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# AN EASTERN EUROPE VISION

International committee for  
**documentation and conservation**  
of buildings, sites and neighbourhoods of the  
**modern movement**

Journal 59 - 2018/02



ARCH. WEINWURM A VÉCSÉI.

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On the cover: Friedrich Weinwurm and Ignác Vécsei, Housing complex *Unitas*, Bratislava, Slovakia, 1930. Drawing of the living space.

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Journal 60 is scheduled for March 2019. Authors who would like to contribute to this issue are kindly invited to contact

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- All texts must be in English; if translated, the text in the original language must be enclosed as well.
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Books: Nikolaus Pevsner, *Pioneers of Modern Design: From William Morris to Walter Gropius*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1960.  
Articles: Julius Posener, "Aspects of the Pre-History of the Bauhaus", *From Schinkel to the Bauhaus*, London, A.A., 1972, 43-48.

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For figure captions, the order of information is: designer, name of building or object, location, date, description, source. If a building has been destroyed, include that information.

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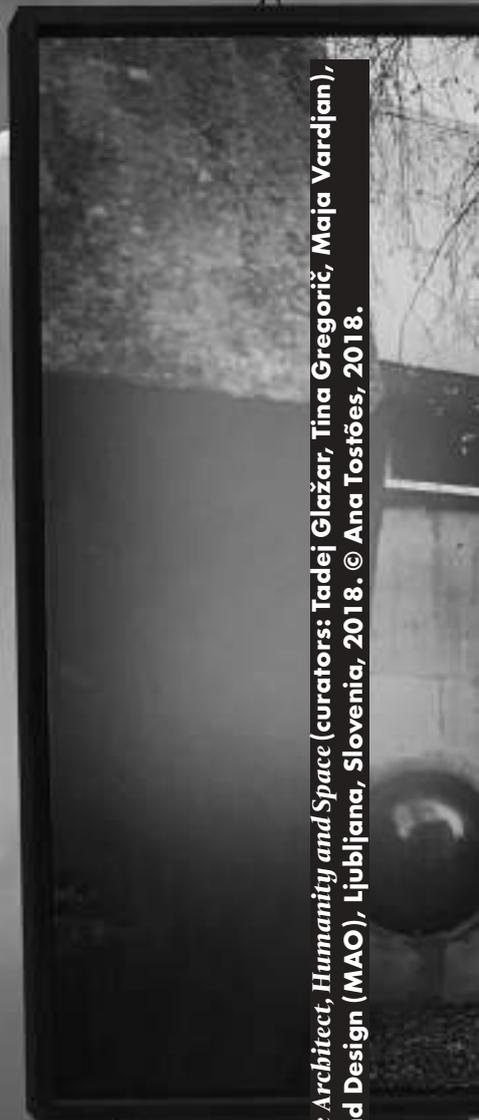
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Photo 1: Interior of the MAO, 1970

Photo 2: Interior of the MAO, 2018

Architectural changes in response to the needs of the MAO  
The MAO is a building that has undergone a complete renovation in 2018.  
The renovation was carried out by the MAO team.



Exhibition *Stanko Kristl, the Architect, Humanity and Space* (curators: Tadej Glazar, Tina Gregorič, Maja Vardijan),  
Museum of Architecture and Design (MAO), Ljubljana, Slovenia, 2018. © Ana Tostões, 2018.



MAO  
The MAO is a building that has undergone a complete renovation in 2018. The renovation was carried out by the MAO team.



## Towards a fresh reading of MoMo historiography

While visiting the MAO (Museum of Architecture and Design) in Ljubljana one can appreciate the architectural power of Stanko Kristl's work<sup>1</sup>. The impressive buildings of this Slovenian architect revealed through the exhibition *Humanity and Space*, illuminate the beauty of the museum space with some astonishing works and show why Eastern Europe deserves to be included in the historiography of the Modern Movement, to clearly demonstrate the contribution of Iron Curtain countries to the modern *avant-garde*. As Matevž Čelik recognizes, "through his architecture he worked to provide responses to the needs of the people — for whom it was intended. This basic premise served as a guiding principle in experiments and his search for spatial and social innovation in architecture."<sup>2</sup>

Given the scope of the 15<sup>th</sup> International **docomomo** Conference — "Metamorphosis. The Continuity of Change", which took place at Cankarjev Dom (by Edvard Ravnikar, 1960–1980), in Ljubljana, Slovenia, on 28–31 August 2018, this subject is definitely on the **docomomo** agenda. The theme of this 59<sup>th</sup> **docomomo** Journal challenges us to reinterpret the modern architecture of Eastern Europe.

During the last few years, authors and editors such as Philip Meuser<sup>3</sup> have been recounting a new history that includes the modern architectural legacy of former USSR and other Eastern European countries. The recently opened MoMA exhibition *Toward a Concrete Utopia: Architecture in Yugoslavia, 1948–1980*<sup>4</sup> and Ákos Moravansky's (ed.) monograph trilogy *East West Central: Re-building Europe*<sup>5</sup>, published last year, are some of the freshest contributions to this movement towards what one might call the rethinking of MoMo historiography.

This DJ focuses on understanding the buildings, projects, personalities and phenomena located at this intersection of a world divided between the capitalist West and the socialist East. The dynamic of changing conditions in Eastern Europe countries contributed specific features to Modern Movement architecture and its local legacies. Bringing together narratives of scholars from the Czech Republic, Hungary, Serbia, Slovakia and Slovenia, this collection of texts is an overview devoted to modern architecture in some of the countries of the former Eastern bloc.

In this issue, diversified reflections are presented: from essays dedicated to collective *habitare*, such as housing

blocks in the former Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, where the hotel typology is also explored; from WWII Memorials in Yugoslavia to interventions in emblematic public building, such as the intervention in the Slovak National Gallery and the restoration of the New Synagogue in Zilina; or the question of preserving industrial complexes in Slovenia. In Hungary, the historiography of post-war modern architecture is portrayed, and its inter-war architecture is also revisited in connection with the interpretation of the diffusion of the Modern Movement made by the local journal *Tér és Forma*. Finally, there is place for discussion about architects and their masterworks, as the Slovak architect Friedrich Weiwurm and the Slovenian architect Edvard Ravnikar.

These examples of the Eastern European architectural *avant-garde*, often forgotten outside of the region for which were original designed, can now be brought to light and provoke new narratives. It is expected that coverage of these pioneering approaches will be further extended to a broader geographical area in a later DJ issue.

**docomomo** is grateful to Henrieta Moravčíková for accepting the challenge to be guest editor of this DJ, and the authors for generously having shared their research. Due to their commitment and meticulous work, it is possible to present this Journal, which addresses the legacy of Eastern Europe architecture and its future.

### Notes

- 1 Exhibition *Stanko Kristl, the Architect, Humanity and Space* (curators: Tadej Glažar, Tina Gregorič, Maja Vardjan), MAO, Ljubljana, Slovenia, 19 December 2018–30 September 2018. © Ana Tostões, 2018.
- 2 Matevž Čelik, "Foreword", in *Stanko Kristl, arhitekt. Humanost in prostor / Stanko Kristl, arhitekt. Humanity and Space*, Ljubljana, MAO, 2018. From the MAO see also: Bogo Zupančič, *Plečnikovi študenti in drugi jugoslovanski arhitekti v Le Corbusierovem ateljeju*, Ljubljana, MAO, 2017; Janez Kresal, *Edo Mibevc - Izbrana Dela*, Ljubljana, MAO, 2016.
- 3 Philip Meuser and Dimitrij Zadorin, *Towards a Typology of Soviet Mass Housing: Prefabrication in the USSR 1955–1991*, Berlin, DOM Publishers, 2016; Philip Meuser, *Seismic Modernism: Architecture and Housing in Soviet Tashkent*, Berlin, DOM Publishers, 2016.
- 4 Exhibition *Toward a Concrete Utopia: Architecture in Yugoslavia*, MoMA, New York, US, MoMA, 10 July 2018 – 13 January 2019 (see p. 88).
- 5 Ákos Moravánszky, Torsten Lange, Judith Hopfengärtner, Karl Kegler (ed.), *East West Central: Re-building Europe 1950–1990*, Basel, Birkhauser Architecture, 2016.

## Is there still something behind the Iron Curtain? Documentation and conservation of Modernism in former Eastern Europe

BY HENRIETA MORAVČÍKOVÁ

Last year, three volumes of the Monograph *East West Central Re-building Europe* were published, where Ákos Moravansky outlined the possibility of reinterpreting European architectural historiography<sup>1</sup>. He drew attention to new processes, phenomena and contexts in the history of 20<sup>th</sup> century modern architecture. Through the mosaic of texts, the European architectural scene of the last century has been brought to the fore as a complex and still undiscovered structure. Although many 20<sup>th</sup> century phenomena have seen comparisons made across the European continent, divided by the former Iron Curtain for a half of the century, there is still room for confrontation and reconciliation. Firstly, because research continues, new contexts are emerging, the perspective of evaluation and the perception of the heritage of Modernism is changing, but also because, in addition to the artificial political structure of the Iron Curtain, which has disappeared along with the disappearance of the Eastern and Western Blocs, a number of constructs such as the territorial or thematic marginalization of parts of European architectural historiography remain to be overcome. After a long period of focusing on iconic personalities and works of architecture it is time to concentrate on thematic research, which will illustrate connections and differences in the Modern Movement of Europe and worldwide. In the sense of this ambition the sense of this tradition, our aim is to draw attention to personalities, works, phenomena, or processes that have so far failed to gain traction in international discourse but which we nevertheless consider important in relation to a comprehensive view of history and the protection of modern architecture.

**docomomo** International can be considered as one of the first, if not the first, platforms to offer a place, after the fall of the Iron Curtain, to an equal approximation of the research positions of former Western and Eastern Europe.

