



Article

Visionary Architects: Barbara Guest, Frederick Kiesler, and the Surrealist Poetics of the Galaxy

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Abstract: In this essay I demonstrate how Barbara Guest's experiments in visual poetry were influenced by Frederick Kiesler's architectural designs: both artists, inspired by Surrealist poetics, sought to build visionary structures that took shape on the page but moved beyond it. Following Kiesler's 1965 death, Guest published a poem in 1968 inspired by Kiesler's "Galaxy" structures, titled "Homage", and included a shortened version in *Durer in the Window* (2003). Kiesler composed a number of works under the name "Galaxies", all of which shared an interest in merging architecture with other art forms, including sculpture, mobiles, drawing, and painting. In "Homage", Guest was less interested in describing Kiesler's "Galaxies" than in building a commensurate architecture of the page, dependent on the spatial arrangement of lines and stanzas, the visual impact of white space, and the reader's imaginative navigation of both. Putting Kiesler's "Galaxies" and Guest's "Homage" in dialogue illuminates a model of inter-arts reception as co-creation or what Kiesler called "Correalism" that depends on the spatial dimensions of the poetic imagination. Both works can be understood as open, mobile, "museums without walls" that anticipate the future by inviting dynamic collaboration and future transformation. Finally, I argue that the relationship between these works models the kind of affiliation important to experimental women artists and poets such as Guest, affiliations that helped form an En Dehors Garde "in the shadow" of the avant-garde.

Keywords: Barbara Guest; Frederick Kiesler; Surrealism; poetry; architecture; ekphrasis; intermediality; avant-garde; en dehors garde; exhibition and display; museum without walls; Museum of Modern Art; New York School



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1. Introduction

Following architect Frederick Kiesler's death in 1965, Barbara Guest published a poem titled "Homage" in *Angel Hair* magazine's Spring 1968 issue, with an epigraph from Kiesler: "A New Era of the Plastic Arts Has begun" (Guest 2001). When Guest republished the poem in her book *Durer in the Window, Reflexions on Art* (Guest 2003), she radically shortened it. In this later version—acknowledging Kiesler's disappearance from the history of the American avant-garde—Guest added an explanatory note: "Frederick Kiesler melded large, slender 'balls' of interwoven metal he called 'Galaxies'. They were the first 'mobiles'. They may have originated in his architectural drawings. Kiesler designed the Peggy Guggenheim Gallery in New York where Pollock and a 'galaxy' of new painters first showed" (Guest 2003, p. 19).

Guest's note indicates the centrality of Kiesler to the New York avant-garde, from the late 1920s (he emigrated in 1926) through the 1950s and early 1960s, when the group of painters and poets that would come to be called the "New York School" were starting their careers. Guest moved to New York in 1946, a moment when Kiesler figured prominently in the reception of Surrealism, as he collaborated on a number of projects with the European Surrealists who came to New York during World War Two (Guilbaut 1983; Sawin 1995). Gerd Zillner's account of the four hundred mourners at Kiesler's funeral on 29 December 1965 suggests the depth and diversity of Kiesler's influence:

[T]he make-up of the mourners is indicative of the close-knit network that the deceased had created during his lifetime. It consisted of different circles of artists, different generations, and fields and reflects Kiesler's interdisciplinary mindset: in addition to his wife Lillian and his assistant [...] the speakers included dancers, composers, writers, and a museum director, a designer, and a visual artist. In view of Kiesler's rediscovery by the architectural scene of the 1970s, it comes as some surprise that there were no architects among the speakers, and only few among the mourners. (Bogner and Zillner 2019, p. 16)

Although Kiesler's nominal field was architecture, his work included theater and set design, gallery and exhibition design, department store window display, furniture design, sculpture, painting, drawing, writing, and little magazine publication, all fueled by his interdisciplinary, collaborative approach to architecture.

In this essay I explore how Barbara Guest's experiments in visual poetry were influenced by Frederick Kiesler's architectural designs: both artists, inspired by Surrealism, sought to build visionary structures that took shape on the page or in the gallery but moved beyond material form. As Kiesler stated in a Surrealist twist on architect Louis Sullivan's famous modernist axiom "Form follows Function" (Sullivan 1896): "Form does not follow function./Function follows vision./Vision follows reality" (Bogner and Noever 2001, p. 94). Whereas Sullivan emphasized that an architect's design should emerge from and enhance a structure's rational, material function, Kiesler instead privileged the architect's vision, which "follows" reality but is not restricted to its visible contours, allowing a structure's design to register the imprint of dreams, imagination, and the unconscious, the irrational elements of "vision" that interested the Surrealists. As poet André Breton stated in his "First Surrealist Manifesto", "I believe in the future resolution of these two states, dream and reality, which are seemingly so contradictory, into a kind of absolute reality, a surreality, if one may so speak" (Breton 1969, p. 14). Poetry was the means of this dialectical resolution of opposed states: Breton did not limit poetic creation to a particular genre or medium, but understood it as a way of knowing, its value located in its capacity to realize a surreality.

Like Frederick Kiesler, Barbara Guest was inspired by Breton's assertion that "to imagine is to see", and understood "poetic" vision in its inclusive Surrealist sense (Guest 2002, p. 32). Kiesler's "Galaxies", dreamlike structures rendered variously as metal and wood sculptures, mobiles, paintings, and drawings, concretized the Surrealist poetic ideal of bringing unconscious states into conscious life to alter an experience of reality. Guest's retrospective note about Kiesler published with her revised "Homage" illuminates the multilayered nature of her engagement with his "Galaxies": Guest responded to the diverse work Kiesler titled "Galaxies", but she also responded to his related design for Peggy Guggenheim's Surrealist Art of This Century gallery, and to the "galaxy" or social-artistic network that Guggenheim's gallery helped to coalesce. Thus in "Homage" Guest was less interested in describing Kiesler's "Galaxies" (as in a conventional ekphrastic poem) than in building a commensurate architecture of the page, dependent on the spatial arrangement of lines and stanzas, the use of "empty" space, and the reader's imaginative navigation of both.¹ Both artists created structures that emerged from dreams and the unconscious, tangibly realizing the impact of these invisible forces through manipulations of space.

Putting Kiesler's "Galaxies" and Guest's "Homage" in dialogue illuminates a model of inter-arts reception as co-creation, or what Kiesler called "Correalism", that depends on the spatial and temporal mobility of the poetic imagination: Guest's poem extends and translates to a new medium and moment the "Galaxy" structure and social-artistic network that Kiesler built. Both Kiesler's and Guest's "Galaxies" can be understood as open, mobile, potentially "endless" structures that anticipate the future by inviting dynamic collaboration and intermedial extension. Building on the history of Surrealist collaboration, Kiesler's "Correalist" works embed a collaborative invitation into their very design, inscribing spectatorship as a form of co-creation. Thus Kiesler brought together "different circles of artists, different generations, and fields" not only through his sociability

and “interdisciplinary mindset”, but also by designing “Galaxy” structures that invite a “Correalist” response (Bogner and Zillner 2019, p. 16).²

These social-artistic networks were particularly important to experimental women artists and writers such as Barbara Guest. During her career Guest was marginalized by art institutions and the postwar avant-garde, a marginalization that was repeated in early histories of the New York School and which feminist scholarship has challenged.³ In turn, scholars’ recent efforts to generate more inclusive histories of the avant-garde have shifted attention away from the avant-garde’s central movements, schools, and coteries to the broader infrastructure of experiment, as it developed in anthologies, little magazines, small press publications, reading series, collaborations, gallery and exhibition catalogs, salons, and informal workshops. Women were actively involved in all of these pursuits, as poets, visual artists, critics, editors, publishers, translators, gallery directors, curators, and teachers. A focus on the varied contexts that supported women’s artistic experiment opens up new histories of the twentieth century’s social and artistic networks and institutions, helping us to visualize the looser but no less important affiliations of what Churchill, Kinnahan, and Rosenbaum have called an En Dehors Garde.⁴ As these scholars argue,

‘En dehors’ means “toward the outside”, implying that artists are turning away from the center or norm, moving in a circular motion, with an eye toward the center. Upon return, the center is transformed, adjusted, and reformed by the arc of the revolution. Rather than assuming a militant position at the forefront of culture, women, people of color, and queer or disabled artists often came from the outside and circulated on the margins. They rarely enjoyed the power, privilege, or authority derived from membership in the institutions of art, or even in the countercultural, avant-garde circles that challenged those institutions. Instead, they worked and moved strategically to transform gendered, racialized literary traditions and visual cultures that excluded or objectified them. (Churchill et al. 2020c)

The relation between Guest’s “Homage” and Kiesler’s “Galaxies” offers us an important guide to this movement of “turning away from the center or norm”, illuminating a looser kind of affiliation and history of En Dehors Garde experiment that was undertaken in what Guest called the “Shadow of Surrealism” (Guest 2003, p. 16).⁵

2. Surrealism in New York and Kiesler’s Galaxies

When Guest arrived in New York in 1946, she found an artistic scene that had been absorbing and transforming Surrealist influence since the early 1920s, a trans-Atlantic dialogue invigorated by the presence of a number of European Surrealists in exile during World War Two (Rosenbaum 2012). As Guest responded to the challenges of negotiating the New York art world, she followed an earlier generation of experimental women poets and artists in conjoining feminist perspectives to Surrealist writing and art, developing what Rachel Blau Du Plessis has termed a “fair realism” (the title of Guest’s 1989 book)—a “female translation of ‘surrealism, a way of acknowledging the powers and subjectivities of the female-gendered marvelous while holding its less comfortable effects at bay” (Du Plessis 2006, p. 175). Frederick Kiesler played a key role in establishing Surrealism’s trans-Atlantic ties and its democratizing legacies in the U.S. Guest encountered Kiesler’s work in galleries and at the Museum of Modern Art, but she also may have met Kiesler through the poet Daisy Aldan, who was a close friend of Kiesler. Aldan founded Tiber Press and edited *Folder* magazine, which supported Surrealist-inspired collaborations and published the work of many female poets and artists, including Guest.⁶

Kiesler began his career in Vienna in stage design, joined the Dutch de Stijl group in 1923, and in 1926 came to New York to serve as co-organizer of the International Theater Exposition, sponsored by Jane Heap and the *Little Review*. He never left New York: in 1927 he began working for an architectural firm, and in 1933 he took the position of director of scenic design at Juilliard (Kiesler and Lillian Kiesler Private Foundation n.d.). In 1926

he began working closely with the artist and collector Katherine Dreier, founder with Marcel Duchamp and Man Ray of the Société Anonyme, one of the first collections of modernist art in the U.S. (Bohan 1982; Gross 2006). Dreier commissioned Kiesler to design a modernist room for the 1926 Brooklyn Exhibition, and in 1927 asked him to design a permanent home for the Société Anonyme collection.⁷ Although Dreier's dream to build a permanent museum to house this collection was never realized, Kiesler's willingness to collaborate with women in avant-garde circles to design innovative structures for engaging avant-garde art would come to fruition in his design for Peggy Guggenheim's Art of This Century gallery.

For Kiesler and other artists influenced by Surrealism, the art museum would become a potent symbol of all they sought to challenge and transform in modern life. As André Breton wrote in the "First Surrealist Manifesto", Surrealism sought to free the imagination from "a state of slavery" caused by the "absolute rationalism" and "reign of logic" in twentieth-century culture (Breton 1969, pp. 4, 9). In contrast to public art museums which instructed citizens in the importance of different national traditions, aesthetic forms, and stylistic schools through the rational arrangement and display of visual artifacts, Surrealists envisioned art museums and gallery exhibitions as portals to the imagination and the unconscious, capable of altering the spectator's perspective on everyday life, objects, and habits. Taking the "museum as muse", Surrealists and their admirers created exhibitions that transformed the museum into a stage for Surrealist-inspired ends, including the fusion of dream and reality, disorienting perspectives on the "real", urban wandering, the pursuit of pleasure and desire, and the merging of art with everyday life. Their innovative galleries and exhibitions were fundamental to the reception of Dada and Surrealism in the United States, and Marcel Duchamp was a pivotal figure in this history, both in terms of his Surrealist exhibition designs and his own self-curated collections, including *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even (The Large Glass)* (1915–1923) (Kachur 2001) (Figure 1).

