Arresting form in time.

Duks Koschitz, born in 1971 in Frankfurt, is an architect, geometer, object artist, professor of Design & Technology at Pratt Institute in New York, and currently a visiting professor at TU Wien. After attending the class of German painter Ben Willikens at the Salzburg Summer Academy he studied architecture at TU Wien and worked in architectural offices in Boston and Los Angeles. During that time, he created objects that focused on visualizing spatial concepts. In 2007 he decided to pursue an artistic path, earned a PhD in Design & Computation at the MIT School of Architecture and Planning in Boston and co-founded 'sparc,' a Design and Research Collective in 2008.

Koschitz's pieces captivate the viewer at first sight. They emerge via the process of folding, developing a unique formal aesthetic depending on the materials he uses – metal, cellulose, and fiber cement. Koschitz explores complex questions at the intersection of architectural and design theory and geometry. Initially, his objects were created with the intention of representing the complex syntax of design processes. Folds play an essential, central role in his art work. While a straight fold is mathematically easy to calculate, curved folds are more complex and, according to Koschitz, remain a relatively 'underexplored topic' in mathematics. They have been the subject of scientific studies, including his own. Even his dissertation focused on folding along two-dimensional curves.

Art provides a perfect medium for working with processes, that at times manifest themselves in moments in space. Moreover, art has an advantage over science – the emotional aspect. As early as 1949, Max Bill stated in his essay 'The Mathematical Way of Thinking in the Art of Our Time' (published in Das Werk: Architecture and Art, No. 36) that human thinking requires visual support: "This support is often found in art, even for mathemati cal thought. Because the artist strives for unity, their vision conveys a synthesis, even if it is initially an artistic necessity rather than mathematical correctness. […] Invisible, abstract thought becomes concrete, tangible, and thus also emotionally perceptible."

Koschitz's objects go beyond theoretical considerations, inevitably incorporating artistic parameters such as haptics, space, surface – and gesture. However, gesture is not inherent to the materials he employs; rather, it requires a deep understanding of industrial materials and a creative yet highly skilled technical approach. Koschitz's folding gestures are particularly striking when multiple objects are presented in dialogue, making the many possibilities of folding a once-flat surface visually apparent. Through soft, curving yet remarkably precise folds, transitions emerge playing with light and shadow. Convex and concave surfaces cause space to twist inward and outward, generating both a physical and an imaginary space that never fully reveals itself to the viewer.

The point of departure for Koschitz's objects is a flat, geometric shape – such as a rectangle, square or ellipse. The decision which curve to apply to a surface is analyzed and sketched in advance, at times with the computer, but primarily using small paper models. The production process does not allow for lengthy workflows. There is only a short time window in which cellulose and fiber cement remain soft enough for folding. 'Trial and error' become the guiding principle, requiring concentration, material expertise and craftsmanship. The necessity of working quickly with the material during production stands in contrast to the prior analytical and theoretical engagement – yet both are interdependent, ultimately leading to remarkable results. And although the folding process remains somewhat unpredictable and irreproducible, the resulting form is never left entirely to chance. Koschitz initially worked with a cellulose-based material reminiscent of cardboard. He was fascinated by its formal qualities but also by its sustainable properties, as it is entirely biodegradable. This introduces an additional conceptual layer to his work, linking materiality with processing techniques. Thus, he does not coat his objects but instead keeps the material as pure as possible – ultimately, also a formal decision. The cellulose material itself exists in a delicate balance between precision, conceptual rigor and tactile sensuality. Since his collaboration with the zs art gallery he has explored new materials such as zinc and fiber cement. Zinc appealed to him because it can be used as a 'pure metal' not as part of an alloy. Both materials are produced as flat sheets and require no additional surface treatment. While fiber cement shares a color family with cellulose but has an entirely different texture, working with metal introduces the possibility of patination, adding a new engagement with color.

A particularly striking – indeed, his most colorful – body of work consists of repurposed traffic signs, some of which he obtained from ASFINAG and MA48. Unlike his abstract, minimalist works, these pieces incorporate symbols that are universally recognizable, designed for rapid visual comprehension. Through Koschitz's manipulation – cutting, rotating, inverting – the symbols are transformed into a new semantic dimension. In addition to his exploration and subversion of existing signs and graphics, these works also emphasize recycling and up-cycling.

Koschitz describes the inherent connection in his work between theory, reductive formal language, and visual form as 'baroque minimalism'. This concept also references French philosopher Gilles Deleuze, who, in his book The Fold: 'Leibniz and the Baroque' (1988), draws on the German polymath Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz. Leibniz used the fold as a complex guiding principle for the Baroque, from the 'folding of matter' to the 'folds of the soul', serving as a metaphor for both inner and outer worlds. Deleuze expanded the notion of the fold as an intellectual space open to interpretation. Similarly, Koschitz's folded objects offer multiple conceptual perspectives: a visual analog to complex scientific considerations distilled into a 'simple form'. Intertwined shapes connect different spaces, continuously shifting between back-, fore-, and middle ground. This results in a surface that is always in dynamic motion, guiding the viewer's gaze along crisp ridges and soft curves – one impulse following the next. The well-structured work challenges ones perception, as if the artist was confronting us with the inherent complexity of life itself.

(Silvie Aigner, 2025)