This trend is obvious within the activities of scholars gathered in frame of the **docomomo** international. Since early 1990s they have prepared several international conferences, exhibitions and publications discussing common topics and intentionally crossing the former iron curtain. Lets mention some monothematic issues of international peer reviewed journals such as the British *The Journal of Architecture*, the Slovakian *Architektúra & Urbanizmus* or the Polish journal *Herito*. One of the

very first initiatives came from the side of the journal *Architektúra & Urbanizmus* in 2003<sup>2</sup>. Based on the results of the international project *Modern Movement Neighbourhood Cooperation*, the editorial board prepared a monothematic issue focused on modern concepts of living and work illustrated by examples from Finish Sunila, Italian Ivrea, Danish Bellevue and Slovak Baťa town Partizánske. In 2009 French scholar Carmen Popescu edited an issue of *The Journal of Architecture* that was devoted to the architecture of the former Communist Bloc<sup>3</sup>. Only one year later the issue of the journal *Architektúra & Urbanizmus* dedicated to the problems of protection and restoration of Modern Movement architecture was published. Under the title “Modern Architecture as Heritage”, the leading scholars from seven **docomomo** chapters presented the latest state of art in their countries<sup>4</sup>. In 2012 “Mass Housing” was thematised by the same journal bringing together current research results in ten European countries. The Polish journal *Herito* published by the International Cultural Centre in Krakow focuses regularly on topics that reflect the common European cultural heritage of 20<sup>th</sup> century. Lets mention the Number 17-18 titled “Cold War Modern Architecture” or the Number 22-23 with the title “The City as a Work of Art”<sup>5</sup>.

For the first time after the fall of Iron Curtain in the late 1980s **docomomo Journal** is completely devoted to the research, documentation and conservation of works of modern architecture in the countries of former Eastern bloc. Texts written by scholars from Czech Republic, Hungary, Serbia, Slovakia and Slovenia give readers the opportunity to learn about the state of the art in the field of architecture historiography and monument protection of the Modern Movement in these countries. Reviews of books and exhibitions even underline the variety and richness of the research carried out in Eastern European countries. It is obvious that these investigations and presentations are closely related with the general discussion on the Modern Movement. A strong need for completing and deepening the knowledge in the field of Modern Movement historiography, new interest in biographical research and the social context of architecture characterize a number of the presented studies. We should mention the remarkable investigation of the generally less-known Hungarian architectural journal *Tér és Forma* by Pál Ritoók and Ágnes

Sebestyén. That journal has shaped the local discussion on the Modern Movement in interwar Hungary and, although it only lasted a decade, it influenced Hungarian architecture historiography of a whole century. Interesting for the international audience might be the process of rediscovering of life and work of the architect Friedrich Weinwurm. Weinwurm used to be an influential personality of the Modern Movement in Central Europe, but was nearly completely forgotten after the WWII. Worth mentioning also is the research on the extraordinary achievements of Czech architecture in the process of modernist occupation of the landscape in the 1960s and 1970s done by Petr Vorlík.

Nevertheless, there is a considerable number of investigations included in this issue that reach slightly beyond the general discussion. It is visible especially in the case of topics that arose from local contexts, as, for example, the underestimation of post-war Modernism because of its relation with the era of socialism, the overestimation of the liberal economy and free market in the field of monument protection or the general lack of public finances. These contexts generated specific local positions and solutions that might be either inspiring or rather deterrent.

As an inspiring and promising local solution we should mention the conversion of the synagogue (Peter Behrens, 1931) to a gallery and concert hall in the Slovak town of Žilina based on voluntary work and fundraising. The strategy of conservation as an “open work” that was applied there, and as discussed in the contribution by Katarína Haberlandová, could serve as an inspiration for other endangered works of architecture lacking the resources for a standard conservation process. We should also stress the series of investigations on social and mass housing introducing, not only the regional histories of this phenomenon, but also its original and contemporary social background. This is especially obvious in the actual social conditions of mass housing projects in post-communist countries which represent an important counterpart to the discussions on this topic in the West. Most striking among these examples is the city of New Belgrade that represents a unique completed effort to build a new socialist city using the tools of Modernism and the planned economy. Jelica Jovanović discusses in her contribution whether and how such a project could be sustainable in the current neoliberal context. More doubts on the future of another typical product of Modernism — collective housing — are expressed in the study of Czech architecture by historian Hubert Gúzik. He argues that this unique legacy is paradoxically denied both from the side of socialist and liberal elites. The same goes for the architecture of post-war Modernism in all of the post-communist countries that generally represents marginalized or endangered heritage. One of the most exciting parts of the postwar heritage of post-communist countries are the memorial sites of national liberation that were built after 1945 under the ideological curatorship of the Communist party. This is especially the case in the former Yugoslavia where they are not only manifestations of a particular ideology but also of the strong movement of modern abstraction in art and architecture. Despite this fact,

these monuments are generally neglected and ignored, as Vladana Putnik Prica and Nenad Lajbenšperger posit it in their article. Nevertheless, there are already examples of successful conservation and renewal of postwar modernist architecture behind the former Iron Curtain. One of them might be the iconic complex of the Slovak National Gallery in Bratislava (Vladimír Dedeček, 1979) that is currently undergoing restoration. Slovak architecture historian, Peter Szalay, discusses in his essay the challenges and pitfalls of this process.

In most of the countries of former Eastern Europe industrial architecture has also been recognized as a part of the cultural heritage only recently. Slovenian architect Sonja Ifko focuses on the slow change of the status of industrial heritage and illustrates this process with some cases of successful adaptive reuse.

Despite the many new discoveries, interesting insights and good examples, most of the contributions are accompanied by a certain scepticism that grows out of the discontinuity of social development and unstable research conditions in this region. This feeling of frustration is most present in the text of well-known Hungarian scholar András Ferkai, who argues that Hungarian Modern Movement architecture is of no interest to anyone, neither to a local nor an international audience. Despite this typical Central European scepticism, we have to state that this monothematic issue could be understood as a confirmation of an important assumption regarding the character of the Modern Movement. All of the manifestations of the Modern Movement discovered or rediscovered behind the former Iron Curtain confirm the position of the Modern Movement as a solid and very European phenomenon.

#### Notes

- 1 Ákos Moravánszky and Judith Hopfengärtner (ed.), *Re-Humanizing Architecture, New Forms of Community, 1950–1970*, Bazilej, Birkhäuser Verlag, 2017; Ákos Moravánszky and Karl R. Kogler (ed.), *Re-Scaling the Environment, New Landscapes of Design, 1960–1980*, Bazilej, Birkhäuser Verlag, 2017; Ákos Moravánszky and Torsten Lange (ed.), *Re-Framing Identities, Architecture's Turn to History, 1970–1990*, Bazilej, Birkhäuser Verlag, 2017.
- 2 “Modern Concepts of Living and Work”, *Architektúra & Urbanizmus*, n. 3-4, Bratislava, 2003, 82-218.
- 3 “Behind the Iron Curtain: architecture in the former Communist Bloc”, *The Journal of Architecture*, n. 1, London, 2009, 1-160.
- 4 “Modern Architecture as Heritage”, *Architektúra & Urbanizmus*, n. 3-4, 2010, 180-387.
- 5 “Cold War Modern Architecture”, *Herito*, n. 17-18, Krakow, 2015, 1-308. “The City as a Work of Art”, *Herito*, n. 22-23, Krakow, 2016, 1-350.

#### Henrieta Moravčíková

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## Residence: Prefab Estate; Plans, Realization, Housing 1945-1989

Exhibition at the Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague  
Prague, Czech Republic, 24 January – 20 May 2018

In his book *The Magic of Thinking Big* (1959), David Schwartz argues that for successful implementation of ideas it is important “to see what can be, not just what already is”. It was precisely this attitude that could be distinguished behind the original idea of mass housing and the idealistic view of completely changed living conditions of the people and of a new society encouraged the immense amount of mass housing on Europe. It was again thinking big that motivated the initiators of the extensive research project *Prefabricated Housing Estates in the Czech Republic as Part of the Urban Environment: An Evaluation and Presentation of Their Housing and Living Potential*. The project was implemented by the Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague in the years 2013–2017 and its participants included three dozen historians of architecture and arts, urbanists and architects, journalists, photographers, a culture theorist, a social geographer, an anthropologist and a demographer. The research resulted in three extensive books, a website with an archive, a map capturing selected residential complexes in the form of a digital atlas, and an exhibition that was held from January 24 till May 20, 2018 at the Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague.

In the past decade, the heritage of European mass housing has become the subject of architectonic and historical research and a theme of a whole range of conferences, journal articles and book titles. It is a phenomenon that remarkably interconnects the European continent, even crossing the former Iron Curtain. It is the European dimension of the reflection on mass housing and the fact that it was conducted in the united European cultural space that enables identifying the common starting points of mass housing development, comparing its development trajectories in the former Western and Eastern Blocs, and revealing the universal spatial or operational models of housing estates as well as the differences in construction technology and the social context of the estates. All contemporary researchers agree that the ideas of the interwar European architectonic *avant-garde*

were the decisive impulse for postwar industrialized housing development. However, the researchers also wanted to identify the local impulses and specifics of this phenomenon.

This effort was pioneered by **docomomo** International, especially its committee on urbanism and landscape, which initiated the first *Trash or Treasure* conference addressing the theme of mass housing development as a potential issue. In 2008, a thematic issue of the *docomomo Journal* with the title *Mass Housing East and West* was published. In September 2011, the *Postwar Mass Housing International Conference* was held at the University of Edinburgh, followed by the monothematic issue of the magazine *Architektúra & Urbanizmus* 3–4/2012, which introduced multiple European research initiatives. Finally, two more thematic issues of the *docomomo Journal* – 2/2014 and 1/2016 presented the latest research on mass housing in a worldwide context.

