau we see an interpretation that attempts to realise the composer's visions via computer control. The idea is to continuously create new performances live in the exhibition space, with real musical instruments using push-up devices known as 'Vorsetzer' at regular intervals synchronised with the image sequence of the film. This means that the music is not simply played back, but rather constantly performed anew. Since the film and music never reached the same length in earlier versions, it can be assumed that Antheil wanted to perform the piece at a much faster tempo than was possible in 1924. The large number of pianos meant that the tempo could have been increased, albeit only if they would have been perfectly coordinated in terms of time. Both human hands and the automats of 1924 have a limit that cannot be exceeded. Winfried Ritsch's push-up 'Vorsetzer', however, have multiple robotic fingers that can play at every conceivable

speed. The sound produced by the orchestra is intended to have a mechanical, emotionless and automated quality to it, invoking an increasingly industrialised everyday world that is being changed by machines.

Léger's and Murphy's image sequences embody this concept with arranged found footage. Black-and-white everyday scenes mingle with an abstract play of forms—skewed, interfused, mechanically rhythmised to a distinct beat. This last description could also be applied to Peter Kogler's work in his collaborations with Austrian sound artist and composer Franz Pomassl, since here we also find abstract shapes in a rhythmic beat, rendered in black and white. Immersed in the installation, the audience become an integral part of the work. Real life no longer appears as a collage of fragmented snippets on the screen—instead it is itself fragmented by the projection in the space of action.

While the installation *Untitled (ERES Stiftung, Munich)* (2016) gives us the opportunity to be plunged individually into an eternity of images through mirroring, in Space01 this experience

becomes collective, and yet remains singular because of the unique nature of the space.

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## Space01

With five perfectly coordinated projectors, the white lines in the inky black of the space break loose, mutating into amorphous shapes. The image shifts constantly, the space itself is set in motion. Are the boundaries still tangible? A key aspect in the perception of this work is sound, which seems to set the rhythm of the shapes or, vice versa, be driven by the patterns itself. This soundscape was developed by Viennese sound artist Franz Pomassl. Just as Kogler explores and experiments with the boundaries of spatial experience, so Pomassl transcends the limits of auditory experience. Sounds in a frequency range that are perceived not via the ear but instead via internal organs and the skin quite literally have a subcutaneous influence on our perception. The projection changes the space, and with it our perception.

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## Needle

From 1992 to 2001, Peter Kogler and museum in progress worked on a series of audiovisual portraits of artists. Conversations with internationally renowned artists were recorded in Vienna at the Bluebox, showing the interviewees as 'talking heads' looking directly into the camera. Their interviewers, who are not shown, selected the artists themselves, they also mostly chose the colour of the background.

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## Accompanying programme

*Guided tour with the artist*  
28.06.2019, 2pm, with Peter Kogler and Katrin Bucher Trantow

*Guided tours of the exhibition*  
12.07., 3pm, with Antonia Veitschegger  
20.07., 11am, with Gabi Gmeiner  
26.07., 3pm, with Antonia Veitschegger  
24.08., 11am, with Gabi Gmeiner

*Exercises in the contemplation of art works*  
07.07., 11am: Fernand Léger and his work *Profile with Keys*, 1924. With Barbara Steiner  
14.07., 11am: On *Brain with Egg*, Franz West and Peter Kogler. With Katrin Bucher Trantow  
15.09., 11am: On Charlotte Perriand. With Katrin Bucher Trantow

*Entangled, intertwined and interwoven*  
With string and sound to a new space!  
17.07.-26.07.2019, Weds-Sun, 10am-5pm  
Venue: Space03  
From 0-99 years. Children must be accompanied by an adult.

20.09., 2pm  
Jule Flierl  
*Ore of Peace*, 2019 (Performance)  
In cooperation with steirischer herbst

29.09.: *Lottery day at the Kunsthaus Graz*

05.10.: *ORF Long Night of Museums*  
Introductions to the exhibition:  
6:30pm-10:30pm, every half hour

06.10.: Improvisations and new compositions on the automated instruments of the *Ballet mécanique* with Winfried Ritsch/ Atelier Algorythmics and students of the University of Music and Performing Arts Graz in cooperation with musikprotokoll

11.10.: Themed tour with Gerd Zillner, archivist at the Austrian Frederick and Lillian Kiesler Private Foundation: *The 'Art of This Century' exhibition*

16.10., from 2pm on: Student's day with closing concert on the *Ballet mécanique* by Winfried Ritsch

20.10.: Closing party  
*Connected with ...*  
*YOU!*

*Workshop for all:*  
Screen-print and sound  
20.10., 10am–5pm  
Come along and join in—  
free admission and participation!

*Workshop for school students:*  
Screen-print and sound  
15.–18.10., 8am–2:30pm, Needle  
and Space04

Further information:  
[www.museum-joanneum.at/  
schule](http://www.museum-joanneum.at/schule)  
With the kind support of the  
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Further information about the  
exhibition and accompanying  
programme can be found on:  
**[www.kunsthhausgraz.at](http://www.kunsthhausgraz.at)**

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and the students of the  
University of Music and  
Performing Arts Graz

A catalogue accompanies the  
exhibition:  
*Connected. Peter Kogler with ...*  
*George Antheil with*  
*Friedrich Kiesler with*  
*Hedy Lamarr with*  
*Fernand Léger with*  
*museum in progress with*  
*Otto Neurath with*  
*Charlotte Perriand with*  
*Franz Pomassl with*  
*Winfried Ritsch with*  
*Franz West ...*

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