Kiesler developed his theory of Correalism in response to Duchamp's *Large Glass* (Figure 1), and put Correalist principles to work in his design for Guggenheim's Art of This Century Gallery: as he stated in his "Note on designing the Gallery", Correalist design encouraged the spectator to "recognize his act of seeing—of 'receiving' as a participation in the creative process no less essential than the artist's own" (Davidson and Rylands 2004, p. 174).⁸ In other words, the spectator became a collaborator in the "work" of art, an idea that Kiesler argued was embodied by Duchamp's *Large Glass*. As a display case for Duchamp's previous readymades and a window to its surroundings, the *Large Glass*—divided into two halves with an abstract "bride" in the top half separated from the "bachelors" below—absorbs and engages the broader context of display in which it is placed, while its abstract elements resist its "visual allure", inviting an intellectual, verbal engagement and "future play and appropriation" (Judovitz 2010, pp. xxiii, 219–20). As Surrealist gallery director Julien Levy recalled in *View* magazine's 1945 Duchamp issue,

[Duchamp's] great painting on glass, which he calls a "glissière en verre", was obviously an experiment in the dynamics of space. The composition was devised so that it might retain a constructive relation with whatever heterogeneous objects passed in back of the transparency. When I first saw the large glass at the Brooklyn Museum I was fascinated, not merely by the work itself, but by the numerous transformations which were lent the composition by its accidental background, by the spectators who passed through the museum behind the glass I was regarding. The "Mariée mise à nu" seemed to absorb them all partially into her own cosmogony, while at the same time she lent some of her own form indefatigably to them. There can be no doubt that this big toy was a sincere experiment with space and a successful one. (Levy 1945, p. 34)

Levy's portrayal of the Glass as a feminized "cosmogony" that is open to and altered by its environment anticipated Kiesler's "Galaxies" and Guest's "Homage". Calling the *Large Glass* a "masterpiece" that "will fit any description such as: abstract, constructivistic, real, super-and-surrealist", Kiesler wrote that "It is architecture, sculpture, and painting

in ONE. To create such an X-ray painting of space, material and psychic, one needs as a lens a. oneself, well focused and dusted off, b. the subconscious as camera obscura, c. a super-consciousness as sensitizer, and d. the clash of this trinity to illuminate the scene" (Kiesler 1937, p. 54). The drama implicit in this "clash" reveals how Kiesler's work in theater and set design influenced his approach to the "scene" of exhibition.

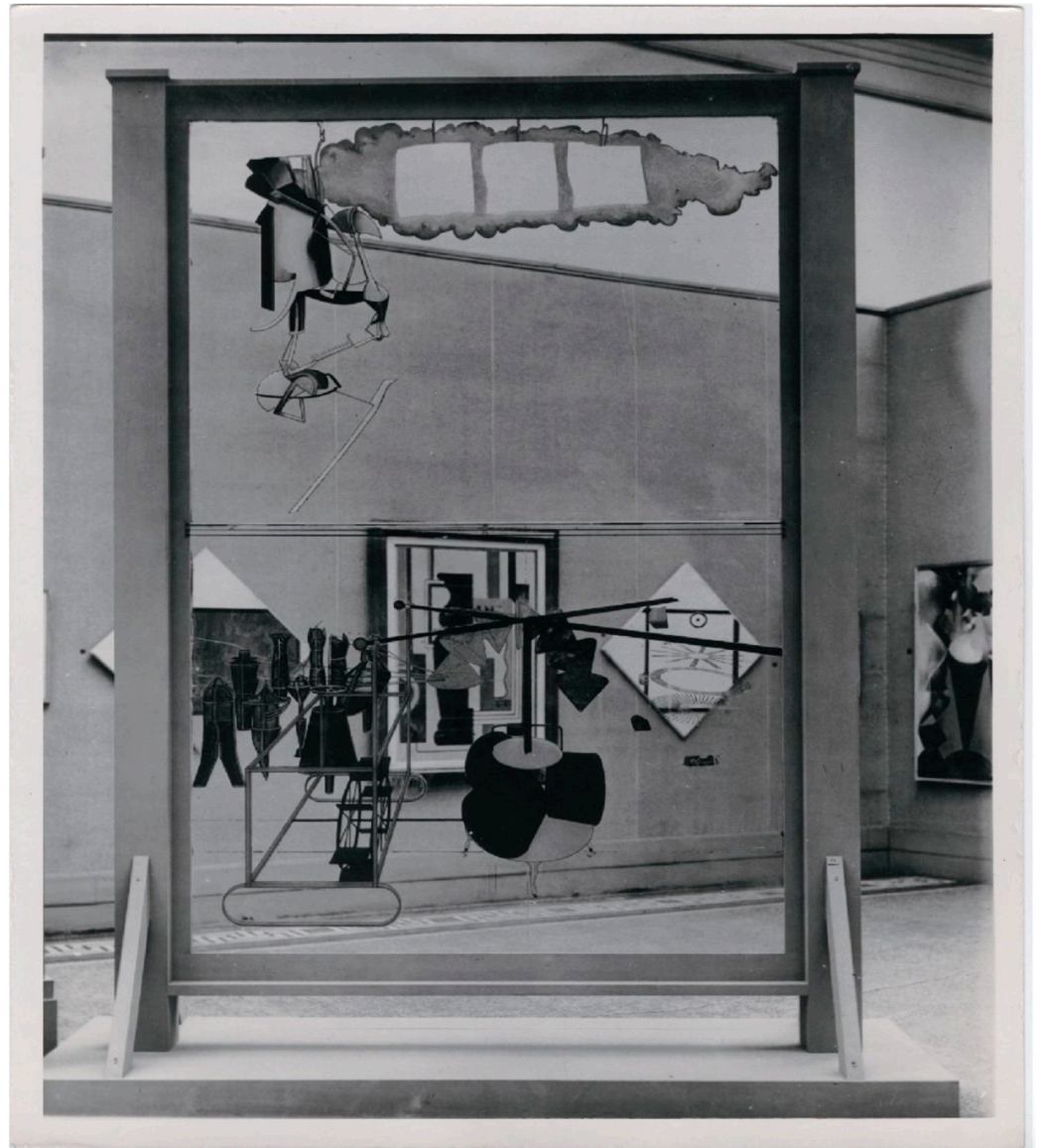


Figure 1. "The Bride stripped bare by her bachelors, even". At International Exhibition of Modern Art (1926–1927: Brooklyn Museum), front view looking toward Fernand Léger's "Composition No. VII" (2 prints). Katherine S. Dreier Papers/Société Anonyme Archive. Yale Collection of American Literature, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library. <https://collections.library.yale.edu/catalog/2014471> (accessed on 26 August 2022).

Kiesler's design for Guggenheim's Art of this Century gallery (1942–1947) sought to involve the spectator's "subconscious" and "super-consciousness" by animating the spectator's relation to the art on display. Peggy Guggenheim's "only condition [...] was that the pictures should be unframed" (Guggenheim 1979, p. 274; Davidson and Rylands 2004, pp. 174–75). In literally and figuratively breaking the frame of conventional museum display, Kiesler aimed to "break down the physical and mental barriers which separate people from the art they live with" (Kiesler 1945, p. 76).⁹ In contrast to the detached, passive

consumption of modernist art emphasized by the Museum of Modern Art, which forbade any touch, Art of This Century invited the spectator's active, hands-on participation in a number of ways, as described by Guggenheim: "In one corridor [Kiesler] placed a revolving wheel on which to show seven works of Klee. The wheel automatically went into motion when the public stepped across a beam of light. In order to view the works of Marcel Duchamp in reproduction, you looked through a hole in the wall and turned by hand a very beautiful spidery wheel. The press named this part of the gallery Coney Island" (Guggenheim 1979, pp. 274–75). On display behind the hole in the wall was the *Boîte en Valise*, Duchamp's suitcase that included miniature reproductions of the *Large Glass* and other works. Duchamp's portable, self-curated museum signified travel beyond the museum's walls, extending its reach by blurring boundaries between museum and suitcase, mechanical and artisanal reproduction, copy and original.¹⁰

Kiesler's kinetic framing of the suitcase invited spectators to engage the context of museum display and to re-imagine what a museum might be. Duchamp's tiny *Large Glass*, exhibited in his portable museum, viewed through Kiesler's spinning wheel, and housed in the Kiesler-designed Guggenheim gallery, collectively articulated an understanding of a museum not as a permanent building but as a dynamic, expanding galaxy, a linked art of framing that invites further frames or re-envisionings, including the spectator's. Anticipating André Malraux's term "museum without walls" (Malraux 1949), Kiesler understood "exhibitions" to include portable little magazines and print collections containing photographic, "readymade" reproductions of art: Kiesler chose to "exhibit" Duchamp's *Large Glass* in *Architectural Digest* (1937), *VVV* (1945), and *View* magazine's March 1945 Duchamp issue (Ford 1945). Reflecting the importance of women to this collaborative redefinition of the museum, Berenice Abbott's photographs of Duchamp's *Large Glass* provided an important visual framing of and engagement with the work that Kiesler incorporated in his 1937 *Architectural Digest* essay.¹¹

Similarly, collaborative conceptions of museum display guided Kiesler's exhibition of the *Large Glass* in *View*. Edited by poets Charles Henri Ford and Parker Tyler, the Duchamp issue of *View* took inspiration from Guggenheim's gallery and Duchamp's innovative installations, to explore the magazine as an experimental exhibition space. A fold-out "triptych" of Duchamp's 14th Street studio created by Kiesler could be assembled to build the studio in three dimensions, thereby transforming the pages of the magazine into a model of the artist's "gallery". A photo of Duchamp's First Papers of Surrealism exhibition appeared on the back of the studio, while the interior of the studio featured a photograph of Duchamp sitting at his desk, superimposed over a photo of the *Large Glass*, with cut-out flaps that could be interlocked by the reader to form the shape of the Bachelors (Ford 1945, p. 24). Kiesler's Triptych (titled "Poème Espace" or "Space Poem") is at once an exhibition and transformation of the *Large Glass*: much like his installation of the miniature *Large Glass* in the Guggenheim gallery, "Space Poem" is a framing which blurs the lines between curator and artist, architect and poet, gallery and magazine.¹² "Space Poem" demonstrated the fluid connection between the two-dimensional page and three-dimensional gallery space, inviting the spectator to engage space textually, visually, physically, and in turn imaginatively.¹³

Kiesler used innovative gallery design (whether in two or three dimensions) to stimulate the spectator's conscious mind but also their dreams and imagination, with the aim of integrating art into life. As Kiesler wrote in his 1947 "Manifesto on Correalism", "Drive out contemporary art from museums. Art belongs to the street, the home, the people" (Bogner and Noever 2001, p. 92). In 1947 as he was developing his "Manifesto on Correalism", Kiesler designed a Salle des Superstitions or "Hall of Superstitions" with help from Duchamp and Breton, at the Exposition Internationale du Surréalisme at the Gallery Maeght in Paris, in which he arranged his own artwork as well as art by Miro, Hare, Ernst, and Duchamp. Kiesler described the "Hall of Superstitions" in his 1947 "Manifesto on Correalism":

In this ‘Salle de Superstition’ (initiated by Marcel Duchamp and André Breton), there were no longer paintings in squares or ovals, there were no longer boxes of cubes or spheres. Every aspect of this plastic reality was transformed methodically into a realizable form, thanks to a specific ideology and the material conditions of a given space-time. The frames of paintings, the pedestals of statues, the styles of architecture all fell, as dust falls from the feet of the traveler who has reached the end of his journey. The house, freed from aesthetic tradition, became a living creature. (Bogner and Noever 2001, p. 99)¹⁴

Rather than approach an art museum as a cemetery or mausoleum for works of the past, Kiesler believed that through Surrealist design he could make the gallery a “living creature” integrated into everyday life and facing the future.

Kiesler’s “Galaxies”, initiated in the late 1940s, extended the Correalist ideals evident in his designs for Art of this Century gallery and the Salle de Superstition. In a “Note on Correalism” which accompanied a 1952 MoMA Exhibition of his “Galaxies”, Kiesler stated “Sculpture, painting, architecture should not be used as wedges to split our experience of art and life; they are here to link, to correlate, to bind dream and reality. To separate sculpture and painting from the flow of our daily environment is to put them on pedestals, to shut them up in frames, thus destroying their integrative potentialities and arresting their continuity with our total mode of life” (Kiesler 1952, p. 8). Kiesler composed a number of works in the late 1940s and 1950s under the name “Galaxies”, all of which shared an interest in breaking the “frame” of conventional museum display by merging architecture with other art forms (painting, sculpture, drawing), and by exploring “empty” space as a constitutive part of architectural structures that could “bind dream and reality” and render the gallery environment a “living creature” (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Frederick Kiesler. Galaxy. 1947–48 (base remade 1951). <http://www.moma.org> (accessed on 26 August 2022).