However, there were even earlier publications with the ambition of mapping the development of postwar mass housing. The majority of them were in the form of guides

or atlases. The very first publication of this kind was probably *The Amsterdam Social Housing Atlas* (Architecture & Natura Press, 1992). Two years later, Stefan Muthesius and Miles Glendinning published a similar title including 400,000 realizations of postwar social housing development in the UK (*Modern Public Housing in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland*, Yale University Press, 1994). The history of the French grand estates was presented by Frédéric Dufaux, Annie Fourcaut and Rémi Skoutelsky's book *Faire l'histoire des grands ensembles. Bibliographie 1950–1980* (ENS Éditions, 2003). This approach was taken up in mapping mass housing developments in Slovakia's capital *Bratislava: Atlas of Mass Housing* (Slovart, 2011), which was the very first publication of this kind in Eastern Europe. However, the immediate predecessor of the recently concluded Czech project was Kimberly Zarecor's research, which resulted in the book *Manufacturing a Socialist Modernity: Housing in Czechoslovakia, 1945–1960* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011).

### The big exhibition

*Residence: Prefab Estate; Plans, Realization, Housing 1945–1989* was an extensive and thematically exhaustive exhibition. The main line provided a chronological record of the development of ideas concerning the construction of large residential structures. It started with the ideological prehistory in the form of the renowned analysis of the housing situation in the first Czechoslovak Republic by Jiří Kroha and ended with a critical reflection on prefab estates and an attempt at their humanization in the form of the architectonic exhibition *Urbanita* organized



01 The first room of the exhibition was devoted to the starting points of the prefabricated mass housing in Czechoslovakia. The very famous sociological analysis of the housing conditions by Jiří Kroha was included in the form of the original collages. © Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague, Photo: Ondřej Kocourek.



**02** Each period of the history of Czech mass housing was illustrated not only by the original drawings, models and photographs but also by the elements of the interior design of the time. © Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague, Photo: Ondřej Kocourek.



**03** Most fascinating was the part devoted to the prefabricated estates built in 1960s and 1970s, so call "beautiful estates" representing the qualitative peak in the development of mass housing in post-war Czechoslovakia. © Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague, Photo: Ondřej Kocourek.

by the journal *Technický Magazín* [Technical Magazine] in the late 1980s. The individual chapters of the exhibition followed the periodization of the construction of housing estates, which was identified and described in the accompanying monograph by the project investigators. The periodization was accurately explained by the brief introductory characteristics accompanied by a time axis, which enabled situating each housing development within a broader social context. This axis constituted a backbone of the exhibition's dramaturgy and held the exposition together. The individual, more or less specific

folds of interpretation developed from this backbone in form of digressions. The main line of the exhibition was physically illustrated by the main exposition material, period photographs, architectonic models, archive documents in the form of architectonic designs and publications of that time. The digressions were filled with historical artefacts from the field of visual arts, housing culture and design.

The authors of the exhibition managed to collect a great amount of material. The most remarkable items doubtlessly included the original models of the housing estates and period photographs. The added value of these two media lay in their ability to show both, how the town planning concepts changed and how the illustration tools and the architectonic craft evolved. However, the quantity of the physical and ideological digressions and layers of the exhibits tended to turn the exhibition into a hardly decipherable collection of curiosities. The great variety and multi-layered character of the exhibition is a logical result of the research, which immediately preceded the exhibition and resulted in three huge books as well. The authors' effort to show the phenomenon of prefab estates in all its complexity undoubtedly played a role, too. The exhibition could, therefore, be perceived as a dense hybrid architectonic-town planning-ethnographic reminder of a half-century of mass housing development in socialist Bohemia that enabled each visitor to select their own way of dating.

### The three big publications

The exhibition was accompanied by two huge books titled *Paneláci* ("Paneláky" is the popular Czech name for the prefabricated housing structures). The first one, *Paneláci*

*1. Padesát sídlišť v českých zemích* [Prefabs 1. Twenty-Five Housing Estates in the Czech Republic] (Lucie Skřivánková, Rostislav Švácha, Eva Novotná, Karolina Jirkalová, Uměleckoprůmyslové museum v Praze, 2018) is an atlas in which on its 463 pages, 50 selected examples of prefabricated housing estates are presented by text analyses, original plans and photographs; in some cases, even by analyses of social conditions. The second book, *Paneláci 2. Historie sídlišť v českých zemích 1945-1989* [Prefabs 2. History of the Housing Estates in Czech Republic 1945-1989] (Lucie Skřivánková, Rostislav Švácha, Martina Koukalová, Eva Novotná, Uměleckoprůmyslové museum v Praze, 2017) is a regular architecture historiography of "only" 350 pages that introduces general history, periodization and characteristic features of the postwar mass housing in Czech part of the former Czechoslovakia. A selection of the first book was published also in English under the title *The Paneláks. Twenty-Five Housing Estates in the Czech Republic* (Lucie Skřivánková, Rostislav Švácha, Irena Lehkoživová, The Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague, 2017). It focuses on the most characteristic and outstanding examples of prefab estates in Bohemia and could serve as a personal guide for anyone interested in this particular part of architectural heritage. The book series, together with the exhibition, should be understood as an unbiased and comprehensive scientific statement of work on this part of Czech architectural history and definitely as a perfect basis for the further aim of protecting some of the estates as monuments. In that sense I am quite sure that the authors of this great project will remain thinking big.

Henrieta Moravčíková



**04** Lucie Skřivánková, Rostislav Švácha, Irena Lehkoživová (ed.), *The Paneláks. Twenty-Five Housing Estates in the Czech Republic*, Prague, The Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague, 2017. Book cover.

## Architect Friedrich Weinwurm: New Path

Exhibition at the Slovak National Gallery

Bratislava, Slovakia, 25 January – 20 May 2018

The 20<sup>th</sup> century created space for extensive development in Slovakia in both cultural and social aspects, a phenomenon visible even today in its built material legacy. Connected to the growth in Slovakia in the 20<sup>th</sup> century are many personalities as practitioners of those professions that have made a significant imprint on the identity of the nation. Today, for instance, the names of the architects Dušan Samuel Jurkovič or Emil Belluš are known to the wider public as “the” Slovak architects who founded Slovakia’s autonomous architectural tradition. As such, they are regarded as founding fathers, as personalities standing on the same level as the nation’s key individuals. Their importance has, for several decades, been confirmed by a lasting interest from architectural historians and theorists, resulting in an extensive publication legacy. Since 2010, a series of extensive book-length monographs have successively appeared to present the general public with these oeuvres: starting with Dušan S. Jurkovič, and one year later presenting the work of Emil Belluš. And yet, when in 2014 the next publication appeared in this exclusive series, dedicated to the architect Friedrich Weinwurm, it represented instead the repayment of a long-overdue debt to the historic and architectural significance of this individual, long consigned to the margins of Slovak architectural history. It was thanks to author Henrieta Moravčíková that this pioneering work was undertaken.

The Slovak National Gallery (SNG) in Bratislava, as the nation’s most important art-historical institution, eventually turned its attention to Weinwurm, this unique representative of the architecture of the “New Objectivity” [*Neue Sachlichkeit*] and interwar functionalism, with a definite time-lag. Its recently ended exhibition of Friedrich Weinwurm’s work bore the title *Nová Cesta* [new path]. And this wording is significant, considering how much any evaluation of this recent exhibition program needs to take into consideration the long path that our knowledge of this major architect’s oeuvre had to traverse before finding its way into the confines of the SNG.

In his architecture, Weinwurm did not have the status of a creator and representative of the architectural lineage regarded as the basis of modern Slovak architectural traditions. Unlike his previously mentioned colleagues Emil Belluš and Dušan Samuel Jurkovič, Weinwurm – a German-speaking Jew who perished in the Holocaust – never in the post-war years became the subject of popular myth. Conversely, it was Weinwurm himself who bears the greatest responsibility for breaking the path for a new architecture in Slovakia. For the development of Slovak modernist architecture, he has the importance of such a figure as Adolf Loos or Hannes Meyer on a worldwide scale. For this reason, the current exhibition takes as its goal primarily the long-needed exposure of the forgotten, the presentation of an exceptional yet still insufficiently appreciated architect represented by dozens of realized structures created in his shared atelier with Ignác Vécsei.

Interpreting this exhibition (and the life of Weinwurm himself) through this sub-title has indeed set us off on new paths. It has helped us to realize that architecture is not only a game of forms, the language of the physical

arrangement of the space around us: it has shifted us away from the path of reading buildings as an *a priori* aesthetic discipline and shown us the content that lies behind the form of its representation. Such a path “beyond form” is shown in the part of the exhibition devoted to Weinwurm’s political struggle for a new architecture intended for all levels of society. The realized projects of a socially committed architecture in Bratislava’s modernist proto-estates of *Unitas* and *Nová Doba* confirm that the architect’s work at the start of the 1930s significantly determined the direction of urban planning for many decades to follow. This architecture is functionalism in its most essential presentation – form follows housing.

Of course, form also follows function: this slogan of Modernism is evident even in the actual realization of this exhibition at the SNG. The exhibition was the work of a sizeable authorial team under the supervision of Henrieta Moravčíková. Her husband Peter Moravčík was in charge of the exhibit’s architectural design and met this requirement of his senior colleagues perfectly. The minimal entrance, in the form of wooden platforms, met simultaneously the functions of a display case for publications and pedestals for architectural models. Though a highly traditional exhibition form, it did not appear banal, but indeed elevated the very content of the displays, acting on several levels or through several instruments for reaching its primary (educational) aims.

For understanding individual architectural works by Weinwurm and Vécsei, the exhibition used wall-projections of axonometric plans. These, in turn, communicated with the cardboard models of selected buildings



01 At the entrance of the exhibition Friedrich Weinwurm and members of his architecture studio welcomed the visitors on the only historical photograph of the whole exposition taken in the year 1926. Photo: Peter Moravčík.

**02** The exhibition introduced the work of the architect Friedrich Weinwurm with reduced means and minimalistic aesthetics: original drawings, contemporary photographs taken by the well-known photographer Olja Triaška Stefanović, axonometric schemes of the main exhibited works and models created by the students of the Faculty of Architecture in Bratislava. © Slovak National Gallery. Photo: Peter Gall.



