On display from 26 May 2021 until 3 October 2021

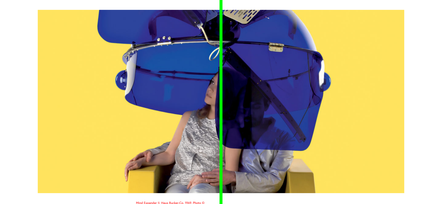
Radical Austria: Everything is Architecture

In *Radical Austria – Everything is Architecture*, you will discover the mind-expanding, boundary-shifting and socio-political work of the Austrian avant-garde in the 1960s and 70s. Members of this group did not allow themselves to be hemmed in by traditional design disciplines, preferring instead to create buildings, environments, objects, fashion, performances, furniture and even experiences. *Radical Austria – Everything is Architecture* focuses on recent history with works that are even more topical and relevant now. The exhibition offers the first comprehensive overview of Austrian design from the 1960s and 70s and contributes to the international post-war avant-garde in this way. It includes work by Coop Himmelblau, Haus-Rucker-Co, Zünd-Up, Walter Pichler, Valie Export, Hans Hollein, Angela Hareiter and Raimund Abraham.

Cover of the magazine Nur 6/1968 (Model with Rainhild Ottowal, Kunstmarkt, Austria at the 18th Triennale di Milano, 1968. Copyright Private archive Hollein)

'Everything is architecture'

The works, performances, installations, interventions, clothes, furniture, environments and architecture of groups like Coop Himmelblau, Haus-Rucker-Co and Zünd-Up, and of individual designers and artists such as Walter Pichler (1936-2012), Hans Hollein (1934-2014), Raimund Abraham (1933-2010) and Valie Export (1940), are responses to societal and technological developments. Whether optimistically and playfully or ominously and critically, they teased out the consequences of these developments for the future – the future that was, at the time, being shaped by technological developments and fascination for the body and the way its designs often oriented beyond the drawing board: almost everything was actually executed and can be seen in the exhibition. The designer Hans Hollein argued that everything is architecture!, and with that notion in mind the featured designers gave concrete shape to their world-view in every imaginable discipline, from inflatable habitations to performances, fashion to furniture.



Pilot Cupsuiter © Haus-Rucker-Co, 1968 (Photo: © Jeanloup / Museum moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien, in: Lust Frei Die Architektur des Zufalls)

From space travel to drugs, pop culture to feminism, media to environmental issues

Following the enforced isolation of the Nazi era, Austrian artists and designers sought from the 1950s onwards to reconnect with the latest international developments in culture and technology, which they were together in a distinctive blend of social and technological critique. They were quick to speculate and experiment with cyberneticc, space travel, drugs, pop culture, media, gender, feminism and environmental issues. Taking inspiration from the emerging pop culture, they organised themselves collectively after the example of psychedelic rock groups.

Architects Walter Pichler, Gustav Peichl and Peter Skerner in front of the Metallkuppelkonstruktion (Heating dome) for the Austrian Pavilion at the Osaka World Fair (1970). 1969. Austrian Press Photo Service (photo by Christian Kern)

The body: departure and destination point

The human body plays a central role in *Radical Austria – Everything is Architecture*: as the vehicle of self-expression in performances, the subject of uncompromising experimentation and, not least, the physical departure and destination point of social, technological and spatial developments. We find it, for instance, in the suits and helmets of Coop Himmelblau, wearers of which are exposed to shocking images, smells and pressure. The helmets and furniture designed by Haus-Rucker-Co are an expression of the dehumanisation of modern life and the ever-increasing speed of life and mind-altering effects of technology. Fashion and design too become battlefields for shifting views of sexuality in the work of Raimund Abraham and Zünd-Up, amongst others. The feminist artist Valie Export commented caustically on the same theme, having men in the street touch her breasts in *Tapp-und-Tast Kino*.

Artist Anouf Reiner posing in the Gallery Cultet (designed Walter Pichler). 1969. Austrian Press Photo Service (photo by Christian Kern)

Precursors

The lack of inhibition combined with analysis made the Austrian avant-garde not only precursors of the current interest in the body, but also of contemporary ideas and developments playing out today in the areas of internet and media – Virtual Reality, for instance – and that of Posthumanism, in which human beings are no longer central but are being subsumed into a larger environment, shaped by different technologies. *Radical Austria – Everything is Architecture* shows how these developments were already being thought about critically in the 1960s and 70s and how this came to be reflected in fashion, design and architecture.

Air Cloner, City, Raimund Abraham, 1966. (Deutsches Architekturmuseum, Frankfurt am Main, © Lenare Abraham)

Avant-gardes and the Posthuman at Design Museum Den Bosch

Design Museum Den Bosch has a tradition of organising exhibitions on avant-garde movements. Earlier events include *The Last Avant-Garde* on radical design in Italy, 1966-86 (2007) and *The Modern Netherlands, 1963-1981: Design in a Model Country* (2011). Extending the focus to Austria reveals the similarities and above all the differences between post-war design avant-gardes. The idea for the exhibition arose from research performed by the curators for the exhibition BodyShift – Anatomies of Design, which was shown in 2019 at Design Museum Den Bosch. Contemporary designers are thinking about the future of the human body. In addition to contemporary makers, the exhibition looked at designs from the 1960s and 70s aimed at the human being of the future, which is how the work of the Austrian avant-garde first crossed our path. It is a period that has so far received too little attention in the Netherlands: one that witnessed impressive projects that retain their relevance to this day.

Werner Schulz, foto van Valie Export's performance Tapp und Tastkino, 1968 in Foyergalerie Amsterdam 2021

Go on a virtual expedition in the exhibition with Jeroen Leendertse (known from the series Ben Tiggelaar's Residence)

Colophon

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DESIGN MUSEUM DEN BOSCH