

HOUSE SIX: The Curved House—Endless House Project (unbuilt). 1950–60

Frederick Kiesler (American, born Romania, now Ukraine. 1890–1965)

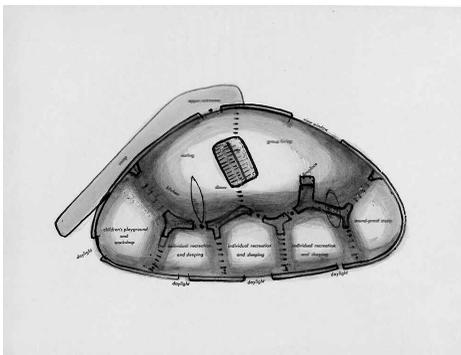


IMAGE 26: Plan. 1951. Ink on paper with color ink on polymer sheet overlay, 14 3/4 x 17 7/8" (37.5 x 45.5 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Purchase, 1966



IMAGE 27: Model for Endless House Project. 1960. Plaster, 20 x 11 1/2 x 6" (50.8 x 29.2 x 15.2 cm). Photo courtesy the Architecture and Design Study Center, The Museum of Modern Art, New York



IMAGE 28: Model for Endless House Project. 1960. Plaster, 20 x 11 1/2 x 6" (50.8 x 29.2 x 15.2 cm). Photo courtesy the Architecture and Design Study Center, The Museum of Modern Art, New York



IMAGE 29: Model for Endless House Project. 1960. Plaster, 20 x 11 1/2 x 6" (50.8 x 29.2 x 15.2 cm). Photo courtesy the Architecture and Design Study Center, The Museum of Modern Art, New York



IMAGE 30: Model for Endless House Project. 1960. Plaster, 20 x 11 1/2 x 6" (50.8 x 29.2 x 15.2 cm). Photo courtesy the Architecture and Design Study Center, The Museum of Modern Art, New York

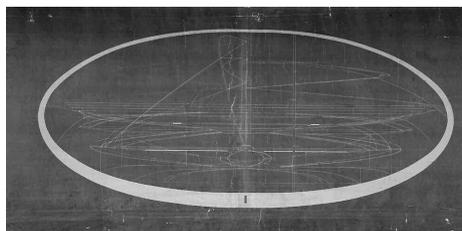


IMAGE 31: Endless Theater Project. 1924 (unbuilt). Section, diazotype, 46 3/4 x 8' 5" (118.7 x 256.5 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of the architect

ABOUT THE ENDLESS HOUSE PROJECT

Frederick Kiesler, the architect of the Endless House Project, was fascinated by the curved form of the human body, an interest that contrasted sharply with the streamlined aesthetic of the International Style architects, such as Le Corbusier (see House Three) and Mies van der Rohe (see House 5). A lifelong obsession for Kiesler that began in the 1920s, the Endless House was never built. In 1961, he turned down an opportunity to finally build the Endless House in Florida because the client refused to make compromises. In reference to his ongoing commitment to the project, Kiesler once claimed that “everyone has one basic idea, and he will always come back to it.”¹¹

Kiesler’s models and drawings provide a clear sense of what the Endless House would look like if it were built. The house would be elevated on columns with a ramp leading to the entrance. Reinforced concrete would have been used as the primary building material, as it could be manipulated to accommodate the house’s roundness and semicircular windows and skylights. Kiesler chose organic materials for the inside of the house, such as floors made from pebbles, sand, wood, grass, and tile; he also envisioned frescoes and sculptures for the interior, bathing pools instead of bathtubs, and adjustable dividers between each room.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Describe the house that you see in Images 26 through 30. Think of five words you would use to describe the Endless House Project. What made you select those words?
- How would you compare the Endless House Project to other homes you have seen in this guide and in your neighborhood?

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

Building the Endless House

Materials needed for this activity: a notebook for each student, pencils, and pens (or colored paper, scissors, and glue for collage work), large sheets of white paper for each group, and photocopies of selected photos, plans, and drawings of the Endless House Project.

Students can work independently or in groups to develop their own vision for completing the Endless House.

Have students consider the following:

- A client has asked you to complete the design for the Endless House and build it. Using your notebook to record your ideas, prepare a drawing of the inside and outside of the house.
- Suppose you were to finish designing and building the Endless House. Would you add other features to it? Why?
- Would you use the same building materials as Kiesler envisioned, or would you change them?
- Where would you build the Endless House? Describe the type of environment you would choose.

11. Lisa Phillips, in *Frederick Kiesler* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1989), 158.

PROJECT EXTENSIONS

1. Your Vision for Kiesler's Endless Theater Project (Image 31)

Have your students design a set for the production of a play that they have read or performed in school. As part of their work, students can include research on Kiesler's vision for his Endless Theater.

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- How would you compare the processes of designing a home and a theater? Do you notice any similarities or differences between the processes?
- What kinds of materials did you use for each of your designs? Why?

2. Everyone Has One Basic Idea

Materials needed for this activity: a notebook for each student, pencils, and pens (or colored paper, scissors, and glue for collage work).

Have your students develop a design idea around Kiesler's quote, "Everyone has one basic idea, and he will always come back to it."

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- What do you suppose Kiesler meant by his statement?
- If you could come up with one good design idea, what would it be?

Students can use any method of expression they prefer—they can record their ideas in writing or in drawings/diagrams.

ABOUT FREDERICK KIESLER

An architect, set designer, and artist, Frederick Kiesler was born in 1890 in Cernauti (now Chernovtsy), Romania, located in the modern-day region of southwest Ukraine. When he was eighteen years old, Kiesler moved to Vienna to study painting and printmaking. Early on in his career, he focused on painting and set design. During the 1920s Kiesler moved to Berlin, where he designed a set for *Emperor Jones*, by the American playwright Eugene O'Neill. While in Berlin Kiesler joined the De Stijl group, of which the architect Gerrit Rietveld was also a member (see House Two).

In 1926, Kiesler relocated permanently to New York. He founded the International Theatre Arts Institute in Brooklyn, where he taught classes on theater design. He began his career as an architect, incorporating his own architectural firm called Planners Institute in 1934. Kiesler also designed his own furniture, and he created store windows for the department store Saks Fifth Avenue.

Kiesler spent thirteen years as director of scenic design at the Juilliard School, designing sets for operas such as Mozart's *Magic Flute* and Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos*. In 1937 he also became an associate professor at Columbia University School of Architecture. Kiesler's architectural designs include private homes for clients in New York City, Connecticut, and Florida, as well as the Film Guild Cinema (now closed, which opened in 1929 on Eighth Street) and the World House Gallery (located in the Carlyle Hotel), both in New York City.

Kiesler died in New York City, in 1965.