As Lisa Phillips writes, “In his Galaxies, Kiesler dispersed fragmented forms throughout a field. They reached up from floor to ceiling, cascaded from ceiling to floor, or arched

out from the wall [...] They were continuously flowing sculptural environments that crossed spaces and walls" (Phillips 2001, p. 29) (Figure 3). Poet Daisy Aldan recalled the effect of encountering the "Galaxies" in a gallery setting:

He wanted to get the picture out of the frame so that there would be in a sense an endless frame. The whole world would become the frame of the picture. He made all kinds of experiments [...] He would have an exhibit and he had the pictures on the ceilings and he made them so that you experienced them looking up. He had the pictures at various angles. Galaxies was a series of painting which were related. I remember seeing that exhibit, the whole gallery was filled with not isolated experiences as in most galleries even today [...] but every painting in the galaxy was part of the whole, the endless whole, and everything he did could be added to this theme. (Aldan 1970, p. 8)

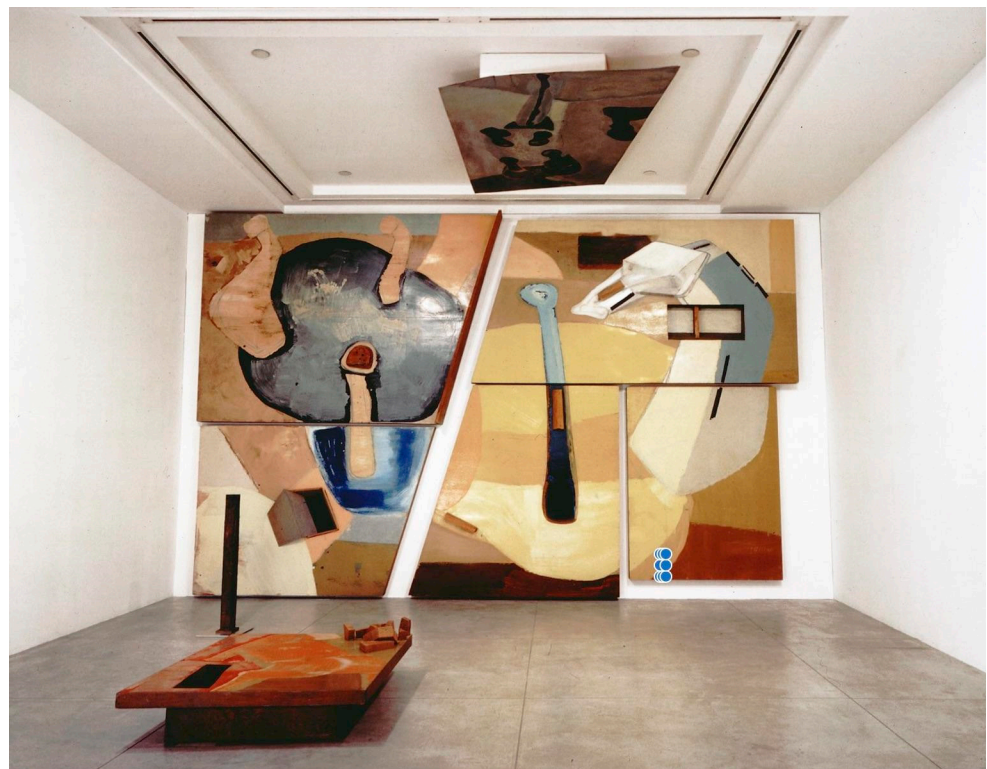


Figure 3. Horse Galaxy, 1954. Installation view at Jason McCoy Gallery, New York, 1998. <https://www.jasonmccoyinc.com/the-estate-of-frederick-kiesler> (accessed on 26 August 2022).

In his use of space in the "Galaxies", Kiesler took inspiration from a galaxy in the astronomical sense of "a system of millions or billions of stars, together with gas and dust, held together by gravitational attraction" (Oxford English Dictionary). As he remarked in his 1952 "Note on Correalism":

I find my paintings consisting of many paintings, smaller and larger units, separated from each other through intervals of varying dimensions, yet belonging together as one cluster, one nova, one galaxy. My sculptures I also see as consisting of divergent chunks of matter, held together yet apart, appearing like galactic structures, each part leading a life of coexistence, of correality with the others. Yet this correlation, whether close or far apart, does not necessarily depend on physical links. As in wireless electricity, there is correlation without connection. These 'endless' paintings and sculptures lead a life of inner cohesion. Between these corporeal units there lie the various empty fields of tension that hold the parts together like planets in a void. (Kiesler 1952, p. 8)

Similarly, he commented in his “Correalist Manifesto”: “We want construction based on a system of continuous tension in free space” (Bogner and Noever 2001, p. 99). Thus Kiesler considered the spaces between the parts of each “Galaxy”, and the fluid and potentially “endless” relation between the diverse works in his “Galaxies” series, as integral to their meaning and function.¹⁵

Kiesler elaborated on the importance of these “empty fields of tension” in a 1952 “Short Note on the Galaxies”, a reflection on the distinction between conventional painting and a series of “Galaxy” environments constructed of painted panels:

These galaxies differ from ‘paintings’ in that they are not one painting but a group of several: and their distances are prefixed in relation to each other. *While painting is an addition to space, a galaxy is an integration with space.* Therefore the intervals between the units of a galaxy are as important as the units themselves, particularly since these intervals flow in and connect with the surrounding area. (italics mine; quoted in Bogner 2001, p. 23)

Kiesler’s understanding of his “Galaxy” as an “integration with space” reflects the influence of Duchamp’s *Large Glass*, which Kiesler had described in 1937 as just such an integration:

Glass is the only material in the building industry which expresses surface-and-space at the same time. Neither brick nor stone, nor steel, nor wood can convey both simultaneously. It satisfies what we need as contemporary designers and builders: an inclosure [sic] that is space in itself, an inclosure that divides and at the same time links.

Normally one looks through a translucent plate glass from one area into another, but in painting an opaque picture (like this) one also accentuates the space division optically. The painting then seems suspended in midair negating the actual transparency of the glass. It floats. It is in a state of eternal readiness for action, motion and radiation. While dividing the plate glass into areas of transparency and non-transparency, a spatial balance is created between stability and mobility. By way of such apparent contradiction the designer has based his conception on nature’s law of simultaneous gravitation and flight. (Kiesler 1937, p. 55)

In his “Galaxies”, Kiesler adapted Duchamp’s understanding of space in the *Large Glass* to a three-dimensional “environment”, that allows the space to “flow in and connect with the surrounding area”, using space to divide and link. This understanding of space would also inspire Barbara Guest’s approach to the arrangement of “empty” space and printed text on the page. As Jill Stoner argues, “Architectural space need not only be bound to enclosure—finite, measurable, and palpable. It may also transcend material boundaries, flow maddeningly like mercury, soft-hard and fluid. Such space is found within texts both written and built. We find it in literature and in architecture; it flows teasingly among words and within walls, between interiors” (Stoner 2012, p. 21). Just as Duchamp used glass (a material that can “transcend material boundaries, flow maddeningly like mercury, soft-hard and fluid”) to draw attention to space as structure and surface, Guest used the blank spaces between and around words, lines, and stanzas to divide but also connect the parts of a poem, and to structure the visible design’s relation to less visible forces.

3. Guest’s “Homage” and the Visual Poetics of the Galaxy

Although scholars have explored the importance of Barbara Guest’s ekphrastic poems responding to the visual arts, architecture is an understudied influence on the visual designs and spatial layout of her poems. To account for this influence, I argue that her poems invite readings not simply as responses to or collaborations with works of visual art, but as visual works themselves. As Willard Bohn argues, visual poems “are conceived not only as literary works but also as works of art”, as much visual as textual compositions (Bohn 2001, p. 15). Elisabeth Frost defines visual poetics as “writing that explores the materiality of word, page, or screen. Combining text with image and/or highlighting the materiality of the medium, visual poetics privileges acts of seeing in acts of reading” (Frost 2016, p. 340).

Visual poetry has a long history, originating in the shaped poetry of Ancient Greece, but by the 1890s, advances in photomechanical reproduction permitted new kinds of experiments with the printing, typography, and visual layout of the text.¹⁶ These experiments went hand in hand with the avant-garde's inter-art collaborations, a practice avidly pursued by Guest, Daisy Aldan, and other poets and artists in post-1945 New York (Silverberg 2013; Rosenbaum 2015). In *Folder 4* (1956) Daisy Aldan published the French text of Mallarmé's *Un Coup de Dés/A Roll of the Dice* followed by her own translation, the first in English, which reproduced the radical spatial design and variable font of the original poem; in a 1970 interview, Aldan recalled Kiesler's interest in visual poetics and his help with her translation (Aldan 1970).¹⁷ While previous experiments in visual poetry were important to Guest's poetic designs (particularly those of Mallarmé, Mina Loy, W.C. Williams, and e.e. cummings), her choice to single out Kiesler, an architect, in her "Homage" calls for a closer look at the importance of architecture to her visual poetics.¹⁸

Barbara Guest's interest in poetic dialogue across media took root in Surrealist poetics, and as her essay "The Shadow of Surrealism" reveals, Guest understood and depicted this shared poetic inquiry in architectural terms:

I grew up under the shadow of Surrealism. In that creative atmosphere of magical rites there was no recognized separation between the arts. Those of us who shared this atmosphere brightened by Apollinaire, Éluard, Valéry, and the old master Mallarmé, considered ourselves part of a hemisphere where all the arts evolved around one another, a central plaza with roads which led from the palette to quill to clef. One could never again look at poetry as a locked kingdom. Poetry extended vertically, as well as horizontally, never did it lie motionless within a linear structure. Assisting in this poetic mobility would be an associative art within whose eye the poet might gaze for reassurance and for a glowing impersonal empathy. (Guest 2003, p. 16)

Guest's metaphor of a "hemisphere" of the arts, and her architectural description of a three-dimensional poetry extending vertically and horizontally, suggests her affinity with Kiesler's concept of the "galaxy" and his Surrealist approach to architecture more generally.

Guest developed her architectural metaphor for a Surrealist-inspired poetry in a late poetic essay, "Invisible Architecture" (Guest 2002). She wrote, "By whom or by what agency is the behavior of the poem suggested, by what invisible architecture, we ask, is the poem developed. The Surrealists taught us to wander freely on the page, releasing mechanical birds, if we so desire, to nest in the invisible handwriting of composition. There is always something within poetry that desires the invisible" (Guest 2002). Guest describes the poem's structure emerging not only from the writer's conscious control and "physical power" over the poem, but also from the "authority of the invisible architecture" which she equates with "the unconscious that dwells on the lower level,/in a substratum beneath the surface of the poem" (Guest 2002). The metaphor of the page as a landscape on which the poet can wander, and of the "invisible handwriting of composition" as a tree-like structure in which a mechanical bird can "nest", perhaps emerging from the "substratum beneath the surface", suggests the structural integrity Guest assigned to what is unseen, the unconscious forces shaping the visible designs on the page. Recalling Kiesler's description of the *Large Glass* as both "surface-and-space at the same time", for Guest the "empty" spaces of the page—the spaces between and surrounding words, lines and stanzas—were not truly empty, but were "surface-and-space at the same time", creating a "field of tension" that mediates the visible and invisible, reality and dream, printed words and the visual imagination.

Guest published "Homage" in the little magazine *Angel Hair* in Spring 1968, soon after Kiesler's 1965 death, and its occasion is one of elegy and tribute, as Guest reflected on Kiesler's importance to a younger avant-garde that began their careers after World War Two. This group included Guest's close friend the poet Frank O'Hara, a central figure in the New York School, who was working as a Curator of Painting and Sculpture at the Museum of Modern Art when he died tragically in 1966. The MoMA held tribute exhibitions for both

Kiesler and O'Hara, and in 1967 published a collection of art inspired by O'Hara's poems¹⁹; Guest's "Homage" subtly honors O'Hara alongside Kiesler as related poetic explorers.