**04** The large-scale photographs enabled the visitors to experience the unique atmosphere of the architecture of New Objectivity after nearly 100 years of its existence. However, the message of the photographs was somehow ambiguous expressing in the same time nostalgia and post-apocalyptic atmosphere of ruined modernism. © Slovak National Gallery. Photo: Peter Gall.



**03** The three main parts of the exhibition "A building art to match its age", "The objectivity that we followed in the present day" and "A roof for everyone" were accompanied by soundtracks presenting the three architecture manifestos of Friedrich Weinwurm. Most appealing was the last one titled "Where does the new path lead?" from 1931 connected with the projects of social housing. © Slovak National Gallery. Photo: Peter Gall.

prepared over several semesters with the assistance of architecture students from the Bratislava Technical University. Original blueprints displayed on the walls did not, themselves, serve as explications of the architecture but more as artefacts recalling Weinwurm himself within the exhibition space. And it was not only his drawings but also his words that filled the exhibition rooms. For the exhibition, the first Slovak translations were prepared of Weinwurm's German texts published between 1924 and 1931 in the journals *Moderne Welt*, *Sborník Modernej Tvorby* and *Nová Bratislava*. The photographer Olja Triaška Stefanović, whose engagement dates back to the start of the previously mentioned monograph publication from 2014, contributed photographs of buildings by Weinwurm and Vécsei,

captivating in the melancholic enchantment only fitting for long-forgotten cultural heritage. Her photographs, in both small and monumental format, document the current state of Weinwurm's built oeuvre. A sense of the actual scale of the depicted scenes brings the viewer directly into the image – i.e. the fragment of Weinwurm's architecture, captured through the technically exacting photographic narrative using the single-axis perspective matching the spirit of the Düsseldorf School.

For many years, the SNG has worked on bringing the field of architecture into its collections. Indeed, Slovakia lacks any independent cultural-historical institution that would focus exclusively on architecture and built heritage. After literature, folk culture, visual arts and design, architecture remains

the last unoccupied area of art demanding a targeted shaping of collections and systematic institutional scholarly reflection. From this standpoint, the exhibition program of the SNG creates a valuable space for reflecting on this long-underrated and overlooked area of Slovakia's artistic legacy. In one sense, it is a valuable task, yet on the other, bearing in mind the primary focus of the SNG, it will always remain merely a marginal genre. Hence it is no surprise that the realized exhibition *Friedrich Weinwurm: New Path* is the very first independent monographic exhibition for a Slovak architect held in the spaces of the SNG since Slovakia gained its independence in 1993 (!). The catalog for the exhibition directly reveals the formation of its own new paths to the presentation and exhibition of architecture: the exhibition as planned by Henrieta Moravčíková and her team has found its new path, and the public have found it to their liking, as confirmed by the attendance figures. Yet for the professional community in Slovakia, the path is not only new but long if we are to reach a broad public appreciation for the heritage of Slovakia's modern architecture.

The exhibition in the premises of the SNG in Bratislava was open from 25.01.2018 to 20.05.2018.

Martin Zaiček

Exhibition conception: Henrieta Moravčíková  
 Exhibition curators: Henrieta Moravčíková, Denis Haberland  
 Photography: Olja Triaška Stefanović  
 Architectural design: Peter Moravčík  
 Axonometric diagrams: Laura Pastoreková  
 Graphic design: Ľubica Segečová

## Toward a Concrete Utopia: Architecture in Yugoslavia, 1948–1980

Exhibition at MoMA

New York, US, 10 July 2018 – 13 January 2019

*Toward a Concrete Utopia: Architecture in Yugoslavia, 1948–1980* opened on July 10 at MoMA to the sound of old Yugoslavian songs, revolutionary and popular, spreading surreally from the museum's courtyard. For the next six months MoMA's third floor galleries will be inhabited by over 400 items, exhibited neatly, salon-style, on walls and pedestals, and organized in four major themes that traverse the period of architectural production covered in the exhibition: Modernization, Global Networks, Everyday Life, and Identities. Though this survey exhibition, curated by the Philip Johnson Chief Curator of Architecture and Design, Martino Stierli, and the visiting curator Vladimir Kulić, Associate Professor at the Florida Atlantic University, with curatorial assistant Anna Kats, offers different and perhaps contradictory things to different audiences, in the history of MoMA's institutional stewardship and codification of Modernism, it delivers a form of revision, and a significant geo-political expansion of the narratives the institution has undersigned so far. The exhibition's artifacts range from precious archival sketches, historical photographs, photographic reproductions of drawings, original models, and exquisite model reproductions (the labor of architecture students at The Cooper Union and the Florida Atlantic University), to commissioned video presentations by Mila Turajlić and photographs by Valentin Jeck. All of these represent and invoke the making of some of the most important architectural and design objects, almost evenly spread, over the territory of the former Yugoslavia. In its selection of work, the exhibition, perhaps self-consciously so, re-enacts in curatorial terms the balancing of national representation constitutive of Yugoslavia's political and social project, which was in some measure indeed materialized by its architecture.

Yugoslavia's specific federalist form emerged from WWII with six, mostly rural republics, major damage to its key urban centers, vast human casualties, war-exacerbated ethnic conflicts, and a war-time revolution. This was followed by a definitive break with the Soviet Union in 1948 which

was decisive both for the country and for its modern architecture. Yugoslavia's architects did not have to contend with socialist realism for very long, nor with the anxieties of interpretation that in most other Eastern European countries followed Khrushchev's official 1954 pronouncements against the socialist realist dictum. The break with Stalin prompted the party leadership to look for its own political path — which led to its experiment in self-management, and later to combinations of a state and market economy. It also prefigured Yugoslavia's eventual leadership in the Non-Aligned movement (with its alternative global market for architecture). Modernism in this context, as the curators and the researchers they assembled suggest, was the architectural language that supported the country's federalist, non-aligned, and self-managed socialism.

*Toward a Concrete Utopia's* survey of a 32 year period of architectural and urban thought of Yugoslavian architects avoids comprehensiveness and chronology, for a set of architectural objects and examples of more sustained urban efforts and practices, which refract the four categories announced in the opening text, into a number of (only slightly) smaller themes: Urbanization, Technological Modernization, The Architecture of the "Social Standard", Tourist Infrastructures, Design, Housing, Exporting Architecture, Regional Idioms, and Monuments. There are three large urban developments that get special recognition in terms of the gallery square-footage: local and international efforts towards the reconstruction of Skopje in the wake of its devastating 1963 earthquake, development of Split 3 Housing, and the postwar reconstruction of the coastal city of Zadar. The show is also punctuated by four immersive spaces dedicated to architects Vjenceslav Richter, Edvard Ravnikar, Juraj Neidhart and Bogdan Bogdanović. While the work of a number of other architects is presented as well, these figures serve to drill deeper into their own production, and through their biographies and bodies of work, into the historical moments and institutional and discursive networks they inhabited. As Kulić suggests, their function is in part also to transmit the message about the

possibility and value of individual creativity in the context of Yugoslavia's postwar architecture.

For the once Yugoslav architects (and in some measure for their colleagues across the equally former WWII) *Toward a Concrete Utopia* is a triumph. It is an important validation of these architects' efforts, of architecture once produced for the collective good — "generous" architecture, as Rem Koolhaas has often characterized examples of socialist architecture, because it was explicitly not aimed at the bottom line, and often quite literally dimensioned for a collective subject<sup>1</sup>. This architectural heritage has been under great pressure in the region for a while already. Even as the show opened at MoMA, some of the buildings presented in its galleries lay in disrepair, ironically mired in property issues and for others, like the never finished Dom Revolucije in Nikšić, Montenegro, developers just had or are having their final word, "transitioning" them into the flow of global capital. The imperative of the price per square meter is literally paving over the architecture once dedicated to public good and aimed at contributing to the quality of collective life, and thus transforming the figure of the architect in this context into a tool for private profit<sup>2</sup>. Disrepair, and disrespect for the architecture produced under socialism, is common across the Second World<sup>3</sup>. But perhaps this MoMA show can serve to turn the tide or, at the very least, turn the fates of some of this architectural heritage in the region.

One of this exhibition's greatest accomplishments thus registers in the realm of preservation. Though it exposed a pervasive lack of archival care across the territory of the former Yugoslavia, the whole effort resulted in salvaging and organizing material by a group of dedicated researchers<sup>4</sup>. Since many of the major architectural enterprises that built Yugoslavia have been privatized, have gone bankrupt, or otherwise crumbled, what would have been important archival material suffered similar fates. *Toward a Concrete Utopia* prompted the research team to locate and digitize at least some of the items constituting Yugoslavia's socialist architecture heritage. There were also important individual acts of preservation that made parts of the exhibition possible. To highlight just a couple of these, in a conversation following the opening at MoMA held at the Center for Architecture in New York, Juraj Neidhart's daughter, Tatjana, described the dramatic events during the long (1992–1996) and devastating siege of Sarajevo by the army of Republika Srpska, and her rescuing of her father's papers related to the book he co-authored with Dušan Grabrijan



**01** At the entry of the exhibition one encounters a three-channel video installation by Mila Turajlić, *Mi gradimo zemlju – zemlja gradi nas* [We built the country – the country builds us] –, and produced out of newsreel footage of the construction of New Belgrade. Installation view of *Toward a Concrete Utopia: Architecture in Yugoslavia, 1948–1980*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, July 15, 2018–January 13, 2019. © 2018 The Museum of Modern Art. Photo: Martin Seck.



**02** Reconstruction of Skopje is dedicated a vast space in which Yugoslavian architects and their work come together with the urban plans produced by, and the images of, Kenzō Tange's team. This space includes another of Mila Turajlić's commissioned videos, large photographs by Valentin Jeck. Installation view of *Toward a Concrete Utopia: Architecture in Yugoslavia, 1948–1980*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, July 15, 2018–January 13, 2019. © 2018 The Museum of Modern Art. Photo: Martin Seck.

