

## Constructed happiness (Tallinn, 20–21 May 04)

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International conference

CONSTRUCTED HAPPINESS

The Domestic Environment in the Cold War Era

20-21 May 2004

The divided world of East and West after World War II, was constantly, either openly or covertly, ready to clash. An important feature of this rivalry was the promise of happiness – who can build a more prosperous life for their citizens, either the communist East or the capitalist West? One of the primary sites for this happiness to appear was in the home – the private sphere and the domestic environment. Could these new homes bring the expected happiness?

The conference addresses this politically and ideologically controversial period from the everyday level through the domestic environment as one of the central topics in the genesis of modern architecture. Focusing on the domestic environment of the Cold War era as a multidimensional social space we will look at the intertwined network of power relations, islands of private life and the unseen barriers and prescribed identities that homes contain.

### \* Building industry and the society

Mass housing and the industrialisation of the building process in the post-war years was seen as an opportunity for overall improvement of the living environment. Simultaneously, the private builder carried out a mass urbanisation outside the confines of the city centres. What were the differences in regard to the image of the ideal home and public housing schemes between the East and the West? What were the different means for financing them?

### \* Barriers, borders, identities

In addition to seen physical boundaries that define spaces and operate in houses, homes are structured by unseen orders of social relations, gender representations and power networks. Together they define the conventions of the domestic everyday. This leads to questions on the relationship

between the housing industry and its imagined subject, on the constructed architectonics of the family and the architecture of the home. Also, what kind of identities, gendered spaces and new territorialisations evolved in different cultural contexts?

\* Islands of private life

The retreat into the private sphere is generally considered as a strategy for staying outside the reach of the ideological public life. In the Cold War climate the private sphere acquired significance as a site of pretended autonomy, of tactical gestures slipping through the fingers of big politics. Was such a concentration on the private sphere impelled by political distress or the radically transformed living environment? Was the private sphere a site for resistance or a place for escape?

The conference wishes to gather together the different experiences of the home environment and the everyday during the long period of the Cold War (1947-1989), to combine different disciplinary understandings and to bring together scholars from both sides of the former East - West divide.

PROGRAMME

THURSDAY, May 20

9.00-9.30

Conference registration

9.30

Official opening

by Ando Keskküla, Rector, Estonian Academy of Arts

Introduction

by prof. Mart Kalm, Head of the Institute of Art History, Estonian Academy of Arts

Hilde Heynen

"The Jargon of Authenticity. Modernism and its (Non)political Position"

David Crowley

"The Public Life of Private Spaces: The Uses of the Home in Poland after 1956"

12.00-13.00 Lunch

13.00

Session I

Dmitrii Sidorov

"Corporate Re-Scaling of the City: The Geographical Construction of Urban Lightscapes in Soviet and Post-Soviet Moscow"

Jeremy Morris

"The Kitchen Space Reflected in Russian-Soviet Literature"

Susan E. Reid

"Our Kitchen is Wonderful"

Yulia Gradskova

"Beauty Norms and Ideals in Women's Everyday Life in the Post-War Russia"

Discussion

Session II

Julian Holder

"Happiness is a Prefab. Modernism, Domesticity, and the Embarrassing Success of the First Post-War Housing Campaign in Britain"

Maarit Kaipainen

"Smooth Construction, Comfortable Rooms, Cozy Communities"

13.40-14.00 Lorenzo Secchiari "The External Spaces and the Services as Sign of Quality of Life in the INA Casa Quarter of San Leonardo in Massa"

Discussion

14.40-15.10 Coffee break

Anna Minta

"The Authority of the Ordinary: Building Socialism and the Ideology of Domestic Space"

Michelle Provoost

"The Liberal Dream of Progress and How It Got to Be Built"

Leonardo Diaz-Borioli

"Cultural Assumptions of Mexican Tropical Resort Architecture: An Other-way close to home."

Aino Niskanen

"The late 1960's Young Generation of Architects: Ideals of Housing, Homes and Leisure-time"

Discussion

16.45-17.35

Film about architect Hugh Maaskant (author Jord den Hollander, 2003).

FRIDAY, May 21

10.00

Adrian Forty

"Concrete Interiors"

Monique Eleb

"Petits bonheurs dans la "maison du 3e type" ou dans le HLM"

12.00-13.00 Lunch

13.00

Session I

Jaak Poom

"Housing Policy In Sweden 1945-2000"

Janis Lejnieks

"Living in Latvia. 1944-1991. Shift in Time and Space"

Asdis Olafsdottir

"The Big Chess-Board. Domestic Environment in Iceland at the Time of the 1972 Chess World Championship"

Irene Cieraad

"The Cold War on the Home Front: the Dutch Post-War Modern Movement Goed Wonen"

Discussion

Session II

Anu Kannike

"Negotiating Privacy: Individual Strategies and Cultural Change in Soviet Estonia"

Kirsi Saarikangas

"On the Edges of the Forest. Planning for the Best of the Women and Children"

Marija Dremaite

"Escaping from Soviet Uniformity: Alternative Housing Projects in Soviet Lithuania in the 1960's"

Discussion

14.40-15.10 Coffee break

Liina Jänes

"Kolkhoz-Village as a Promise of Happiness. A New Type of Settlement in Estonian Rural Architecture"

Juraj Podoba

"The House as a Symbol of Real Socialist Welfare: The Case of Rural Slovakia"

Carola Ebert

"Into the Great Wide Open. The Bungalow in 1960's West-Germany between Housing Industry and Stately Representation"

Raphaëlle Saint-Pierre

"Happiness in French Houses of the Fifties"

Discussion and concluding panel moderated by Jean-Louis Cohen.

Reception buffet in the Tallinn City Hall The organisers reserve the right to change the programme

Reference:

CONF: Constructed happiness (Tallinn, 20-21 May 04). In: ArtHist.net, Apr 17, 2004 (accessed Mar 30, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/26308>>.