In "Homage" the speaker addresses a "Galaxy" as a "you" through "poetic apostrophe" (an address to a dead or absent person, thing, or idea as if they were alive and present), and the meaning of "Galaxy" and "you" shift fluidly over the course of the poem, variously alluding to Kiesler's works titled "Galaxies"; the specific "Galaxy for Nelson Rockefeller" exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA); a galaxy in the astronomical sense; a galaxy as a metaphor for an installation of artworks; and a galaxy as a figure for a group of affiliated artists. Guest's second-person address to this fluid "Galaxy" brings it to life, suggesting that she wanted "Homage" to function not as a poetic mausoleum enshrining the dead, but rather as a dynamic engagement with Kiesler's "Galaxy" that extends its reach into the present and future. Guest's epigraph to her 1968 "Homage"—"a new era of the plastic arts has begun"—comes from Kiesler's "Second Manifesto of Correalism" (Kiesler 1965), indicating that Correalism was a key inspiration for the poem. "Homage" transforms artistic spectatorship and display into co-creation or what Kiesler called "Correalism": rather than describe Kiesler's "Galaxy", Guest's 1968 poem enters it, living within and around it as a "practical sculpture", so as to build a related structure on the page (Kiesler 1952, p. 8).²⁰

Building on her understanding of the page as a landscape and a poetic stanza ("room" in Italian) as an architectural structure, Guest uses the placement of words, lines, stanzas, and the spaces in between and around them, to establish analogies between the visual design of the poem and that of the built and invisible landscape.²¹ As the poem unfolds, Guest dramatizes the speakers' movement through and negotiation of this landscape, a landscape that the reader simultaneously navigates in the present tense as they read. The poem establishes its entrance into the "world" of the "Galaxies" as a physical movement of ascension but also as a process of aesthetic choice and transformation that corresponds to Guest's early career:

The world
is going upstairs
and some people
of whom Frederick Kiesler
didn't approve

are sitting in the basement.

Galaxies galaxies
you are our last jewels
the ones the Czar gave us
and we preserved
in our ateliers

Preferring to drive
taxicabs
and knowing
we had a secret
(able to live gracefully
in tenements)

We simply waited
a fresh morning
that was bound one day

to open
over the roofs

And we see dawn
as a palace. (Guest 2001, pp. 101–2)

In the opening stanzas Guest uses the architectural metaphor of a dwelling with an upstairs and basement to establish a contrast between “the world” which is actively “going upstairs”, and the people unapproved by Kiesler who are static, “sitting in the basement”. She emphasizes this distinction graphically as well: positing an analogy between a stanza and a room with a staircase, Guest’s first stanza uses its lines and line breaks to suggest an analogy between the movement of the poem down the page and the movement of climbing up stairs, an ascension that alludes to Kiesler’s skyward gaze in his “Galaxies”. “The world” is a planetary term, connoting Kiesler’s “Galaxy”, but also evokes the French “le monde”, which refers to high society and/or those in the know, a like-minded group headed in the same direction. The space between the first and second stanza creates a dramatic enjambment, with the fate of those who Kiesler rejected hanging in the balance. The solitary line of the second stanza, which completes the grammatical phrase, graphically underscores what happens to this group: left alone in the basement, they are cut off from the previous stanza and the structure it evokes, so they are unable to ascend, and implicitly, stuck in the past.

Although the opening of the poem does not explicitly align the speaking “we” with “the world”, as an “Homage” to Kiesler the poem implies this connection, and the first address to the “Galaxies” simultaneously brings the “Galaxies” and the “we” into relational focus: “Galaxies galaxies/you are our last jewels/the ones the Czar gave us/and we preserved/in our ateliers” (Guest 2001, p. 101). Guest’s lines suggest that the “we” is an exiled European aristocracy who have cherished the jewels once given to them by the Czar, the jewels precious not simply for their economic value but as symbols of a distant European culture. The “we” preserve these jewels in their “ateliers”, French for an artist, architect, or designer’s studio. In the context of Kiesler and his “Galaxies”, the “we” in these lines may give voice to Kiesler and the European avant-garde that emigrated to the U.S. in the 1920s, 30s, and early 1940s; in this sense, the “Galaxies” connote the experience of spatial dislocation and exile (Norman 2016). However, as the poem unfolds, the “we” also gives voice to a younger generation of poets and artists who cherished Kiesler’s work and the works of the European avant-garde: in this understanding of the “we”, Kiesler may be the Czar, who bequeathed his “Galaxies” (jewels) to younger American artists. In Guest’s address to the “Galaxies” at the opening of the stanza, she repeats the word “Galaxies” but leaves space in between the words, creating a visual analogy to the constitutive space between the varied paintings, drawings and sculptures that Kiesler titled “Galaxies”. Just as the “we” can be read as distinct generations that hold different understandings of the “Galaxies”, so the space between the repeated word “Galaxies” may comment on the variable meaning of these artworks, contingent on the elements Kiesler included, their spatial arrangement, the environment in which they are located, and on the spectator’s point of view. Pronouns allow Guest to create some of the referential and in turn spatial fluidity of Kiesler’s “Galaxy” structures.

Guest’s association of the “Galaxies” with precious jewels raises the subject of the Galaxies’ artistic versus economic value, and the struggles of the avant-garde. By the early 1950s Guest had become part of a group of young painters and poets interested in avant-garde experimentation and collaboration (Guest 2008, p. xxii). However, whereas painters could sell their work, even successful poets experienced the difficulty of making a living from their art, a subject Guest addressed in “The Shadow of Surrealism”:

Painters naturally gravitated toward expensive cars, lofts and chateaux, while poets take buses, settle in dim rooms [...] and until the event of the word processor satisfied themselves with modestly turned print. Money rolls into the pockets of painters with a frequency that stuns the poet. Just as the extravagance of a painter is admired so is his ability to leap the boundaries of experiment or assume the

labors of a chauvinist past. Some of us did desire to sit under the same umbrella as Picasso, even share his villa at Mougins. The physical extravagance of paint, of enormous canvases can cause a nurturing envy in the poet that prods his greatest possession, the imagination, into an expansion of its borders. (Guest 2003, p. 16)

Thus the “we” who eke out a living, “Preferring to drive/taxicabs”, and willing to accommodate the city’s rigors, “(able to live gracefully/in tenements)”, connotes the hardships encountered by the avant-garde, but may refer specifically to the poets who were part of Guest’s circle, a reading supported by Guest’s emphasis on grace, which alludes to Frank O’Hara’s lines from “In Memory of My Feelings”, “Grace/to be born and live as variously as possible” (O’Hara 1995, p. 256), and to O’Hara’s and Guest’s friend, the painter Grace Hartigan, who like Guest struggled to navigate the postwar avant-garde as a woman. Guest’s depiction of a younger avant-garde who cherish Kiesler’s artworks in their studios resonates with Kiesler’s emphasis on the value of the visionary imagination in contrast to the market for art in his “Correalist Manifesto”: “Drive out ‘high painting’ from art galleries. Shows have become exhibitionist acts, the painter, an exhausted producer./Drive out contemporary art from museums. Art belongs to the street, the home, the people. Curators live large. Artists hock their hunger and pride./Drive out art traffickers from the salons of the nouveau riche; they condemn art to pillory./Drive out art advertisement from the cities, where too many artists debase the idea of a pure, solitary spirit and prostitute art to a predatory industry” (Bogner and Noever 2001, p. 92).

The undivulged “secret” this “we” know they possess refers to what Guest called the “invisible architecture” of a poem, and to the poet’s “greatest possession, the imagination”, which permits a visionary “expansion” of “borders” beyond the constraining walls of the tenements, signified iconically in the poem with parentheses:

(able to live gracefully
in tenements)

We simply waited
a fresh morning
that was bound one day
to open
over the roofs

And we see dawn
as a palace. (Guest 2001, pp. 101–2)

Looking up to the sky above the built city, the poets “see dawn/as a palace”, the line break and white space between these lines signifying the poets’ ability to transform—through poetic metaphor and spatial imagination—their humble environment into royal architecture, connoting the Czar and his jewels, Kiesler and his “Galaxies”, and what poet Charles Baudelaire called in “The Painter of Modern Life” the “aristocratic superiority of [the] spirit” (Baudelaire 1972). Guest’s use of white space between these lines and stanzas graphically indicates the importance of the space “over the roofs”—the sky and its galaxies—which provide a literal “opening” and metaphorical inspiration to those hemmed in by the vertical city.

As the “we” embark on their visionary endeavor, the poem turns explicitly from the realist city (and the related challenges of making a living, driving taxicabs, living in tenements) to the Surrealist landscape and the influence of dreams, imagination, and art.

Having in sleep
experienced
original dreams
which now become
an environment

So we climb into it
 in the night suit
 trusting to place
 one foot on
 “the cornerstone of the edifice” (Guest 2001, p. 102)

Guest posits a shared Surrealist inspiration between the younger “we” that sees dawn as a palace, and Kiesler in his creation of galaxy environments. Thus the lines “Having in sleep/experienced/original dreams/which now become/an environment” can refer to Kiesler (inspired by dreams, Kiesler created Surrealist environments, including his “Galaxies” and his innovative Gallery designs), but can also refer to the poet, the poet’s circle, and the reader. Guest’s use of the present tense in “now become” positions the unfolding poem (and readers as they read), as part of the >Galaxy”, suggesting that the “original dreams” and the resulting “environment” are also theirs. Just as the “we” at this moment may variously include Kiesler, Guest’s circle, and the reader, Guest does not specify the “it” that the “we” climb into: “it” may evoke Kiesler in a “night suit” like a Surrealist astronaut, climbing into the landscape of dreams or into the physical “environment” that resulted from these dreams; Guest and her group literally climbing into a large “Galaxy”, possibly Kiesler’s twelve-foot high “Galaxy for Nelson Rockefeller” exhibited at MoMA in 1952 (Figure 2); and the readers, who imaginatively “climb” into the galaxy structure that the poem builds as it moves down the page. In this way the poem, like a “Galaxy”, remains “open” to its environment and audience.

In short, as a work of Correalism, Guest’s “Homage” explicitly builds its own “Galaxy” as it imaginatively enters Kiesler’s structure. In the middle section of the poem, Guest uses the spacing of lines and stanzas to establish an analogy between the visual/verbal reading of the poem’s designs, and the movement of entering the physical structure of a Kiesler “Galaxy”. For instance, Guest enjambes the grammatical phrase “So we climb/into it” to enact the movement into a large “Galaxy”: breaking the line after “climb” generates a visual space at the end of the line analogous to a spatial structure that must be climbed, while the temporal lag, the time it takes for the reader’s eye to move back and down the page to the next line, generates an analogy to the time that elapses as the subject climbs into the sculpture. Similarly, “trusting to place/one foot on/‘the cornerstone of the edifice’” uses the spatial and temporal gaps between lines to build an analogy to the movement of the foot, tentatively establishing a foothold on the edifice, once the subject “trusts” that it will hold their weight.

Guest’s use of quotation marks around “the cornerstone of the edifice”, a line placed at the end or “corner” of the stanza, signals her self-reflexive awareness that she is using an architectural metaphor to “build” or materially realize her poetic “Galaxy”. This quote may also indicate Guest’s awareness of how her poetic “Galaxy” metaphorically builds on and extends an external structure, Kiesler’s “Galaxy”, incorporating his artwork as a key part of the “edifice” she constructs on the landscape of the page. Similarly, Guest uses quotation marks in the stanza that follows to signal how the poem joins and extends Kiesler’s work:

No longer “traditional”
 or “isolated”
 Whose edges
 border on
 a scheme
 accurate as stone (Guest 2001, p. 102)

These lines dramatize both physical movement and an affective change, as the “we” who enter the “Galaxy” structure are no longer “traditional” or “isolated”. These quotes explicitly allude to Kiesler’s essays, including a line from his “Correalist Manifesto” about the Salle de Superstition: “The house, freed from aesthetic *tradition*, became a living creature” (italics mine; Bogner and Noever 2001, p. 99), and a line from his “Note on Correalism”

which accompanied the 1952 exhibition of his “Galaxies” at MoMA: “The debacle of art as a necessity today is caused by its separation from daily living, its *isolation*” (italics mine; Kiesler 1952, p. 8). “Edges” refer both to the edges of the “Galaxy” and to the edges of the poetic line, and they are equally “accurate” whether built of “stone” or words. Similarly, Guest’s structure “borders” on “a scheme” that remains invisible but structurally central to the poem: Kiesler’s “Galaxies”, and more generally the dreams and unconscious forces that the poem manifests, its “invisible architecture”. Guest’s Note to “Homage” emphasizes that Kiesler’s “Galaxies” originated in “architectural drawings”: the first material realization of his vision appeared on paper, like Guest’s poem (Guest 2003, p. 19) (Figures 4 and 5).