*Architecture of Bosnia and the Way to Modernity* (1957)<sup>5</sup>. In Belgrade, the main protagonist in the Exporting Architecture narrative, Energoprojekt, whose architecture section was led by Milica Šterić, had an unusually well-organized archive held in a prefab house near its famous office building in New Belgrade. The archive was first damaged when the nearby Chinese Embassy was bombed by NATO in 1999. More recently, in preparation for the show members of MoMA's exhibition team rushed to rescue archival material from its possible destruction in a "hostile takeover" of the company by the new private majority shares holder. Though not readily available for the general MoMA visitor consumption, but circulating as legends among the curatorial team, these stories of preservation are an important register of the historical events, complexities and contradictions otherwise not palpable in the exhibition<sup>6</sup>. Concretely in these two above cases: a devastating ethnic conflict, the NATO solution to it, and the advances of the wildest kind of neo-liberal capitalism. Though I absolutely recommend the exhibition's catalog as required reading for the exhibition visitors (and especially reviewers), deeper and more complicated histories than even the ones the catalog manages are necessary to deliver on the earnest curatorial promise of the wall text—for this material to become actually useful for our own (dark) times<sup>7</sup>. Despite the fact that the material in the exhibition was submitted to MoMA's institutional habits of seeing in terms of styles, objects and authors, which of course transforms it in important ways, it is thanks to MoMA and its curatorial and research teams, that *Toward a Concrete Utopia* is an important record now that may slow down the quiet entropic disappearance of the historical traces of an era. It has prepared the ground for more research on why and how we might learn

from the examples it includes. I prefer to see it, therefore, as an invitation to research the architecture of the socialist era which, though it was many things in Yugoslavia, was also optimistic about the prospects of a diverse, multi-ethnic, equitable, self-managed and self-conscious collective.

Ana Milijački

#### Notes

- 1 Most recently Rem Koolhaas made such pronouncements on socialist modern architecture generally in a public interview conducted by the Russian American journalist, Vladimir Pozner at the Garage in Moscow as part of *the Moscow Urban Forum 2018*. See <https://strelkamag.com/en/article/rem-koolhaas-vladimir-pozner>.
- 2 Because I find these ideals most clearly embedded in the architecture that supported civic and everyday life, I found the show's section on the Social Standard most exciting. It includes projects such as the Kosovo University and Public Library in Priština (designed by Andrija Mutnjaković), as well as the recently (and beautifully) renovated Museum of Contemporary Art in Belgrade (designed by Ivanka Raspopović and Ivan Antić).
- 3 In my own research of Czech architecture, I found the destruction of the department store Ještěd in Liberec particularly sad, though not the sole, example of this. In the show at MoMA, the disrepair of some of the famous tourist structures like the Haludovo hotel (designed by Boris Magaš), or the memorial on Petrova Gora (designed by Vojin Bakić, Berislav Šerbetić, and Zoran Bakić) quite literally represents the general attitude towards this architectural heritage. The contemporary politicians operating in the territory of ex-Yugoslavia have nothing to gain from identifying themselves with the old ideals of "brotherhood and unity", or the once

regulated development of the Adriatic coast; and the memorials of the anti-fascist struggle that most of them had to visit regularly as part of their early education, might have the capacity to dangerously expose the contradictions now deeply embedded in their own, often fascist, politics.

- 4 The names of the members of this collective are impossible to find on the exhibition walls, but they are thankfully included (on page 179) in the catalog. I will relist here the curatorial advisory board, because without their research and understanding of the importance of preserving and organizing the material, we would all be poorer: Tamara Bjažić Klarin, Matevž Čelik, Vladimir Deskov, Ana Ivanovska Deskov, Sanja Horvatinčić, Jovan Ivanovski, Jelica Jovanović, Matrina Malešić, Maroje Mrduljaš, Bekim Ramku, Arber Sadiki, Dubravka Sekulić, Irena Šentevska, Luka Skansi, Lukasz Stanek, Marta Vukotić Lazar, and Mejrema Zatrić.
- 5 Juraj Neidhart's room is dedicated to this research on Bosnian architecture's premodernism.
- 6 The first small event to mark the opening of *Towards Concrete Utopia* in Belgrade, included Vlada Kulić, and two members of the curatorial advisory board: Jelica Jovanović and Dubravka Sekulić, and took place at the mobbed REX cultural center on July 26, 2018.
- 7 I use here Hannah Arendt's term "dark times", which she, in turn, borrowed from Bertolt Brecht for her collection of essays *Men in Dark Times* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1970), precisely because she believed that the men and women she wrote about in that collection responded to the "dark times" in a way that produced hopeful forms of "illumination". It is a term that thus contains, through its layered historical references, both a description befitting our own historical moment and possible antidotes to it.

## BOOK REVIEWS



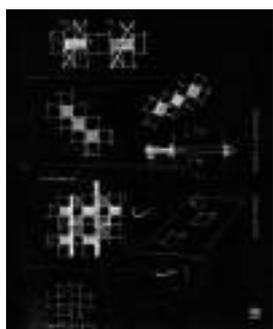
**Vladimír Deděček.**  
**Interpretation of his Architecture**

Editor: Monika Mitašová  
Publisher: Birkhäuser  
Language: English  
ISBN: 978-3035615982  
Year: 2018



**Vladimír Deděček.**  
**Interpretácie architektonického diela**

Editor: Monika Mitašová  
Publisher: SNG  
Language: Slovak  
ISBN: 978-80-8059-198-4  
Year: 2017



**Vladimír Deděček.**  
**Stávanie sa architektom**

Editor: Monika Mitašová  
Publisher: SNG  
Language: Slovak  
ISBN: 978-80-8059-200-4  
Year: 2017

Architect Vladimír Deděček belongs to the first generation of Slovak architects trained

at the Slovak University of Technology after the WWII that extensively shaped the postwar built environment in the former Czechoslovakia. Vladimír Deděček became famous and, at the same time, a controversial figure of Slovak architecture of the second half the 20<sup>th</sup> century because his monumental expressive architecture was sometimes confronting and radical in their older urban settings.

The two books, Monika Mitašová (ed.), *Vladimír Deděček. Stávanie sa architektom*, Bratislava, SNG, 2017, and Monika Mitašová (ed.), *Vladimír Deděček: Interpretácie architektonického diela*, Bratislava, SNG, 2017 (published now in English as Monika Mitašová (ed.), *Vladimír Deděček: Interpretation of His Architecture*, Birkhäuser, 2018) are part of a major project, which the Slovak National Gallery dedicated to the author of the new gallery building constructed in the late 1970s. The basis of the project is the extensive research by Slovak architecture theoretician Monika Mitašová and the photographic work of the Austrian photographer Hertha Hurnaus. The first book presents a private and broader social context of the academic and non-academic community of artists, sociologists and architects that inspired Vladimír Deděček in his decision to become an architect. Equally, his first sketches are reflected as an individual and creative way of becoming an architect. Three of the very first sketchbooks of Vladimír Deděček form an integral part of the book.

The second book was prepared by Monika Mitašová in collaboration with the architecture theoretician Marián Zervan, the photographer Hertha Hurnaus and the architects Benjamín Brádňanský and Vít Halada. It includes textual, architectural and photographic interpretations of four of the most famous and most discussed architectural works by Vladimír Deděček; the reconstruction and additions to the Slovak National Gallery in Bratislava, the Slovak National Archive, the Supreme Court of the Slovak Republic and the Regional Political school in Modra. At the same time, it creates a source of the methodological approach that is tested in the process of interpretation of a further thirteen key works by Vladimír Deděček in the years 1960 to 1990. An important layer of the second book is represented by photographs and graphic diagrams. The author of the photographs is one of the best contemporary photographers of architecture in the European context. The graphical diagrams are, in turn, a picture of precise single analyses prepared by two pedagogues of the

Academy of Fine Arts in Bratislava. The 841-page monograph is an original approach to the interpretation of architecture. It tests new methods of formal, historical and social interpretation of the architecture work, confronts the different views on the selected works and creates a basis for an unbiased discussion on the architecture of Vladimír Deděček and architecture in general. The book deliberately takes the form of “work-books” with the intention of giving readers not only a didactic but, above all, open, comprehensive approach to the architectural thinking of an important Slovak architect of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Henrieta Moravčíková



**Socialist Modernism in Romania and the Republic of Moldova**

Editor: Dumitru Rusu  
Publisher: BACU Association  
ISBN: 978-973-0-25553-9  
Language: Romanian and English  
Year: 2017

*Socialist Modernism in Romania and the Republic of Moldova* is a photo album developed by the Bureau for Urban Art and Research (BACU), an organization focused on the conservation and rehabilitation of built heritage and art from the Socialist period in Central and Eastern Europe.

In 2013, BACU launched a research project called *Socialist Modernism* which aims to document architecture and art dating from 1955-1991 – the Socialist modern period. The publication of *Socialist Modernism in Romania and the Republic of Moldova* is one of the outcomes of the work BACU has been developing for these last 5 years, combining field research with archive and library investigation.

This publication is organized into six sections. The first section provides the reader with an insight of the emergence of socialist Modernism in the 1950s and the technical features that came to characterize it throughout the following decades.

The successive five sections offer a visual journey through a series of colored photographs taken in different Romanian and Moldovan cities. The captured pictures vary from public spaces to interiors, from façades to details and have been divided according to the buildings' functional purposes - science, education, culture and sports facilities; housing units; administrative and transportation buildings; hotels, leisure and treatment facilities; industrial facilities.

This publication intends to raise awareness to unprotected socialist modern buildings, their meaning and value for architecture history and their current neglected state.

