

Living Space – Unusual Experience

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Damage from WWII generated the 'zero space', in which it was easy to introduce the modern revolution in the sphere of urban planning. On the Eastern side of the 'Iron Curtain' ideas, leftist in their assumptions, were willingly taken up by communistic authorities to realize purposes of social engineering. Moreover, in the time of dramatic shortage of apartments, reasons of economy caused adverse circumstances for industrially produced large-scale tower blocks (projects often resulted from a radical reduction of modern paradigms). Regulated by the state policy, introduced by authorities, they became the only obligatory model of living space for the generation, who lived in the 2nd half of the 20th century. Such assumptions as: 1) needs of the man can be standardized; 2) it is enough to raise the level of hygiene of a place, in which the man lives to solve his basic existential problems; 3) the modern man will satisfy his mental needs in the public space and not in the retreat of an own apartment, in a family circle; caused that the built flats were little, with very limited privacy and instead large squares, playgrounds, sport halls and theatre-cinema halls were proposed. Such policy brought about a fact that the life of inhabitants of tower blocks were put to everyday inconvenience.

The experience of the last several years brings a reflection that there is no fixed paradigm of the city. Political and economical changes in Central and Eastern Europe after 1989 and the opening of the free market economy brought about a formation of a new (in this part of Europe) model of the contemporary city – a so called 'insular city plan'. This relieves from planning the city as the entirety and confines itself to a development of small areas resembling islands, designed with growing perfection, while other parts of the city vanish from the field of interest. A rapid development of the private market of flat building bore fruits in the form of the abandonment of tower blocks estates by part of those dwelling there. These created the new social class of private businessmen. Their fast growing affluence allowed them the realization of a dream characteristic for this generation: about possession of an owned house with a garden. Rows of identical houses, surrounded by straight mowed lawns (so called 'American dream housing model') became characteristic for the suburban satellite districts. There are also other resolutions like modern, small dwelling estates of a high standard equipped with recreation areas, underground parking places, security systems and often gated – the so called 'gated communities'. In this situation the estates of tower buildings became 'urban ghettos', where the only ones staying are those for whom improving life conditions is beyond the means. At the same time green areas shrink or are liquidated in these areas - so far their biggest advantages. Their value is now estimated not from the point of view of their social assets, but they're calculated according to their market value. In accordance with the criterion the functioning of these areas as places for free usage by dwellers of the estate, seems to be groundless. This is why authorities, with no hesitation usually drastically limit their size or mean them for sale. In this way sports grounds and playgrounds disappear and

shopping centers or private buildings take their place. Former kilns and social clubs are rented out to anybody who is ready to pay rent for them. Therefore real estates of this type become places where one can only find modest accommodation but is unable to satisfy higher needs.

The exhibition is an attempt to pose the question once again about the living space: what it means to us; along with what kind of value system we shape it; how a relation to it takes turns under the influence of the global change in spheres of the politics, the economy or the climate. If we question the ideas of modernists, where we can search for ideas that can be proposals worthy of being taken under the consideration in our time? We plan that the exhibition will be a platform to present international artists and architects, who work on creating alternative concepts of human habitat.

Born in Poland, presently living in Montreal, Canada, artist **Ana Rewakowicz** presents two of her projects related to the nomadic model of life, uncertainty as a notion characteristic for our time. The starting point for her project *SleepingBagDress Prototype2* was developed in the 60s by the Archigram group concept of 'clothes for dwelling'. Rewakowicz's project consists of a multipurpose kimono-dress that, when inflated changes into a cylindrical container inhabitable by one or two people. The project was presented in Mexico City, Brussels, Toulouse, Tallinn and as part of the International Symposium of Electronic Art (ISEA 2004). During the exhibition we present the object itself as well as the video documentation from actions realized with the use of it.

SR-Hab (Socially Responsive Habitat) is the next project of the same artist, which we show during the exhibition. It is a mobile prototype habitat attached to a bike. It uses the energy produced by the sun or human work - pedaling. The artist realized this project in collaboration with the students of the Mechanical Engineering Department of McGill University in Montreal. It was presented publicly in Montreal in April 2010 and in Finland in July 2010, until now.

The city as a resource is a problem, on which a couple of German artists - **Folke Koebberling&Martin Kaltwasser** - concentrates. Their activities include installations, exhibitions and interventions in the city space, through which they try to question the city life in a context of the privatization and economization. On the exhibition a video recording is presented, documenting the project *Hybridraum. Seven instructions for the city of today*. It was made by artists in 2006-2007. It consisted in the implementation of a number of actions realized in the public space of Berlin's district Hansaviertel. These actions were an attempt to adapt concepts developed by modernists in the 1960s, to our times. They indicate the potential, which is the public space in the lives of residents.

Among instructions introduced for the realization, there was an exchange of unwanted items between people; an attempt to create a common space where residents of the settlement could spend their free time; an initiative to put a bench on the yard again, which was removed in the event of homeless people who used to sit on it; a call for the widespread use of urban lawns as a common space for camping etc.

Because of the ease with which it's possible to create a space almost immediately and in any place, containers have become a kind of 'icon of globalism'. Artists and architects use them to create a mobile exhibition space, as well as more and more to create housing architecture (see <http://www.fabprefab.com/fabfiles/containerbayhome.htm>).