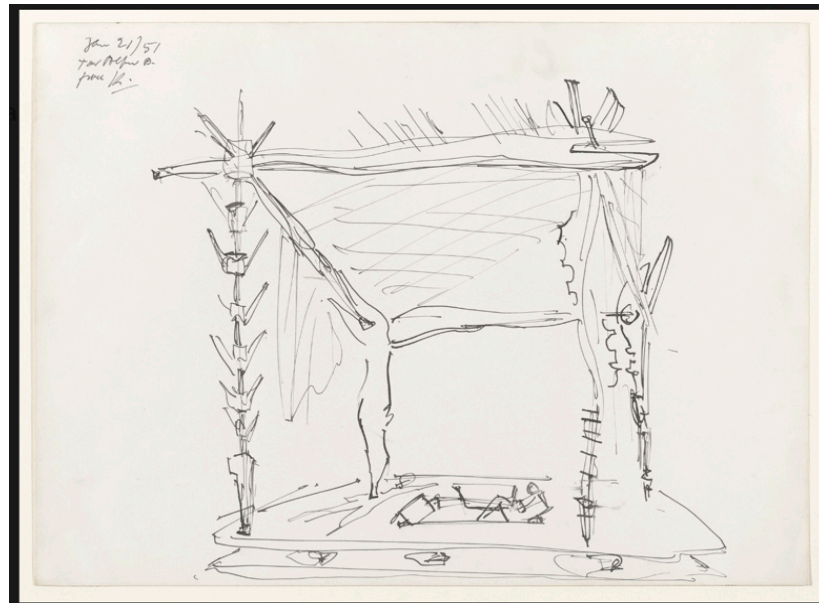


Figure 4. Frederick Kiesler. Study for Galaxy, 1947–1948. <http://www.moma.org> (accessed on 26 August 2022).

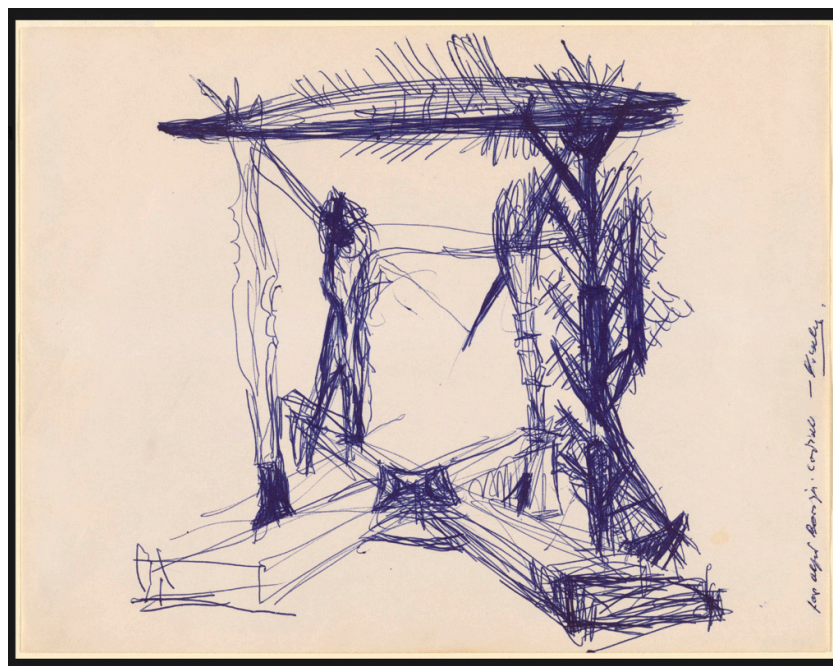


Figure 5. Frederick Kiesler. Study for Galaxy, 1947–1948. <http://www.moma.org> (accessed on 26 August 2022).

As Guest builds and extends Kiesler's "Galaxy", the spatial designs of the poem serve to show how "we" become part of Kiesler's "environment" in an artistic but also social sense:

Whose edges
no longer rough
surround us
(on the walks
to commence our future
in another scale) (Guest 2001, p. 102)

In these lines Guest puns on the idea of "having rough edges", a judgment that critics may well have applied to Kiesler's sculpture and to the poetry of Guest's circle, but which also signifies their shared willingness to challenge social and artistic conventions. Stating that the edges "surround us", Guest suggests that Kiesler's "Galaxy" structure and Gallery designs provided a kind of provisional but protective and sustaining shelter that allowed a younger artistic avant-garde to coalesce: as Guest noted, "Kiesler designed the Peggy Guggenheim Gallery in New York where Pollock and a 'galaxy' of new painters first showed" (2003, p. 19).²² The final lines of the stanza convey the idea of "edges no longer rough that surround us" visually and iconically, through the parentheses that surround the phrase "(on the walks/to commence our future/in another scale)": while the tenement structure parenthetically enclosed and constrained the young poets, Kiesler's structures provide support while encouraging new movement or "walks" into the future. These lines connote a younger avant-garde embarking on new paths, but also register O'Hara's use of the walk as an organizing motif in his "I do this, I do that" poems; rather than position O'Hara as part of the past, Guest subtly positions O'Hara's death as a continuation of his appetite for life, as taking a "step away" into another dimension (O'Hara 1995, pp. 257–58). Part of yet distinct from Kiesler's "Galaxy", the "we" join and extend the Galaxy "in another scale"; Guest's two-dimensional poetic text displays and extends Kiesler's three-dimensional "Galaxy" structures into future time and space.²³

4. The Bartered Bride and the En Dehors Garde: New Formations of the Avant Garde

The start of "Homage" gestures to a museum or exhibitionary context, with "the world" going upstairs, perhaps to view Kiesler's "Galaxies", while the artists and work Kiesler considered unimportant remain sequestered in the basement. The conclusion of "Homage" (1968) returns in a more specific fashion to the 1950s/early 1960s museum context in which Kiesler exhibited his "Galaxies", prompting Guest's reflections on the compromises to Surrealist visionary structures necessitated by the art "world". While stanza ten concludes with the vision of a "we" literally and metaphorically supported by Kiesler's "Galaxies", preparing to commence a "future/in another scale", ready to launch out into space, in the final five stanzas of the poem, Guest shifts to a first-person speaker, a figure for the poet, who encounters a Kiesler "Galaxy" in a specific exhibition space:

Galaxy I see you hanging
from the ceiling

You are our bartered bride
with your grand
comatose
skeleton

Because you are edifice
and bestowed on you is
a "coat of arms" (Guest 2001, pp. 102–3)

Guest's description of a "Galaxy" "hanging/from the ceiling" recalls Daisy Aldan's description of "Galaxy" exhibitions with components on the ceiling; however, with its "grand/comatose/skeleton" and "coat of arms", Guest likely alludes to the "Galaxy for Nelson Rockefeller" exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art in 1952. As Zillner writes, "Kiesler was associated with no museum as closely as with the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York" (Bogner and Zillner 2019, p. 35), which exhibited his Correalistic furniture from the Guggenheim gallery, as well as his sculptures, architectural drawings, and his models and plans for the never realized "Endless House" which he had hoped to build in the museum's gardens.²⁴ Kiesler's "Galaxy for Nelson Rockefeller" (1948–1952) was exhibited at MoMA as part of an exhibition titled *15 Americans* (9 April–27 July 1952) (Bogner and Zillner 2019, p. 36). The "Galaxy" is a twelve-foot-high edifice or "skeleton" of a "room" that lacks floors, walls, and ceiling, which Kiesler had originally designed in 1948 for the set of the Darius Milhaud opera "Le Pauvre Matelot/The Poor Sailor" (libretto by Jean Cocteau) at Juilliard, an opera with nautical themes (Kiesler and Lillian Kiesler Private Foundation n.d.). MoMA displayed it in a room along with a nineteen-part "Galaxy" painting (1951) arranged on one wall, with the top four painted panels echoing the horizontal "fish spine" of the sculpture (Figures 6 and 7).



Figure 6. Installation view. Frederick Kiesler. Galaxy (1951). 15 Americans Exhibition. <http://www.moma.org> (accessed on 26 August 2022).

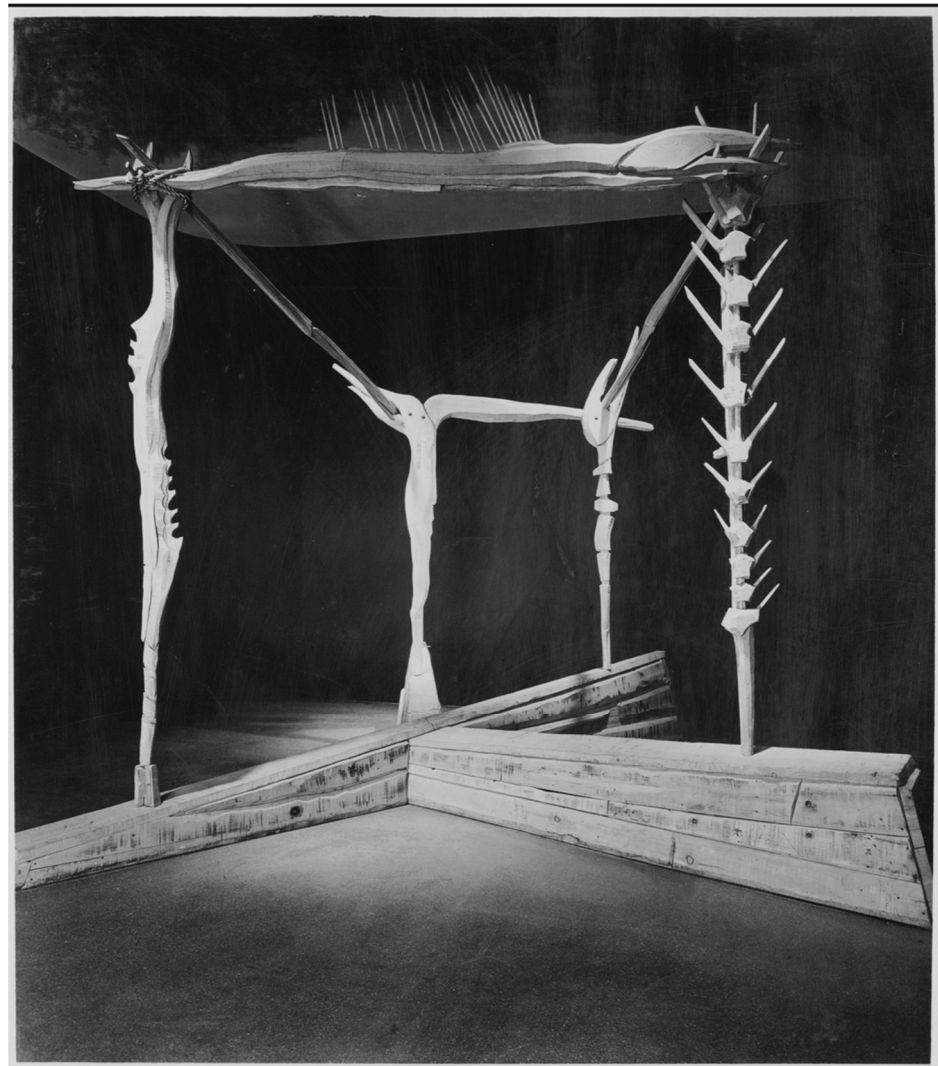


Figure 7. Installation view. Frederick Kiesler, *Galaxy*, 1947–1948, 1951. Collection of Nelson A. Rockefeller. 15 Americans Exhibition. <http://www.moma.org> (accessed on 26 August 2022).

