



Installation view *Lebt und arbeitet in Wien*: Sebastian Koeck: *Improvised balcony*, 1997/2026, Kunsthalle Wien Museumsquartier 2026

Sebastian Koeck

b. 1990, Innsbruck, Austria

British architecture of the 1950s used the term ‘as found’ to describe an approach that derives specific, yet unmediated forms from everyday life. Social patterns were thus made visible with a kind of raw poetry. ‘As found’ refers to picking up on traces of memory that reveal how a place came to be what it is today.

Sebastian Koeck’s artistic practice can be read as a contemporary version of this concept. He is drawn to historically charged material, empty spaces and the anonymous aesthetics of incidental architecture. He transforms spaces into places marked by suggestively narrative traces of former users. Yet these traces – as well as the people who might have left them behind – are largely fictitious and imbued with multi-layered cultural references. As seemingly historical layers, they accumulate personal or at times mythical narratives and invite viewers to explore them collectively. For example, Koeck collaborated with Juan Francisco Vera to present discarded, well-worn office chairs in a warehouse-like constellation as though on hold for some future use (*Three Rooms*, 2020). At the Art Sonje Center in Seoul, he arranged forgotten umbrellas into a still life that appears artificial but could just as easily have resulted from everyday activities (*Foyers*, 2024). *Adder* (2025), on the other hand, was staged in an abandoned school building in Riga using cardboard models of art nouveau houses, found objects and a sound piece broadcast on the thirty-three speakers still left in the school, which the artist mounted in a row. He thus created an indeterminate space between intention and coincidence, present and past.

Koeck’s works often translate what is already there into a different materiality or relocate it in ways that draw attention to its subtle signals.

This also raises an insistent question about what ultimately constitutes an artistic gesture and distinguishes it from the everyday handling of things. The question also informs his attention to what he calls ‘artists by chance’: people whose creative achievements were unintentional and perhaps all the more memorable because of it. Giving them visibility without illustrating them is one of the paths he proposes. In 2023, amateur cave explorer Floyd Collins – a forgotten pioneer of his field – inspired Koeck to transform the Ve.sch exhibition space.

This resulted in works that modify what already exists, imbue it with narratives and transform it into structured atmospheres for what is absent or overlooked. Ultimately, Koeck’s artistic approach is like an open-ended process of searching that gathers and combines objects and impressions in order to open new spaces for communication shared with the viewer. The audience is invited to participate in searching for what may have occurred or what might have produced the visible result. Investigative curiosity is rewarded.

For this reason, Koeck has for years collected laminated slips with the phrase ‘I’ll buy your car’, which car resellers tuck under windshield wipers in order to attract prospective clients. They are acts of communication without any specific addressee, improvised gestures within a system where everything can be granted a second life while still speaking eloquently of its first. Shifted into the exhibition context, this ‘as found’ approach acquires a decidedly artistic form that remains a fragment of real life.

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