Beatriz Agostinho



**East West Central: Re-Building Europe 1950-1990, Vol. 1: Re-Humanizing Architecture, New Forms of Community, 1950-1970**

Editors: Ákos Moravánszky, Judith Hopfengärtner

Publisher: Birkhäuser Verlag GmbH

Language: English

ISBN: 978-3-0356-1015-4

Year: 2017



**East West Central: Re-Building Europe 1950-1990, Vol. 2: Re-Scaling the Environment, New Landscapes of Design, 1960-1980**

Editors: Ákos Moravánszky, Torsten Lange

Publisher: Birkhäuser Verlag GmbH

ISBN: 978-3-0356-1015-1

Language: English

Year: 2017



**East West Central: Re-Building Europe 1950-1990, Vol. 3: Re-Framing Identities, Architecture's Turn to History, 1970-1990**

Editors: Ákos Moravánszky, Torsten Lange

Publisher: Birkhäuser Verlag GmbH

ISBN: 978-3-0356-1015-8

Language: English

Year: 2017

The trilogy of collections of essays and texts under the name *East West Central: Re-Building Europe 1950-1990* has a goal offering an original view on the evolution of architecture in Europe after WWII even though the era has been covered multiple times by researchers. The project was conducted by the lead professor of architectural theory and history at ETH Zürich, Ákos Moravánszky. It maps the evolution of architecture through the prism of dominating themes from the 1950s to 1990s. Books follow the series of conferences that laid the groundwork for the publication.

The project is ambitious in several aspects. As the name implies, similar to Moravánszky's previous research, the central theme corrects the West-centric view of architectural discourse of second half of 20<sup>th</sup> century. The project is, therefore, focused on questions, which were discussed simultaneously in both the Eastern and Western Blocs, finding similarities rather than searching for idiosyncrasies. The hermetically sealed Iron Curtain is regarded to be a myth. Moravánszky, as an editor, presents publications that narrow the focus down to common ground, overlapping tendencies, concurrent development and West-East cultural exchange. He offers us a view on the architectural project of Europe, emerging from the need for reconstruction of the demolished cities and an ideology of critical positivism, that could have been universal for the whole continent.

The decision to cover the forty years of divided Europe in three separate volumes is interesting. Each one applies its own viewpoint and covers a twenty-year period (1950s-1970s, 1960s-1980s and 1970s-1990s). Overlapping avoids flattening of history into a restricted linear narrative. It is clear, that the ambition here is not a holistic inclusion of everything, but rather a specific thematic

interpretation. Such a concept is clear and avoids inter-disciplinarity. The subject of research is the built environment in the rather traditional understanding as architectural production. However, it is also clear that there is a need to understand the underlying forces of politics and cultural development that shaped that production.

The core theme of the first book, architectural production after the war, is re-humanization of settlements. The 1960s and 1970s are characterized by the unprecedented scale of urbanization made available by implementing new technologies in city planning. Reflecting the universalist positivism and critical reevaluation of identity is the theme of the third collection. Each volume is introduced by the editor's essay, while the individual texts were chosen in accordance with the theme.

**Re-Humanizing Architecture**

The first volume, named *Re-Humanizing Architecture*, covers the time after WWII (1950-1970). It frames the reconstruction of Europe (mostly the West) as the triumph of humanism, not only as the common ground for the ideologies of dominant political forces (Christian democracy and social democracy), but possibly an ideology overarching the capitalist and socialist regimes. Despite the drastic differences in civic rights and freedoms, both the welfare state and the communist dictatorships were declaring the prime interest in the "little man". Humanism also brought the critical approach to architectural modernity. The development of the cities dictated by the *Athens Charter* doctrine is confronted with the question of collectivity and human scale. How could urban planning work better for the individual, the family and the community? Team 10 attacked the functional segregation of the cities. These planners favored a more complex organization of the city as a fractal structure with multiple independent cores. In other words, connection instead of distribution.

Structuring the texts in chapters helps keeping up with the concept of the volumes even if the form is a collection. The editors are able to navigate the reader in different interpretations of the theme. Texts therefore could cover a rather broad formal range. If some comparatively analyze the construction of housing estates, such as Marijke Martin, Cor Wagenaar: The Netherlands and Czechoslovakia, others offer a more intimate view via the figures leading the discourse of the time, such as Luca Molinari: Rehumanization of the after war Italian architecture: Ernesto Nathan Rogers and Giancarlo De Carlo.

It is apparent, that the ideological frame of humanism is not seen as a background for

the architectural discourse, a mere context, but rather as an integral theme of the era. The book, therefore, does not regress into superficial categorization according to formal architectural style (socialistic realism, Modernism) for it is more important to find common features.

### Re-Scaling the Environment

After the 1950s, both sides of Europe witnessed urban expansion fueled by economic growth. The landscape was being reconfigured dramatically. The agrarian economies were heavily industrialized and the metropolis had become a center of a new kind of economy of services. Developing cybernetics and data analysis directly influenced geography and urban planning. Both the socialist state and welfare state allowed for central planning at an unprecedented scale. Political détente contributed to increased exchange of information through the Iron Curtain.

Architects and urban planners used new technologies in a technocratic data-based approach to the development of the landscape. Utopian mega structures and infrastructures were the new daring answers to regulate the extreme urbanization and growth of cities. Suddenly, it was possible to manage the organization of the whole landscape. However, such an unprecedented scale of planning was also the beginning of the collapse of this positivistic project — Modernism. Economic recession in the 1970s, ideological fatigue in the East and growing concerns about the natural environment were reflected in a general disillusionment for such projects and planning as such.

The second volume offers a view on the scene that embraced new tools for the new scale of development. The city is no longer a theme for the planners, the landscape is. The complex structures of habitats provided a possibility of a new kind of urbanization, that rejected the dichotomy of the urban core and rural periphery. Machines allowed planetary-scale planning.

The book presents these concepts as the late phase of Modernism. Hashim Sarkis writes about the genesis of territorial aesthetics in relation to Le Corbusier's "Geo-Architecture". The projects for the Mississippi basin in the 1930s are stated as amongst the first examples of planning at such a scale. Several texts focus on the bureaucratic apparatus of states as the new centers for this kind of progressive planning. The construction of housing estates and the total occupation of the landscape is dealt with in others. Daniela Spiegel writes about recreation resorts in the former DDR. However, the inclusion of SIAL, the Czech

hi-tech collective, is inconsistent as it operated independently from the bureaucratic planning apparatus that produced the kind of environment the volume addresses.

### Re-Framing Identities

Critical reflection on Modernism and the post-war development of cities is the theme of the third volume. The period of 1970-1990 is defined, unsurprisingly, as that when the project of universal modernity is confronted with a wide-ranging critique. As the themes of individuality, language and identity were more articulated in the cultural discourse, technocratic rational solutions to the city as a mechanism were challenged among urban theorists.

Postmodernity is defined rather typically as the semiotic interpretation of architecture as a language. The study of the city has become the study of history, references, local traditions and symbolism. The rediscovered fascination with continuity resulted in an increased concern with heritage and the historical city centers. The book argues that, because of this concern with continuity, the relatively new cultural division between the West and the East was becoming undermined. Both sides were revisiting their common history, such as in the concept of Mitteleuropa.

However, this common history was not restricted to local identity. Cultural exchanges throughout the past have become a matter for discussion. The rediscovery of Russian constructivism in Western discourse is described in the essay from Ally Vronsky.

The last volume is coherent. Nevertheless, it lacks the thematic originality of the previous ones. The problem is reduced to the concept of identity and neglects the political and economic conditions of postmodern society, such as the commodification of space and consumption.

The occasional inconsistency in the selection of texts is a weakness of the collection. Some are apparently only abstracts of broader research, lacking the quality of an autonomous piece and serve rather as references. Seeing scientific abstracts and essays in one place, one has to think if a form of a journal would not be more appropriate for the collection, allowing for a both deeper and broader insight.

Despite these reservations, the collection accomplishes its set ambitions; framing post-war development in themes is original, but not purposeless. The relation of architecture, planning, politics and culture offers a more complex view on architectural production in the era. The collection is one of the most interesting works dealing with the period and shows it is most desirable to interpret history conceptually.

Michal Janák



### Off Season

Editors: Andrea Kalinová, Martin Zaiček,  
 Petra Hlaváčková  
 Publisher: Archimera  
 ISBN: 978-80-972341-3-3  
 Language: Slovak, Czech, English  
 Year: 2017

"...everything, where has it gone? It makes me feel sick, my ladies. And have you been to the spa management and have you told them anything? So tell them that one doctor was crying when she saw what it looked like now".

These are Mrs Marcela Blašková's laments over the condition of the Machnác sanatorium as she recalls the building when she was its former chief physician of medical rehabilitation, naively referring to the spa management for a solution. The Machnác is now managed by a different institution: the capitalist market. And its rules and competences are different and merciless.

The texts, photographs and attached pictures by several authors in the *Off Season* publication present a selection of aspects of the Sanatorium for the Health Insurance Company for Private Clerks and Attendants (the original name for the Machnác), which was built by the architect Jaromír Krejcar in Trenčianske Teplice in 1929-1932. This building is one of the most valuable architectural works in Slovakia. It is a prime work of inter-war Modernism and its current condition is a scandalous illustration of the government's incompetence to look after the country's endangered cultural assets. The publication is also one of the products of the activities of the artistic group, Abandoned (Re)Creation, which studies, among other things, various aspects of this architectural work's ruinous condition.

The contents of the individual texts can be compiled into two blocks according to the topic. The first and more extensive one is the topic of the building and its author. The other one is Martin Zaiček's survey on the organization and development of balneology in the inter-war period, the after-war decades up to present. The author focuses primarily on Trenčianske Teplice and their intended and only fragmentarily implemented urban

transformations. This block also includes the personal memories of doctor Blašková quoted earlier in this article. She worked in Machnáč for years and her story, put into context with the other expert texts, inspires the reader to discover a new dimension of sympathy for this building, which served for decades.

The third block comprises of a set of photographs representing Machnáč, mainly in fragments of its present condition. There is no melancholy or poetic illusion, which gets so often evoked by ruined architecture. In addition, the third block includes a set of records of various performances, interventions and other events, which were inspired by this architectural work, its condition and atmosphere, and carried out by committed and sensitive participants. Although being an autonomous expression not necessarily connected with the architecture, the chronicles build up another temporary layer of the architecture's story. These photographs, despite the current condition of Machnáč, do not seem to be depressing as I can see them as a different way of presentation of the building's potential. Considering the other graphic attachments, I was particularly captivated by the final architect's report from the time when the building was finished. It is in the form of a paperback publication and it forms an entire part of an almanac. I find it interesting because I can identify myself with some of its formulations, as for the way of reasoning, some architectural decisions were considered correct and substantiated, even though only time and the building's function can prove them right.