The “Galaxy for Nelson Rockefeller” inspired MoMA Director Alfred H. Barr, Jr. to write a prose poem which he published in *Harper’s Magazine* with an installation photo of the “Galaxy”, to coincide with the exhibition:

Galaxy is architecture for sky-gazers; its plan is a cross with arms raised in amazement; its major axis slopes abruptly toward a vanishing point like Borromini’s false perspective in the Palazzo Spada; its four caryatids are a dolphin’s spine, a hippocampus, a lobster claw and an ichthyosaur caressed by a boomerang; its lintels are driftwood and a comb-finned gar. (Barr 1952, p. 142)

Barr likens the “Galaxy” to a four-poster bed, a pergola, a drifting raft, and concludes by calling it “the supreme anti-technological gazebo” (Barr 1952, p. 142). In his descriptive note he adds that Kiesler “looks on Galaxy as a practical sculpture, to live with and within—to put in a garden, in a wooded grove or on a beach”, echoing Kiesler’s comment that the “Galaxy” “is a practical sculpture. It is both to be lived with and within” (Kiesler 1952, p. 8). Barr’s poetic metaphors emphasize the skeletal (dolphin’s spine, comb-finned gar) and fossil-like nature (ichthyosaur) of the structural components of the structure, which Barr associated with the detritus and movements of the sea (raft, sea horse, dolphin, lobster, driftwood, gar). Lacking walls yet creating large airy spaces suggestive of a dwelling open to space and the elements, the large “Galaxy for Nelson Rockefeller” embodied Kiesler’s ideal

of structures that achieve “integration” with “the flow of [the] daily environment”, an ideal that Barr’s poetic language echoes and which his *Harper’s Magazine* “installation” furthers.

Describing the Galaxy as “hanging” from the ceiling, Guest addresses the spatial and material limits on Kiesler’s visionary ideal imposed by the museum context. While Guest cherished Kiesler’s “Galaxies” for their dream-inspired structure, to make his way in the New York art scene Kiesler also needed to consider their economic value, and Guest addresses this particular “Galaxy” as a “bartered bride”. “Bartered” refers to the exchange of goods or services for other goods or services without using money; in terms of Kiesler’s “Galaxy”, “bartered” connotes the exchange of artistic ideals for an exhibitionary reality, with the implication that the artist’s vision is compromised in that exchange. Despite Kiesler’s ideal of a practical sculpture that could be integrated into everyday life; an art that “belongs to the street, the home, the people”; and an art that wouldn’t succumb to “a predatory industry” (Bogner and Noever 2001, p. 92); he nevertheless sold his “Galaxy” to Nelson Rockefeller, President of MoMA, and displayed his “Galaxies” in the very kind of “white cube” museum setting that his design for Art of this Century and the Salle de Superstition sought to challenge and transform.²⁵ Guest’s first-person speaker ruefully reflects on the compromises that Kiesler needed to make to realize his vision within the museum economy and New York art world, a predicament that resonated with the post-1945 avant-garde more generally as their works were absorbed into the modernist museum. The question “Homage” ponders in its concluding stanzas is whether it is possible to transform the MoMA from a cemetery for avant-garde art, into an exhibitionary space that furthers the avant-garde’s aim of an “imaginary museum” or museum without walls, that can integrate art and everyday life.

This question was especially relevant to Guest as a woman poet. In her address to the “Galaxy” as a “bartered bride”, Guest also reflects on the “ceilings” she and other experimental women poets and artists encountered as they negotiated the male-dominated avant-garde and art institutions like the MoMA.²⁶ Guest’s statement, “You are our bartered bride”, following her address to the Galaxy (“I see you hanging”), syntactically positions the Galaxy as the “you” and bartered bride, personifying the sculpture. However, Guest’s use of white space between these stanzas also distances the connection between Galaxy and Bride, opening up additional possibilities of grammar and meaning. Given the analogies Guest previously established between the “Galaxy” and the structure of the poem, Guest’s “you” may address the poem, or herself. “Bartered bride” connotes the history of a marriage market in which women were “exchanged” to cement power and ties between families, courts, and territories, and Guest may subtly comment on her own marriages and their economic role in sustaining her artistic career. In the context of the museum and the masculine avant-garde, the “bartered bride” reflects a long history of women artists’ relegation to social versus artistic roles. In this context Guest’s adoption of the “I” which distinguishes her from the previous “we” may reflect her own sense of marginalization in the postwar avant-garde’s schools and coteries.

While the “bartered bride” connotes the gendered and economic constraints women artists in particular faced, in the context of Kiesler’s “Galaxy” the “Bride” also alludes to the Bride and the Bachelors in Duchamp’s *Large Glass*. As I have argued elsewhere, the *Large Glass*’s critical engagement with conventional museum display and creation of an active role for the spectator proved generative to many women artists who were interested in establishing new models of producing, displaying, and consuming avant-garde art (Rosenbaum 2017). While the Surrealist movement inspired many women poets and artists, Breton and other early Surrealists tended to cast women in the role of muse, aesthetic ideal, medium to irrational states, lover, patron, or spectator.²⁷ Taking up the “Correalist” invitation of the *Large Glass*, and specifically taking on the role of Duchamp’s Bride, women used their position on the margins of both the museum and the avant-garde as an impetus to reimagine both, and in doing so, to comment variously on institutional power, the practices of Surrealist display, and gendered modes of looking (Rosenbaum 2017). Women

in 1950s and 1960s New York, including the painter Grace Hartigan and poet Barbara Guest, took up and reworked the figure of the Bride in significant ways (Figure 8).



Figure 8. Grace Hartigan, *Grand Street Brides* 1954. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; purchase, with funds from an anonymous donor. © Rex R. Stevens. <https://whitney.org/collection/works/1292> (accessed on 26 August 2022).

Duchamp's Bride, both positioned within but also resistant to the plot of heterosexual desire and feminized spectacle, could be written over by female artists who redefined readymade gender roles in their own works and lives. In spatially dividing the Bride from her prospective Bachelor mates by placing her in the top half of the *Glass*, Duchamp set in motion a spatialized "plot" involving desire and a frustrated romance. The abstract and mechanical qualities of Duchamp's Bride and Bachelor allow them to "defy traditional gender qualifications" (Judovitz 1998, p. 71).²⁸ In describing the Bride in his "Notes on the Large Glass" as both as an "apotheosis of virginity" and as a "new motor", who is stripped nude by the bachelors but whose own "desiring" generates a "stripping voluntarily imagined" (Duchamp 1969, pp. 22, 24), Duchamp presents conventions of masculinity and femininity as ready-made clichés that mechanize our habits, but which can also be ironized, suspended, and performatively remade.

For example, Grace Hartigan's painting *Grand Street Brides* (1954), based on Walter Silver's photograph of a bridal shop window on Grand Street, responds to the *Large Glass* as a department store window (Figure 8). She commented "I passed by a store window jammed full of mannequins in cheap white lace bridal gowns with a seated figure in a bilious violet maid of honor dress. It would make a marvelous group picture, a kind of modern court scene" (Hirsch 2003, p. 33). She added, "I was married four times and never had a white wedding, but I am fascinated with how much it means—and how little the groom means". In fact, Hartigan omitted the groom and any reference to Duchamp's bachelors from her painting. Hartigan's six foot by eight and a half foot painting was literally grand in size, almost the size of an actual shop window, and close in size to Kiesler's "Galaxy for Nelson Rockefeller". In choosing to paint from a photo of mannequins, readymade brides wearing readymade gowns captured in a readymade photo, Hartigan altered the readymade. In doing so she made room for the woman artist and new conceptions of

femininity. Hartigan commented “I’m painting myself actually in the painting as well as standing outside, painting the painting. [...] I have been accused that all of my women are another aspect of myself. So it is with a sense of belonging to art history that I put myself in there” (Hirsch 2003, p. 35). Tellingly, Hartigan completed this painting soon after her work’s entrance into the MoMA, which sharpens the painting’s art historical commentary: in 1953 Alfred Barr acquired Hartigan’s paintings “The Persian Jacket” (1952) and “River Bathers” (1953) (Edelman 2013, p. 3). Hartigan occupies the position of both spectator and spectacle, artist and bride: her painting exposes the patriarchal culture that manufactures and displays the bride and its feminine ideal (Edelman 2013, pp. 6–7), but she also transforms that ideal and asserts the power of the female gaze by turning the bride into the figure of the artist.

In Guest’s address to the Galaxy-Bride, she too is simultaneously spectator, spectacle, and artist: she gazes at Kiesler’s “Galaxy”, at herself as a Bartered Bride, and perhaps at Hartigan’s painting, and is the artist recording these gazes as she writes the poem. Like Hartigan, Guest writes herself into the history of the avant-garde, but does so through her framing and extension of Kiesler’s response to Duchamp’s *Large Glass*, which Kiesler had described as “in a state of eternal readiness for action, motion and radiation” (Kiesler 1937, p. 55).²⁹ In personifying Kiesler’s “Galaxy” as a Bride, Guest envisions it as a three-dimensional version of Duchamp’s abstract Bride, on the move as it steps out of the *Large Glass*, giving feminist meaning to Kiesler’s vision: “the house, freed from aesthetic tradition, became a living creature” (Bogner and Noever 2001, p. 99). Similarly, in Section Nine of her poem “The Screen of Distance”, from the 1989 collection *Fair Realism*, Guest writes:

The Bride raised the cloud settled on her
aspen head and stepping away from her bachelors
she seized like wands the poems I handed her:

‘A life glitters under leaves
piled for anonymity . . . ’

She would lead us through glass to view the
enigmatic hill where a castle slung a shadow. (Guest 2008, p. 230)

In this vision of the Bride, she steps away from her bachelors and out of the *Large Glass* for a new perspective enabled by Guest’s wand-like poems, resulting in a vision of a castle in shadow, an allusion to Guest’s essay “The Shadow of Surrealism” and perhaps to the metaphor of dawn becoming a castle in “Homage”. Similarly, in “Homage” Guest depicts Kiesler’s “Galaxy” as a Bride who has left behind the *Large Glass* and her bachelors for more visionary realms, and who offers spiny protection (a coat of arms) and a structure on which Guest can build her poems: “you are edifice”.

Although Guest begins her address to the “Galaxy” as “hanging”, “bartered”, and “comatose” (in a state of deep unconsciousness often due to injury or illness), adjectives which suggest the Bride’s economic compromises, failed vision, and inability to move or dream, the final stanzas bring Kiesler’s Bride to life:

Because you are edifice
And bestowed on you is
a “coat of arms”

Which you
regally loan
dividing it
into weightless halves

Making your entrances

from the moon³⁰ (Guest 2001, p. 103)

Guest's use of passive voice omits the figure who has bestowed on the "Galaxy" a coat of arms, and thus the bestower may be Duchamp, Kiesler, or Guest. Placing "coat of arms" in quotation marks suggests on the one hand that Guest is assigning symbolic meaning to an abstract structure, associating it with the visual design on a shield, the chainmail coat used in battle, or perhaps with the arrows of Artemis, the Greek goddess of the moon. And much as quotes function earlier in the poem, this quote also signals that the coat of arms has been imported or borrowed from an external source, echoing the importance of "readymade" elements in the *Large Glass* and in Kiesler's framings of the *Glass*. In his poetic response to the "Galaxy", Alfred H. Barr Jr. described the Galaxy's "plan" as a "cross with arms raised in amazement" (Barr 1952, p. 142). Echoing Barr, Guest's "coat of arms" may also refer to the structural "arms" on the "Galaxy", that reach out to enclose, protect, or offer assistance, a feminist twist on the armor of the masculine "avant-garde" as the advance guard of an army. Describing the Bride as an "edifice", which refers to a large or imposing building, Guest positions the Bride as a figure of importance, affirmed by her "coat of arms" and the adverb "regally", which alludes back to the Czar and his jewels. This Bride is queenlike, with power: rather than a figure who is bartered by others, she loans the coat of arms. She divides this coat into "weightless halves", connoting the use of space as a kind of structure that connects and divides, as in the two "halves" of the *Large Glass*, and in the spaces of Kiesler's "Galaxies" and Guest's "Homage".