A project of American architectonic studio **Jones, Partners: Architecture - Pro/Con** *Package Housing System* is a proposal of an alternative architectonic resolution that depends on the adaptation of after-market containers. They can be stacked depending on specific conditions, site contingencies, or to respond the changing needs of clients – challenging the impulse towards small mansions or wasteful schemes that seem to characterize so much suburban development these days.

The system allows you to create normal homes, which meet all the necessary functions. They can be equipped with rooms of varying nature, with kitchens and bathrooms and the resulting buildings are visually attractive. Because containers are the basic building modules of the system and they are already in its function designed for transport, their transfer, even over long distances, is no problem. An additional advantage of this system is the speed of execution. From order to completion usually doesn't take more than four months. In that time the necessary formalities are handled, transportation and assembly on site. Houses constructed like these are cheap!

The basis of the structure of houses designed by the studio Jones, Partners: Architecture are the containers 20'ISO, which are compiled and linked together in various configurations. Another element, which constitutes an architectural shape of the proposed houses, is the space between the containers put to a simple framework, created with the technology available on the spot by contractors. In this way the projects for homes are designed, which can be used for plots in the urban wasteland, suburban areas, on a farm or in the desert. Combining advanced technology and functionality, they echo Le Corbusier's concept of home as the 'machine for dwelling'.

One of the best Polish architectonic studios, **KWK PROMES**, presents its project *standard hOuse* realised in 2009. Thanks to its round shape it is suitable for any plot. It is addressed to people, who look for a modern dwelling, which, at the same time, is built with use of traditional materials. The *standard hOuse* is economical whilst satisfying all the needs related to the comfort and safety of people who live in it. Its energy economy, very close to the idea of the passive architecture, was achieved thanks to its specific shape (a cylinder). It's an application of mechanical ventilation with the retrieval of heat (recuperation) and the system of warming up water with a use of solar energy. Its interior can be freely shaped since none of the internal walls is a carrier.

At the exhibition, we present a model of the house built in Pszczyna and a documentary film, about it, directed by Tomasz Baron.

Finnish artist **Jan-Erik Andersson** presents an idea of his project *Life on a Leaf*. Realised in a collaboration with the architect Erkki Pitkäranta in 2009, the project explored the possibility of building an individual house on a plan of a leaf. Andersson, inspired by the ideas of Art

Nouveau, treats the architecture as a total work which draws elements from nature, fairy tales, art and interviews with prospective users of the proposed buildings. Like artists and theorists of Art Nouveau, Andersson believes that the house is to be a shelter for the soul, in opposition to the modernists' concept of the house-machine.

The architectural shape of the artist's house was inspired by fairy tales. The title leaf arrived from Stockholm in the sixteenth century and landed on the window at Turku Castle when King Erik was imprisoned there. The glass inside was steamy, so the king drew a heart on it. Then the leaf was detached and flew to the plot, in which the artist has put his house. Its foundations are in the shape of the leaf, and the front window is in the form of the heart. Other elements of the house have their roots in various fairy tales. For example, a motif of rotten apples on the floor in the living room, the form of concrete feet on the ceiling or the forest bell on the top of the roof. The documentation of the process of the construction of this house as well as its present functioning allows viewers an insight into this unusual architecture. Its final shape results not only from the ideas of Jan-Erik Andersson and Erkki Pitkäranta, but also of many international artists who participated in the joint creation of this work.

Two Finnish artists, **Lea and Pekka Kantonen** will present their multimedia installation *Studio Entrance Hall*, which is part of a complex project, on which they have worked since 2008 and which has been a reflection on the living space. The title entrance hall is a place for taking off and putting on shoes and outdoor clothes, watching oneself in the mirror, combing hair, speaking on the phone, welcoming and saying goodbye and for other kinds of encounters often accidental and provisional. Its function is always the same, even if the orders of the other rooms are changed when the family size grows or diminishes.

The installation *Studio Entrance Hall* consists of household appliances and three projections on transparent screens. The home space is shown on film as the movement of rhythms and stoppages. In this way the video shows the two-directional relationship between members of the family and the home space and vice versa. Thus the work invites people to discuss ontological questions - how we live, move and behave in our home circumstances. Artists want to present home as a space of constant reconstruction and change. Home for them does not mean only staying in one place, but also includes travel, visits, displacements and communication.

In conclusion: in each of the projects submitted, the optimal living space is another philosophical concept. For Folke Köbberling and Martin Kaltwasser is not only the interior of the house, but it's also the space, which is outside and is to serve to the social communication. For Ana Rewakowicz it is important that the house is mobile and every wanderer can take it with him/her. The studio Jones, Partners: Architecture designs ecological houses, easy to transport and installation in all conditions. Similarly, KWK PROMES proposes a modern house, which is well typed in each place. For Jan-Erik Andersson it is to be derived from stories. According to Lea and Pekka Kantonen, home is not confined to the interior, its idea includes also daily routes as well as encountered people, who became a common experience of their family. Thus, the living space is to be fixed or variable, ascetically modest or full of ornaments, closed or open. It is impossible to make everybody happy by creating a universally applicable model of it. Long live individuality!