In the first block, Klaus Spechtenhauser introduces Jaromír Krejcar, his activities and work in the broader context of mainly leftist creations in architecture and art in the 1920s and 1930s. It was a time of slowly fading optimism anticipating another global conflict, and also a time of socially radical views hardly realized when confronted with faced with wealthy contractors. Quite rightly, Machnáč is presented here together with the Czechoslovak pavilion at the world exposition in Paris in 1937 as a leading work by Krejcar. It ranks among the most significant architectural works of inter-war Modernism in the European context.

The interview with the architect Tenzer, one of the closest colleagues to J. Krejcar, and the text by Andrea Kalinová, are similar in their method. They both intimately explore two aspects of Krejcar's existence; the first text depicts the system and circumstances of his work as an architect, the other one illustrates the turbulence, peaks and tragic troughs of his private life.

The text by Peter Szalay is a survey of the materiality of Machnáč, its original and

current condition. Such focus on surfaces and materials is obviously meaningful in the case of this architectural creation, because this building ranks among the best works of its time, concerning not only its form, compositional characteristics, proportion of parts with one another and also within the building as a whole, but also the work's use of materials, surfaces and colors. The author is accurate with his analysis of the motivation and physical expression, which has caused today's decay in the fabric of Machnáč. This demolition by neglect is a well-established strategy by the owner, to force the Monuments Board into freeing up the conditions for the restoration and reconstruction of the building. This approach is a means to create favorable conditions for an implementation of a promising model for development, to the detriment of many aspects of the building's authenticity. Using a metaphorical link between Krejcar's inter-war period and the present, it seems as if this early-capitalist mechanism, which exposes this architectural work to destruction, was punishing its architect for his past avant-garde leftist orientation.

The book does deliberately does not include the most important issue, which is a speculation on various possible strategies to grant Machnáč its life and future again which could be a different future from the one mentioned by Jan Tabor in the introduction. There are several other possibilities. What they all have in common, is that they are a theoretical construction between an ideal, today only an elusive reconstruction, on one side, and its degenerated variations, originating from the motif of profit, on the other side. The existential character of Tabor's version of letting the building succumb to its gradual decay and its transformation into a tragic architectural narrative, is enchanting in our helplessness against severe reality.

This skepticism is well-founded. The private ownership model means profitability. This comes from the ratio between reasonably high incomes for accommodation services on one hand and the reconstruction and operating costs on the other. The initial circumstances are extremely unfavorable. The potential Slovak clientele now expects a different accommodation standard than Machnáč could offer without a significant change in its layout. It is a conflict between the profitable ownership model and the essential authentic values of the building. There is virtually no clientele in Slovakia which would prefer such values to their own comfort, and the number of foreign clients is negligible. Without reconstruction, which would raise the accommodation standard of Machnáč, it is not capable of functioning

without a financial loss. No private investor in Slovakia will commit to such an endeavor.

The other hypothetically possible scenario is a curatorship by the state. Machnáč is too large for an institute, a museum or retention as an exposition object in its own right, which it might be able to be changed into as a result of a careful reconstruction. However, the state owns and runs numerous institutions and facilities, also those offering accommodation, principally at a financial loss, or it subsidizes them. I believe that this is the only scheme that might reverse the current decline and help recovery and operation not dependent on profit.

*Off Season* means with no reason when speaking about this architectural work and its current situation, because hazarding with our cultural heritage is unreasonable, in terms of the higher principle of self-preservation of the community's consistence through cultural values.

Pavol Paňák



### **Friedrich Weinwurm Architekt / Architect**

Author: Henrieta Moravčíková

Publisher: Slovart

Language: Slovak, English

ISBN: 978-80-556-1158-7

Year: 2014

The richly illustrated, 26 by 29 centimeters large, 375 pages long, hard cover book is the first comprehensive work on the life and work of architect Friedrich Weinwurm (1885–1942), one of the most prominent figures of the New Objectivity in what was Czechoslovakia. He was called by three given names, Frigyes, Friedrich, Bedřich, which highlight his multi-faceted identity: Jewish, Hungarian, German and Slovak (Czechoslovak), characteristic also for the city of Bratislava (Pozsony, Pressburg) in the interwar period. The author terms this multi-ethnic milieu as Central European, which is in Anglo-Saxon bibliography often termed as East Central European or simply East European, following the Cold War division of Europe. Still, Central European is

the proper term, as culturally this territory has more in common with the Austro-German *Kulturraum* including its Slavonic constituents, based on Western Christianity (Catholicism and Protestantism) than with the Orthodox Christian, Eastern Europe in the context of Russian *Kulturkreis*. Indeed, Friedrich Weinwurm was educated in Bratislava, then called Pozsony or Pressburg (Slovakia), Cluj-Napoca, then called Kolozsvár (Romania) and in Germany by prominent architects such as Peter Behrens, Bruno Taut, Hannes Meyer and, most importantly, Heinrich Tessenow. He earned his diploma at the Technical University in Dresden in 1911 and he became employed in the office of architects Pogány and Töry in Budapest, two prominent figures of Hungarian Proto-Modernism.

The book contains two parts, a main one with ten chapters, and a catalog with a rich survey of works and writings by Weinwurm, a biography, bibliography and index. The chapters of the 200 page long main part are as follows: “An Architect of the Central European Territory”, “Objectivity”, “Outside of the Centre”, “A Unique Aesthetic of Jewish Architects?”, “Politically Engaged Architecture: *Unitas* and *Nová Doba* (housing estates)”, “To reshape the City”, “A Representative Villa, or the Discrete Charms of the Pressburg Bourgeoisie”, “Architect or Engineer?”, “The Partnership of Weinwurm and Vécsei, From Architect to Refugee”.

Friedrich Weinwurm turned to Modernism in 1924 in the new Republic of Czechoslovakia, established on the ashes of the Habsburg Empire. Despite the early Pan-Slavonic agenda of this country — highlighted by Czech cubism and rondo-cubism in the early 1920s — its architecture was predominantly modern, neatly fitting into the culture of the Central European, Austro-German and West-Slavonic *Kulturraum*. Zdeněk Lukeš of Prague calls Friedrich Weinwurm the Slovak Loos, based on his refusal of decoration and his slight touch of neo-classicism. Henrieta Moravčíková links these characteristics to Weinwurm’s teacher, Heinrich Tessenow’s opus. While both observations are correct, the link with Loos refers more to his use of materials and composition of masses, treatment of the façade, whereas Loos’ *Raumplan*, its labyrinthine character, based on Albert Einstein’s *Raum-Zeit* (space-time) and indirectly to Jewish mysticism, is largely absent. It is curious that Einstein impacted more the Christian Loos than the Jewish Weinwurm who, as Moravčíková explains, was more pragmatic than theoretical, also avoiding some schematism of functionalism. Still, Weinwurm’s architectural

language was far from being compact and exclusive – different modernist idioms ran parallel: restrained Modernism characterizes Villa Sonnenfeld in Bratislava (1928), while Dr. Klaubert House resembles the Dutch *avant-garde*. Even on one single building one encounters different architectural languages, as with the Grand Sanatorium, which on the street front shows decorativism similar to that of architect Lajos Kozma in Budapest, while on the courtyard façade one encounters some elements of Alvar Aalto’s Paimio Sanatorium.

In the sub-chapter titled “Germans, Jews or Free-Masons: a Unique Aesthetics” the author sheds light on the social milieu of Weinwurm. Here the reader finds information on Jewish clients of Bratislava, Piešťany, who provided the architect with commissions for erecting villas, beer factory for the families Heller, Stein and Graber. He also designed the mortuary for the Orthodox Jewish Cemetery in Bratislava.

In the chapter titled “Politically Engaged Architecture” one can read about Weinwurm’s interwar period housing estates that followed the philosophy and forms of the German *Siedlungs-Architektur*, simple, clean, social and harmonious. However, on page 103 a photograph shows the irony of history: on the streets of the housing estate *Nova Dobá* [new times], created by social democracy, Nazis are marching under the banner *Defilé národnej sily* [the parade of people’s power] in 1944. However, by then, Friedrich Weinwurm was no longer alive. Hiding from Slovak and Hungarian authorities in order to avoid deportation to Auschwitz, he wrote his last letter home to his family in 1942. It is not known which Nazi collaborators murdered him, whether the Hungarian or the Slovak. With him and his fellow Jews, Central Europe was annihilated too under the boots of Nazis and later the Soviets.

Henrieta Moravčíková’s book is not only exceptional regarding the presentation and analyses of the architecture, including its *Zeitgeist*, but also in terms of design: the typography, the slightly yellowish paper that recalls the interwar period and, most poignantly, regarding color photographs: in the era of eye-catchy, garish, over-photoshopped digital images shot with dramatic wide-angle lenses printed on shiny paper, this book presents restrained, film-like colors, shot with moderately wide lenses on matt paper, in tune with the drab, slight decay of interwar period villas – a real *Gesamtkunstwerk*.

Rudolf Klein



**Arhitekt Danilo Fürst /  
The Architect Danilo Fürst**

Author: Nataša Koselj  
 Publisher: Celjska Mohorjeva Družba  
 ISBN: 978-961-278-082-1  
 Languages: Slovenian and English  
 Year: 2013

The architect Danilo Fürst (1912–2005) was a pioneer of prefabricated housing in Slovenia. As a student of Plečnik, he was also a master of architectural detail, which was mainly shaped before WWII when he was the town architect in Bled. Among his most important works are Stražišče Kranji Primary School, terraced houses in Peričeva Street in Ljubljana, and the Forest Authorities building in Bled. With Edvard Ravnikar and France Ivanšek, he was on the founding committee of the *Arhitekt* magazine. He was also the president of the Slovenian and Yugoslavian architects’ associations, and the organizer of many actions and events that crucially marked the development of Slovenian architecture in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

From the Publisher.