The poem concludes with the dream-like vision of the Galaxy-Bride in motion, "Making your entrances/from the moon". The moon not only connotes astronomical "galaxies" and the Surrealist landscape of night, sleep, and dreams, but is also a feminized symbol associated with women's poetry, from the romantic-era poets to Mina Loy's 1923 "Lunar Baedeker". Just as Loy sought to transform the feminized symbol of the moon, "pocked with personification", to engage the liminal spaces women artists occupied in avant-garde Paris, so Guest invokes the moon to transform this symbol as well as the space of the modernist museum (Loy 1996, p. 82).³¹ In doing so Guest uses a theatrical metaphor, the Galaxy-Bride entering the "stage" of the museum and poem from the moon, an entrance made every time the poem is read. In Guest's dramatic rendering the Galaxy-Bride is an otherworldly creature who defies conventions of feminine beauty and dissolves the museum's walls into the limitlessness of outer space.³²

Although the "Galaxy for Nelson Rockefeller" is on the one hand a "bartered bride", it invites a Correalist response like Guest's poem, which responds to the spatial, gendered, and economic "ceiling" of MoMA by bringing the "Galaxy" to vivid life in a different medium and exhibitionary context. Both Kiesler's "Galaxies" and Guest's "Homage" can be understood as unconventional "museums without walls" that anticipate the future by inviting dynamic collaboration and "endless" transformation.³³ Much as Kiesler's "Space Poem" provided a mobile, interactive installation of Duchamp's *Large Glass* in *View* magazine, Guest's "Homage", published in *Angel Hair* magazine, offered a feminist framing and extension of Kiesler's "Galaxy", connecting Kiesler's poetic structures to a younger generation of artists and writers, and concretizing a galaxy in the social sense of an artistic network extending through time and space. As Kiesler wrote in his 1952 "Note on Correalism": "The debacle of art as a necessity today is caused by its separation from daily living, its isolation.[...] The new flame will be kindled by the reawakening of our primordial awareness of the interrelatedness of man and nature, by a new consciousness of belonging-together, of coexistence in spite of apartness in space-time, of interdependence beyond such economic and social factors as now separates us" (Kiesler 1952, p. 8). Guest also uses a metaphor involving awakened, collective vision to convey this interdependence in "The Shadow of Surrealism": "Assisting in this poetic mobility would be an associative art within whose eye the poet might gaze for reassurance and for a glowing impersonal empathy" (Guest 2003, p. 16). A "glowing impersonal empathy" born from "an associative

art” is the “Correalist” binding agent of this Galaxy network, in which the spaces between media, generations, and artists are as foundational as their connection and overlap.

The intermedial network visualized through the relation between Guest’s “Homage” and Kiesler’s “Galaxies” offers an important guide to the looser relationships and cross-media affiliations that characterize the history of an En Dehors Garde that has remained in the “Shadow of Surrealism” (Guest 2003, p. 16).³⁴ Charting the history of the En Dehors Garde involves recovering archives, using new analytical tools such as network analysis, adopting the intermedial potential of concepts such as Correalism, and devising new theories—in short, it involves turning away from the well-worn pathways of movements, schools, and coteries for less visible textual and material spaces, entering the imaginative structures or “museums without walls” that were created on the margins of art institutions and the avant-garde. In this way the history of the avant-garde is “transformed, adjusted, and reformed by the arc of the revolution”, its movement no longer defined as militantly out in front, but rather, one strand of an expanding galaxy (Churchill et al. 2020a).

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Notes

- ¹ Surrealism marks an important turn in the long history of word/image relations, understood by most scholars of ekphrasis (defined by James Heffernan as a “verbal representation of a visual representation”) as an antagonistic struggle, historically gendered in terms of a silent, feminized image or artwork narrated or made to speak by a male writer (Heffernan 1993, pp. 3, 7). Even as recent scholarship on feminist and queer ekphrasis has complicated this understanding of word-image relations (Bergmann-Loizeaux 2009; Halpern et al. 2009; Glavey 2015), it has often come up short in addressing the works of the avant-garde. For instance, “readymades” and found objects do not constitute forms of “visual representation” in Heffernan’s sense. Surrealist poets and artists tended to collaborate and to work across verbal/visual boundaries, just as they challenged other oppositions assumed to be antagonistic (e.g., dream and reality). Informed by Surrealism, Guest’s poems participate in and transform the tradition of ekphrasis, opening up the kinds of media that poems engage, and using the relationship between word and image to advance feminist commentary on technologies of vision, the gaze, desire, and imagination. Instead of antagonistic dominance over a feminized art object, in Guest’s poetry we find, as Sara Lundquist argues, a preference for speaking with and through the artwork (Lundquist 1997); instead of a simple critique or reversal of the male gaze we find instead, as Du Plessis argues, that Guest “multiplies the gaze so that she, as a female poet, can claim some power over the many dimensions of sight and seeing” (Du Plessis 2006, p. 177). In applying Kiesler’s understanding of Correalism to the relation between poetry and visual art, Guest’s “Homage” charts yet another model, one of spatial connection and extension, which results in an intermedial, sequentially collaborative work.
- ² Zillner has recently emphasized the importance of the concept of the network and of network analysis to understanding Kiesler’s diverse work, career, and influence (Bogner and Zillner 2019, pp. 16–17).
- ³ (Lundquist 2001b; Du Plessis 2006; Nelson 2007; Kinnahan 2001, 2004; Keller 2001; Diggory 2001; Caples 2008) have demonstrated how Guest was often marginalized in the reception of the New York School: their scholarship has worked to reverse this trend while simultaneously challenging and expanding our understanding of the school and of the avant-garde more generally. I build on their insights in this essay.
- ⁴ For a review of the substantial scholarship on women and the historical avant-garde, see (Churchill et al. 2020a; see also Frost 2003; Nelson 2007; Nielsen 2015; Richards 2020; Shockley 2011; Yu 2009).
- ⁵ As Garrett Caples argues, Surrealism was an abiding influence throughout Guest’s career: “At her last two or three readings, she’d begun to identify herself as a surrealist, prompted in part by the two poems she’d written about de Chirico that open her final book, *The Red Gaze*. *The Red Gaze* was in fact originally subtitled *Surrealism and Other Poems*, although she nixed this in the end, not wishing, she said, to be overshadowed by surrealism. It was a characteristically ‘Barbara’ statement, one riffing off the title of her essay ‘The Shadow of Surrealism,’ which had recently been collected in *Forces of Imagination*” (Caples 2008,

p. 153). Caples, like Du Plessis (2006), emphasizes Guest's feminist adaptation of Surrealism; he points out "Being a woman in a male-dominated world, she felt oppressed by the social order; her art wasn't taken seriously, and this was a deep source of pain to her. She felt continually slighted, from Ron Padgett and David Shapiro's omission of her in the *Anthology of New York Poets*, to David Lehman's cursory treatment of her in *The Last Avant-Garde*. This oppression perhaps provided the psychological conditions conducive to surrealism. Whether or not she should be considered a surrealist is probably less important than the fact that much of her poetry is. Her imagination was" (Caples 2008, pp. 154–55).

- 6 On Daisy Aldan's *Folder* magazine, see Michael Hennessey (2011). Guest's archive in the Beinecke Library attests to the importance of *Folder* magazine; Guest clipped and saved a photo from the January 1960 issue of *Mademoiselle* titled "The Folder Poets" (Guest n.d.). The photo depicts, from left to right, Daisy Aldan, William Weiss, Kenneth Koch, Barbara Guest, Emilie Glen, Frank O'Hara, Ruth Yorck, Kenward Elmslie, Denise Levertov, Charles Boultonhouse, Arthur Gregor, Joy Gould, Le Roi Jones, Lucia Dlugoszewski, Jean Garrigue, Edward Field, and Storm de Hirsch, all published in *Folder* (1953–6). Aldan founded Tiber Press with Richard Miller and Floriano Vecchi in New York in the early 1950s: Tiber published prints by visual artists, a series of collaborative books by poets and artists, *Folder* magazine, which contained both poetry and visual art, and the anthology *A New Folder* (Aldan 1959). The name "Folder" originated in the experimental design of the magazine: rather than a bound volume, it consisted of looseleaf pages held in a folder, with each poem and work of visual art printed on a separate page. Aldan hoped that readers would incorporate the art and poems into their everyday living space, an idea stemming from Caresse Crosby's magazine *Portfolio*, published during World War II on unbound pages. Like *Portfolio*, *Folder* looked back to Surrealism in its effort to facilitate dialogue and collaborations between poetry and visual arts, in its international focus, and in its experimental understanding of the magazine as a portable collection and social space that puts art and artists in dynamic relation to one another. Aldan's archive in the Beinecke includes letters from Frederick Kiesler as well as Aldan's typed appreciation of Kiesler, "Frederick Kiesler: Vessel of Fire", and a typescript "Kiesler Archives", a 1970 transcription of Aldan's recorded memories of Kiesler and their friendship. Aldan recalled that she met Kiesler through the poet Ruth Yorck in 1954; Aldan was working on a doctorate at NYU on "The Influence of French Surrealism on American literature", and Kiesler was always "immensely encouraging" of Aldan's work and the work of other young artists and writers (Aldan 1970, pp. 1, 5). They became lifelong friends and collaborators, and Aldan included a drawing of Kiesler's "Endless House" in *A New Folder* (1959) (Aldan 1970, pp. 5, 12).
- 7 Kiesler's room for the Brooklyn Exhibition was not completed in time for the exhibition (Bohan 1982, pp. 61–62). See (Rosenbaum 2017), for a discussion of Dreier's installation of Duchamp's *Large Glass* and *Tu M'* in her Connecticut home.
- 8 Kiesler developed his understanding of "Correalism" in response to Marcel Duchamp's *Large Glass*, publishing an essay on "Design—Correlation" in the May 1937 *Architectural Record* (81.5, pp. 53–60) that featured his reflections on *The Large Glass*, accompanied by photographs taken by Berenice Abbott, arranged into spatial designs on the page by Kiesler. He also published a related reflection, "Design-Correlation". VVV 2–3 (March 1945), pp. 76–80. Kiesler formalized these ideas in his "Manifesto on Correalism" (Kiesler 2001), initially published in French in *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* in 1949, and printed in English translation in (Bogner and Noever 2001, pp. 92–99). The "Second Manifesto of Correalism" was published in *Art International* 9.2 (March 1965): 16–19.
- 9 Kiesler wrote "It is the principle of unity, primordial unity, the unity between man's creative consciousness and his daily environment which governs the presentation of paintings, sculptures, furnishings and enclosures in these four galleries" ("Note on Designing the Gallery", Davidson and Rylands 2004, p. 174).
- 10 On the *Boîte en Valise*, see (Bonk 1989; Filipovic 2009; Judovitz 1998; Hopkins 1998; Tomkins 1996).
- 11 Similarly, Berenice Abbott's photographs of Kiesler's Art of this Century gallery are an important record of the interactive features of the gallery and offer a further mediation and framing of it. See (Davidson and Rylands 2004).
- 12 For a further, related framing in a different medium—an interactive digital exhibition and analysis of View's Duchamp issue, including Kiesler's Triptych—see Erin McClenathan's StoryMap, "Loy in View" (McClenathan 2020): <https://mina-loy.com/art-exhibits/loy-in-view/> (accessed on 26 August 2022) McClenathan (2020) and Michael Taylor (2019) discuss the importance of Jamaican-born Percy Rainford's photographic contributions to the Triptych.
- 13 In 1947 Kiesler also made a "Galaxy" portrait of Duchamp <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/33989> (accessed on 26 August 2022) and in 1948 one of e.e. cummings <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/33977> (accessed on 26 August 2022). Kiesler's archive includes typescripts of poems that reflect on architecture, including a poem dated 11 July 1958 and one dated to the 1960s, published in (Bogner and Noever 2001, pp. 34, 38–39). Daisy Aldan recalled Kiesler writing poems and sharing them with her (Aldan 1970, pp. 12–13), and in her interview about Kiesler she looks through his poetry manuscript titled *Thirsty Paper*, and reads aloud a number of the poems (Aldan 1970, pp. 14–21).
- 14 Similarly, in his 1947 "Correalist Manifesto", Kiesler argued that under the influence of "Correalism", "Painters, sculptures, and designers, driven away by functionalism, will return from exile to be saved by architecture; suddenly, every house will become a museum" (Bogner and Noever 2001, p. 99).
- 15 The potential "endlessness" of Kiesler's constellation of "Galaxy" artworks is akin to the endlessness of the "expanding universe". Dieter Bogner argues that the "Galaxies" "develop parallel with the Endless House beginning in 1947" (Bogner and Noever 2001, p. 23). Lisa Phillips argues that Correalism and endlessness are the central aesthetic principles that informed the "Galaxies" (Bogner and Noever 2001, p. 29). Phillips writes, "The celestial galaxy worked as a metaphor for both composition and the idea of

‘endlessness’. Galaxies, like compositions, comprise various elements as they come into being. ‘Only then is their expanse defined, and they can actually, by further necessity, be further expanded by adding new units. Their inner cohesion is the principle matter, and since this impetus might grow and make new demands, these galaxies [...] are by principle endless’. For Kiesler, the galaxy expressed the miracle of how things are held together as well as the implications of an infinitely expanding universe on both microscopic and macroscopic levels” (Bogner and Noever 2001, p. 29). She notes that the “realities of the atomic age, nuclear physics, and space exploration gave his Galaxies special urgency” (Bogner and Noever 2001, p. 29).

