

Module 001 / F 05.11

Module 002 / Restraum

2 video installations by Meggie Schneider / 2010

The private living room as a module and part of the cultural history of everyday life and as a contemporary document

Floor plans of a way of life, a form of architecture in the broadest sense, claiming that ways of life can be read as an architectural construct.



Floor plan of a P2 module for 2 residential parties
(P = "Plattenbau" = prefabricated building / 2 = 2nd development plan)

In former East Germany, housing was always considered to be an essential component of the ideological legitimisation of the system: the prefabricated building as a technical but socially determined artefact. The socialist family was generally considered to be the smallest unit of society in the GDR. The suspension of the bourgeois separation of public and private sphere in favour of a basic universal identity of interest between individual, family and society was an important factor. Family, the domestic realm and socialist society were linked in a new way.

Experimental P2 housing complexes were established in the early 60s by architect collectives, emphasizing uniformity of design both exterior and interior. These units were built more often than any other model of prefabricated housing. In a few years, they became the symbol of the "New Life, New Living". Housing standards, which were primarily organized and planned by the government leaders, served as a tool to control and arrange the life of GDR citizens.

In this project the housing module / unit ("L'Unité d'Habitation") functions as a cinematic narrative and artefact, as well as an archive of images.

If we see the "Plattenbau" as a form of memory storehouse, then the contents are its residents and one discovers an archival sequence of personal stories on housing.

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GER 2010 / 1- channel / 4:3 / blu-ray disc / colour / stereo / 22 mins

suggestion

Installation: 1 TV-monitor / 1 AV-Player / 1 headphone / 1 table / 1 chair

Video stills



F for the section / 5 for the level, following Western Standard / 11 for the apartment door

A P2 first-occupancy resident tells of her life. The apartment had been bestowed to her by the state on account of merit and she has remained in the same one, in the same block, until today. And yet the number of her apartment's level altered by four floors. Her coordinates are easy to find when we look at the housing monument. A solitary hanging flower basket is a stark contrast to the strict graphic architecture in its public space and accentuates the personal view. Still, this 'risky venture' is reflected in the strength of the resident herself. Against the regulations she uses this solitary plant as a symbol of her own past and brings it into the new system. She had been told that the statics made it impossible to hang a plant.

German text:

F für den Abschnitt, 5 für die Etage nach West-Standard, 11 für die Wohnungseingangstür

Eine P2 Erstbezugs-Bewohnerin erzählt aus ihrem Leben. Einst für Verdienste vom Staat beschenkt, blieb sie bis heute in der gleichen Wohnung im selben Block. Und doch änderte sich die Bezeichnung ihrer Etage um 4 Stockwerke. Beim Betrachten des Wohnmonuments sind ihre Koordinaten leicht auszumachen. Eine einzige Blumenampel lehnt sich aus der strengen Grafik hinaus in den öffentlichen Raum und betont den persönlichen Blick. Doch das Wagnis liegt in der Stärke der Bewohnerin selbst. Entgegen der jetzigen Vorschriften, rettet sie ihre ehemals inszenierte Blumenpracht in einer einzelnen Pflanze wie ein vertrautes Artefakt ihrer eigenen Geschichte in das neue System hinüber. Man sagte ihr, es sei die Statik, die das Anhängen einer Pflanze unmöglich mache.

Module 002 / Restraum

GER 2010 / 1-channel / HD 16:9 / blu-ray disc / stereo / colour / 19 mins

suggestion

Installation:

1 video projector (ca. 3.000 Ansi-LM) / 1 AV-player / 2 speakers / 1 amplifier /
2 chairs from „Palast der Republik“

Video stills



A nameless urban public space in the geographical centre of Berlin, near Alexanderplatz. Framed by two housing monuments of the prefabricated building type P2, set on stilts. It is an urban dialogue, positioned in the cinematographic narrative of "shot – reverse shot".

The park-like grounds beyond the railroad tracks of Alexanderplatz is the backdrop for the television tower (Fernsehturm). A number of historic architectural sites such as the church (Marienkirche), the Neptune Fountain (Neptunbrunnen) and the Townhall (Rotes Rathaus) are located there. Other buildings and homes were demolished to make way for a vast open space. A new empty space. Park-like grounds around a water garden with places to sit and stay. A socialist wonderland.

People from labourers to academics were chosen to obtain an appropriate apartment as a bonus or reward, most of them by phone and to their great surprise. The higher the apartment, the greater the honour. Not every apartment had its own balcony, yet all had ONE terrace.

German text:

Ein urbaner Raum mit öffentlichem Charakter in der geografischen Mitte Berlins, namenlos. Gerahmt von zwei auf Stelzen angelegten Wohnmonumenten des Plattenbautyps P2. Angelegt wie die kinematographische Erzählform Schuss-Gegenschuss, ein urbaner Dialog.

Die parkähnliche Anlage jenseits der Schienen des Alexanderplatzes ist die Kulisse für den Fernsehturm. Dort versammeln sich historisch architektonische Sprengel wie Marienkirche, Neptunbrunnen, und Rotes Rathaus. Andere Architekturen und Häuser wurden weggesprengt.

So entstand eine große Freifläche. Ein neuer Leerraum. Eine parkähnliche Anlage mit Sitz- und Verbleibmöglichkeiten vor Wasserspielen. Eine ehemals sozialistische Wunderwelt. Verdiente Arbeiter bis hin zu Akademikern wurden prämiert und ausgezeichnet.

1970 wurde ihnen dort eine Wohnung zuteil, meist per Telefon und Überraschung.

Je höher die Wohnung, desto wichtiger die Auszeichnung.

Nicht jedem seinen Balkon, sondern allen EINE Terrasse! Aber jedem SEINE Wohnung!