**Bratislava Atlas Sídlisk /  
Bratislava Atlas of Mass Housing**

Authors: Henrieta Moravčíková, Mária Topolčanská, Peter Szalay, Matúš Dulla, Soňa Ščepánová, Slávka Toscherová, Katerína Haberlandová  
 Publisher: Slovart Publications  
 Language: English, Slovak  
 ISBN: 978 80556 04787  
 Year: 2012

The mass housing developments that loomed so large in the built output of the

postwar decades have never fitted easily within the mainstream of modern heritage, which emphasizes the individualism of “master” designers and designs. If we wish to properly convey the character of these housing complexes, a much wider approach is required, inventorising entire districts and grounded in collective statistics rather than glamorous individual imagery. Here, however, we run up against the sheer scale of the subject-matter itself, which hugely challenges any published inventory project. Thus, there have been only isolated efforts to inventorise entire mass housing “stocks”: for example, the (un-illustrated) “gazetteer” section of the 1994 volume, *Tower Block*, co-authored by this reviewer with Stefan Muthesius. The comprehensive housing inventory of the city of Amsterdam published in 1992, with its color-coded maps and statistics on every single social housing project, required a book of such massive dimensions (A3) that it can only realistically be accessed in an archive or library.

In a bold attempt to break out of this impasse, Henrieta Moravčíková and colleagues have made the most ambitious attempt yet to produce a comprehensive area inventory of mass housing in book form, in their new, fully-bilingual *Bratislava Atlas of Mass Housing*. This atlas is both a thematic monograph and an area-based gazetteer. Its first part contains essays on the historical and cultural context of postwar housing in socialist Czechoslovakia, highlighting the prominence of standardization and industrial prefabrication within post-Khrushchev Soviet-bloc housing discourses. The main “atlas” itself fills 206 of the book’s 343 pages, comprising a chronological inventory of all 21 housing schemes built in Bratislava between 1955-1995, complete with maps, statistics and historic photos and text summaries. The relatively small number and large size of postwar developments in Bratislava emphasizes the concentrated, coordinated character of Eastern Bloc housing production. The final section, with its type-plans of standard housing blocks and institutions, and its photographs of public art projects, accentuates the socialist countries’ focus on extreme type-plan standardization, and their vastly spacious, usually semi-completed landscaping and social provisions.

Overall, *Bratislava Atlas Sidlisk* provides the most comprehensive single-city mass housing book-form coverage yet achieved, with very few identifiable gaps: an overall map of the city would have been helpful, as would clearer captioning of the layouts of individual housing schemes. To some extent, it runs counter to today’s electronic orthodoxy of GIS-type databases, “tagging” and so forth, but perhaps an ideal formula would combine the two, as in the recent Heritage Lottery-funded project,

“Tower Block UK”, which makes *Tower Block* and its gazetteers available as an electronic resource (see <https://www.towerblock.eca.ed.ac.uk>). The **docomomo** International Specialist Committee on Urbanism and Landscape (of which Henrieta Moravčíková is an active member) is currently pursuing the potential of on-line databases, one experimental project being the **docomomo** International Mass Housing Archive (<https://datashare.is.ed.ac.uk/handle/10283/2927>). Maybe Bratislava’s publication of the most comprehensive published inventory to date could become the foundation for a Slovak database initiative of equivalent international exemplary status?

Miles Glendinning



**Manufacturing Socialist Modernity: Housing in Czechoslovakia, 1945-1960**

Author: Kimberly Elman Zarecor  
 Publisher: University of Pittsburgh Press  
 Language: English  
 ISBN: 978-0822944041  
 Year: 2011

Eastern European prefabricated housing blocks are often vilified as the visible manifestations of everything that was wrong with state socialism. For many inside and outside the region, the uniformity of these buildings became symbols of the dullness and drudgery of everyday life. *Manufacturing a Socialist Modernity* complicates this common perception. Analyzing the cultural, intellectual, and professional debates surrounding the construction of mass housing in early postwar Czechoslovakia, Zarecor shows that these housing blocks served an essential function in the planned economy and reflected an interwar aesthetic, derived from constructivism and functionalism, that carried forward into the 1950s.

With a focus on prefabricated and standardized housing built from 1945 to 1960, Zarecor offers broad and innovative insights into the country’s transition from capitalism to state socialism. She demonstrates that during this shift, architects and engineers consistently strove to meet the needs of Czechs and Slovaks despite challenging economic conditions, a lack of material resources, and

manufacturing and technological limitations. In the process, architects were asked to put aside their individual creative aspirations and transform themselves into technicians and industrial producers.

*Manufacturing a Socialist Modernity* is the first comprehensive history of architectural practice and the emergence of prefabricated housing in the Eastern Bloc. Through discussions of individual architects and projects, as well as building typologies, professional associations, and institutional organization, it opens a rare window into the cultural and economic life of Eastern Europe during the early postwar period.

From the Publisher.



**Edvard Ravnikar: Architect and Teacher**

Editors: Ales Vodopivec, Rok Znidarsic  
 Publisher: Springer  
 Language: English  
 ISBN: 978-3211992036  
 Year: 2010 [2009]

Edvard Ravnikar (1907–1993) is considered the central figure in Slovenia’s post-WWII architecture. He was Joze Plecnik’s most famous student. Plecnik studied under Otto Wagner. Ravnikar worked for Le Corbusier in Paris as of 1939 after completing his studies in 1935. His thorough planning reflects Plecnik’s poetic architecture, while his formal work was in line with Le Corbusier’s vision of urban planning and modern architecture. Ravnikar was his own man artistically, and wasn’t only successful as an architect. How work also made him an important personage in the development of the architecture department. He was a critic and essayist for the Slovenian and international media. All of this influenced generations of Slovenian architects and explains why Ravnikar can be felt in almost all major Slovenian buildings and monuments. This monograph can be viewed as the result of an examination of Ravnikar’s oeuvre. It contains documentation on his buildings and written work, as well as contributions by Friedrich Achleitner, William J.R. Curtis, Friedrich Kurrent, Boris Podrecca and many others.

From the Publisher.

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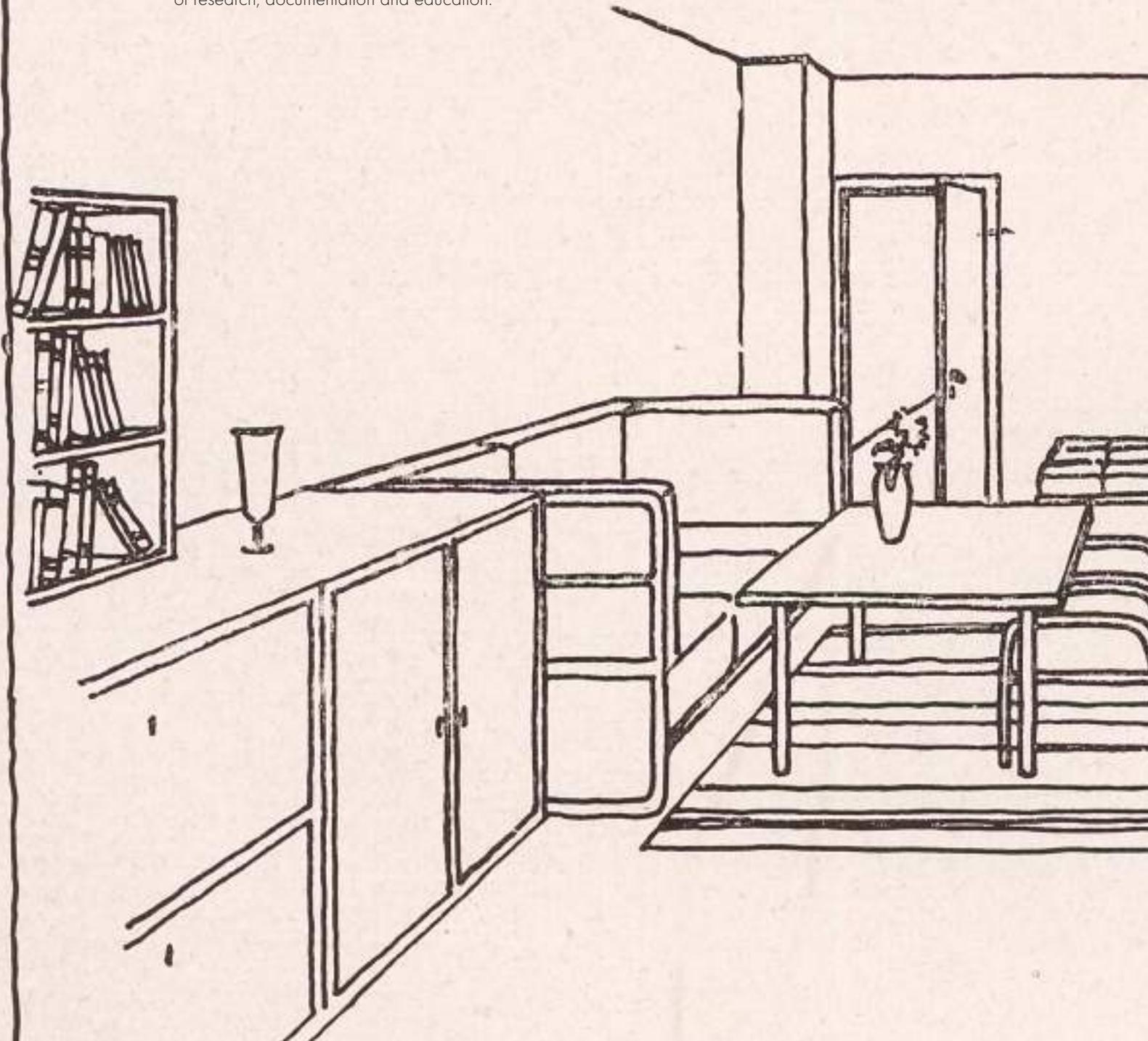
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