- 16 Influential works of avant-garde visual poetics included Mallarmé’s *Un Coup de Dés*, Apollinaire’s *Calligrammes*, Marinetti’s futurist poems guided by his concept of ‘Words-in-Freedom’, Pound’s and Fenellosa’s ideograms, Mina Loy’s *Love Songs*, and poetry inspired by Cubism (Blaise Cendrars, Max Jacob, Pierre Reverdy, W.C. Williams, e.e. cummings), Dada (Kurt Schwitters, Raoul Hausmann), Surrealism (poem-objects of Breton), and Lettrism (Isidore Isou). While extremely various, the visual poems associated with the avant-garde use the innovative spatial layout of words and letters as a means of breaking with conventions of linearity, reference, syntax, punctuation, spelling, and poetic voice; and explore the plastic possibilities of print through play with typography, font, and graphic design.
- 17 Aldan recalled that “Kiesler often spoke about Mallarmé, in fact I was told that he had in the 1920’s and 30’s, he had done a study of Mallarmé and of the word, the visual poem, the placement of the poem on the page, which was a tremendously new concept. [...] I never would have completed the *Coup de Dés*, worked on it so profoundly, if not for Kiesler. I remember that now, he helped me, the layout I took directly from Mallarmé, but he discussed it with me and he helped me with several nuances of the language, of the poem” (Aldan 1970, p. 12). Arguably Aldan’s translation was as important as Olson’s “projective verse” (1950) in positioning the page as an “open field” for experiment, an experiment that Guest would pursue in *The Open Skies* (1962), *The Blue Stairs* (1968), and in “Homage” (1968). Guest’s experiments with visual form were not static, developing and changing over the course of her career, such that her late and early experiments in visual poetics differ stylistically in substantive ways, even as space endured as an important component of her poetic designs.
- 18 On the importance of space as an architectural structure in Guest’s poetry see in particular (Donovan 2009). Donovan argues that Guest’s use of space is primarily but not always visual, and likens Guest’s poems to Gothic structures: “Like the Gothic architects, Guest created a carefully constructed form with very little materials. The effect is a notion of a complete body that verges on transcendence and relies on trace outline, space, light and an echo of the familiar” (n. pag.). Lamm argues that in Guest’s book *Fair Realism*, “images of domestic architecture serve as figures for artistic forms that make dwelling in the imagination imaginative, livable, and just” (Lamm 2013, p. 116). Finberg makes a persuasive case for reading Frank O’Hara’s poems in the context of modernist architectural space and discourse, specifically through their playful subversion of corporate America’s adoption of international style in iconic structures such as the Seagram building: “They are not poems that chronicle the city, but rather should be read as akin to contemporaneous event scores and happenings” (Finberg 2016, p. 115). On poems as architectural structures see also Marsha Bryant’s and Charlie Hailey’s essay for this special issue, particularly the discussion of Wallace Stevens’ “architectural poem” (Bryant and Hailey 2022, p. 5), and Jo Gill’s essay on Hart Crane’s “architectural art” (Gill 2022).
- 19 *In Memory of My Feelings* was published by MoMA after O’Hara’s death in 1967 and reprinted in 2005. Selected and edited by Bill Berkson (1967), this portfolio volume includes 30 of O’Hara’s poems, illustrated with 46 original drawings by thirty of the artists he knew, reproduced by offset lithography on individual sheets. The illustrated poems on unbound sheets of paper were placed in a canvas portfolio. The portfolio, a miniature exhibition, was published to accompany an actual exhibition of the illustrated poems at the MoMA which ran from 5 December 1967 to 28 January 1968. In his Preface, Rene d’Harnoncourt stated, “it was decided that the best way the Museum might honor Frank O’Hara, after his sudden death, would be the publication of a book of his poems decorated by the plastic artists with whom he was associated. This is that book, a homage to the sheer poetry—in all guises and roles—of the man” (1967, n.pag.). The Museum also held a “Frederick J. Kiesler Memorial” exhibition from 31 December 1965–20 March 1966.
- 20 Like Kiesler, Guest was involved in the New York theater scene, writing and staging several plays in the 1960s; this shared interest in theater helped both artists to approach the reception of the artwork in dynamic terms. Correalism suggests a different model of inter-arts engagement than that of conventional ekphrasis, moving closer to collaboration and intermediality. Women poets’ and artists’ collaborative works have received less attention than ekphrastic poetry, but Lundquist in her study of Barbara Guest’s collaborations with Grace Hartigan and Mary Abbott suggests that collaboration provided crucial mutual recognition and support (Lundquist 2001a). Kimberly Lamm argues that Guest’s collaborations with female artists demonstrate an “aesthetic of restraint” that “work toward creating feminist artistic practices among women that exceed struggles with and against male dominance” (Lamm 2013, p. 115). On collaboration in the New York School see (Silverberg 2013); on collaboration in Surrealist circles, see (Hubert 1994). Collaborative works involving women not only commented on and refigured notions of original authorship, but also explored and challenged social relationships defined by gender, sex, race, class, and power (Hubert 1994, pp. 4, 10, 27). In visual-verbal collaborations, patriarchy and its associated hierarchies, including the conventional antagonism between a masculinized word and feminized image, were challenged and opened up: collaboration often served as a means of exploring new configurations of gender and desire, beyond the limits imposed by Breton and the Surrealist movement.
- 21 Webster writes that e.e. cummings, a prominent practitioner of visual poetics, establishes “analogies between the visual, spatial [and syntactic] structure of the [poem] and the kinds of physical, emotional movement evoked” (Webster 1995, p. 121).

- 22 Gerd Zillner also emphasizes the “Galaxy” as a figure for a social-artistic network, noting that “At the end of the 1940s Kiesler began drawing portraits and making the multi-part Galaxy Portraits of his friends” (Bogner and Zillner 2019, p. 39).
- 23 In her orientation towards the future, Guest’s “Homage” revises T.S. Eliot’s modernist model of poetic tradition, even as Guest like Eliot posits the importance of connections that living artists make with the dead; rather than remapping past and present in Eliot’s feedback loop, Guest’s “Homage” connects past and future. Like dead stars (also a favorite metaphor of Eliot), Kiesler’s “Galaxies” continue to illuminate the present and reach out to the future in spatial, social, and artistic terms.
- 24 Kiesler worked for decades on his plan for a Surrealist-inspired “Endless House” that integrated art and everyday life. That the “Endless House” was never built but generated exhibitions, drawings, models, and a book, testifies to its importance less as an established structure than as a formally variable “imaginary museum” capable of generating dream and imagination. On the history and various incarnations of the “Endless House”, see (Bogner and Noever 2001).
- 25 Philip Johnson, the Curator of Architecture at MoMA, also commissioned Kiesler to create a similar “Galaxy” sculpture for the garden of his Glass House in Connecticut (Bogner and Zillner 2019, p. 40). On MoMA’s “white cube” mode of exhibition, see O’Doherty (2000) and Staniszewski (2001).
- 26 The influential history of modernism recorded at the Museum of Modern Art, as Griselda Pollock has commented, “systematically failed to register the intensely visible artistic participation of women in making modernism modern” (Pollock 2010, p. 34). Pollock notes that of the 2052 exhibitions held at MoMA since 1929, 95, or 5%, have focused on women (Pollock 2010, p. 42).
- 27 Penelope Rosemont argues that the early Surrealist movement was male-dominated and many male Surrealists were not feminists, yet they were nevertheless “the irreconcilable enemies of feminism’s enemies, and thus in many ways could be considered feminism’s allies. They concentrated their attacks on the apparatus of patriarchal oppression: God, church, state, family, capital, fatherland, and the military” (Rosemont 1998, p. xlv). Breton idealized women as muse, erotic or romantic ideal, and as a child-like medium to irrational unconscious states, but also “championed the sorceress, vamp, succubus, temptress, seer, sphinx, wanton, outlaw, and dozens of other models of unconventional women” (Rosemont 1998, p. xlvii). Amelia Jones observes “the tendency within surrealism to rationalize in its own fashion—by orienting its explorations toward the ultimate recontainment of femininity, flux, homosexuality, and other kinds of dangerous flows that intrigued the surrealists but which they could not bear to allow to remain unbounded” (Jones 2004, p. 252). The history of Surrealism’s reception by women and other marginalized groups in the U.S. can be seen as a history of resistance to such containment; see (Rosemont and Kelley 2009; Rosenbaum 2012). On women and Surrealism, see (Allmer 2009, 2016; Chadwick 1985; Caws et al. 1991; Conley 1996; Fort and Arcq 2012; Lusty 2007; Hubert 1994; Watz 2020).
- 28 David Hopkins has demonstrated Duchamp’s influence on a generation of queer male artists interested in challenging masculinist modernism after World War II (Hopkins 2007), while Amelia Jones approaches Duchamp not as an authorizing paternal origin but as a figure whose generativeness for postmodernism lies in the readymades’ deconstruction of sexual difference (Jones 1995).
- 29 Kimberly Lamm explores Guest’s poem “Heroic Stages” as a response to Hartigan’s paintings, and argues that “Guest saw both Hartigan and her work as crucial allies in a creative world that lauded the masculinist heroics of abstract expressionism through the criteria of the ‘modern-abstract-contemporary’” (Lamm 2013, pp. 115, 122–24).
- 30 Guest’s revised and condensed “Homage” concludes: “Galaxy! Galaxies! /entering from the moon” (Guest 2003, p. 19). Moving from the singular “Galaxy” to the plural “Galaxies” suggests the ways in which individual “Galaxy” artworks circulate as part of larger “Galaxy” environments, and proliferate through extensions and responses such as Guest’s poem. The later version of “Homage” published in 2003 radically condenses stanzas 3–9, and omits stanzas 10–12 that address the “Galaxy” as a “bartered bride” (Guest 2003, p. 19). Guest subtracted material and this later version is thus more abstract than the 1968 publication. Rather than consider the later poem a final version of the earlier poem, I recommend regarding the two as related but distinct works, parts of a galaxy.
- 31 Loy’s poem can also be read as a response to Duchamp’s *Large Glass* and Man Ray’s photo of a section of the glass (Rosenbaum 2020).
- 32 Du Plessis connects otherworldly space in Guest’s poetry with her “fair realist” adaptation of the Surrealist marvellous (Du Plessis 2006).
- 33 Although ekphrasis is a concept conventionally applied to literature, scholars have approached it in the context of the museum (Heffernan 1993; Bergmann-Loizeaux 2009; Fischer 2006; Paul 2002; Yacobi 2012) and have usefully extended it to film and music (Clüver 1998; Bruhn 2000; Sager Eidt 2008). More generally, scholars of intermediality (crossing borders between media) are using this concept to reconsider and extend understandings of ekphrasis (Eilitta 2012; Rajewski 2005; Yacobi 2012). The context and concept of the collection, gallery, or museum as a kind of architectural, spatial frame that cuts across media, invites us to broaden our approach to ekphrasis by considering ekphrasis as one medium presenting a work in another medium, a self-conscious art of framing that uses and reflects upon generic mixture. Broadening the forms and media of collection that we consider under the rubric of the museum allows us to engage collections that are visionary, imaginative, textual, filmic, digital, virtual, etc. My understanding of “imaginary museums” coincides with Wall-Romana’s understanding of the “cinematic imaginary” as an expansion and transformation of the poetic imagination through new media, primarily the cinema (Wall-Romana 2013, pp. 16–18, 29–30).

- ³⁴ On the relevance of network analysis to a more expansive history of the avant-garde, see Churchill, Kinnahan, and Rosenbaum, “The Biography Project: Loy and her Social Network” (Churchill et al. 2020b); Chinn et al., “Networking the New American Poetry” (Chinn et al. n.d.); and Sturm, “Alice Notley’s Magazines” (Sturm n.d.).

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