



CONTEMPORARY DESIGN &
ARCHITECTURE TRIENNALE
BUDAPEST

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MEETING IN THE CENTER OF EUROPE

Hungary will be the home of the European Union's presidency in 2011. This event will place Budapest in the centre of international interest—one of the continent's cities with a great history and whose culture is still actively being shaped by both western and eastern effects and trends up to this day. The imminent presidency of this capital city also offers the opportunity to place the relevant values of the culture shaped by this double impact in the focus of interest for the community of the European Union. The objective of our initiative, therefore, is that the areas of contemporary culture that are followed by an increasing amount of interest—architecture and design—would be introduced in the framework of an international exhibit. The exhibit opens the doors for us to launch the Budapest Architectural and Design Triennale (CoDA – Contemporary Design and Architecture) event series, which will provide a regular home for the introduction of international as well as Eastern and Western European contemporary architecture and design.

FROM THE SEA TO THE MIDDLE OF LAND

European harbour cities provide homes for successful contemporary architectural exhibitions: Rotterdam, Venice and Lisbon. Budapest, this city located in the heart of Central Europe, wishes to join this group of cities with a concept similar to the others yet unique in connection with the historic events of the recent past.

THE CONQUEST OF LAND IN THREE STEPS

Explorers and conquerors defined the conquest of unknown territories in three tactical steps:

- 1. MAPPING THE UNKNOWN TERRITORY
- 2. DEVELOPING A STRATEGY AND
- 3. EXECUTING THE PLAN, THAT IS, CONQUER THE TERRITORY.

The Budapest Architectural and Design Triennale will follow this proven method, with the purpose of providing a platform for the contemporary architectural and design trends to be introduced, in addition to the seaside cities, in the centre of Europe also.



Remembrance Point, Hódmezővásárhely



Neon covers exhibition, Budapest



Kitsch and Cult exhibition, Budapest, 1999

1 THE FIRST STEP THE UNKNOWN RECENT PAST...

The events of the second half of the 20th century divided Europe in two. Despite the differing political ideologies, development posed similar challenges to the Western and the Eastern European architects and designers as well. The architects and designers of the 21st century build on this, from many aspects, common past today.

The first event of the CoDA11 event series in 2011 in Budapest will be the extraordinary historical exhibition entitled Scales, 1960-2010, which will attempt to introduce this intrinsically intertwined past with its common roots.

2 THE SECOND STEP EXPLORING THE "SCALES"

The exploration of the topics of the Scales exhibit will take place with the launching of the coordinated research projects of the European countries. The international research projects will be led by the Chair of Architectural Theory of the Institute gta, ETH Zurich.

3 THE THIRD STEP THE SCALES EXHIBITION

The Scales exhibition will be organized in arrangement with the congress of the European Forum for Architectural Policies (EFAP) held in Budapest in 2011. In connection with the exhibition, a conference will also take place where the research results of the participating European countries will be presented to the representatives of the profession, the media and the associated disciplines.

SCALES 1960-2010



ARCHITECTURES > CITIES >
> LANDSCAPES > EUROPE

To understand the recent architectural landscape of Europe means to survey a territory, which underwent, and is still undergoing, radical transformations. These were triggered by the division of the continent into two political blocks: upheavals, reforms and the big political earthquakes of 1956, 1968 and 1989, followed by the EU extension in 2005. The skepticism regarding the possibility of European integration and the rhetoric of an "old" and a "new" Europe was not only an attempt to mark a new internal border, but to attest youthfulness to political leaders who served in crumbling regimes before. While further extensions of the EU are pending, the diversity of opinions over the future of the European project increases.

The goal of the proposed exhibition and conference is therefore to establish a conceptual framework to understand the radical changes of territorial, urban and architectural form in Europe between 1960 and the present in their social context. The division of the continent into two political "blocks", as expressed in the "Iron Curtain" metaphor, asks for a careful investigation into differences in paradigms, theories and paths of knowledge transfer. The planned exhibition, however, is neither a display of source- and interpretative material intended mainly for scholarly review, nor a nostalgia show of photographs, interiors and objects, but a collection of visual material produced for this occasion, which will allow a comparative view of the processes of transformation.

The basic structure of the exhibition can be best outlined as structured along two axes: one is a timeline of the fifty years between 1960 and 2010; the other axis represents the main areas/scales of transformation under the influence of such overarching processes as industrialization, centralization, de-industrialization, post-Fordism, the emergence of consumer society, ecological concerns, the fostering and dismantling of the welfare state. The role of institutions and methodologies of planning (e.g. trans-border areas, country, region and city) as well as attempts at creating international networks across political boundaries will be considered.

This is the core of the exhibition. It focuses on "samples" taken from parts of Europe which underwent radical transformation since 1960. Such examples are e.g. the industrialization and deindustrialization of the Rhine valley, Wallonia (Belgium) and Silesia (Poland); the development of a tourist industry in France, Switzerland, Austria or Croatia; or the distribution of agricultural land in border regions. Areas separated by the "Iron Curtain" are particularly interesting, including border regions of the former Yugoslavia and its federative states as well as territories along the recent Schengen borders. Such changes will be visualized by sequences of maps, aerial/satellite views, and photographs. Interactive computer animations may be displayed as well. The scale of the visualization should allow a comparison of the examples. The ideological differences between liberal market economies, Capitalist welfare states, diverse Socialist approaches ("New Economic Mechanism", easing state control, limited market economies) will be shown, demonstrating their respective "strategic" sectors of development. The exhibition will also show the regulatory instruments, such as central planning, building norms and standards. This part of the exhibition focuses on processes of change in different scales, such as:

Complementing this core aspect of the exhibition, additional topics can be introduced to provide the temporal processes of change with an interpretational framework. Such topics include:

- Knowledge transfer. The metaphor of the "Iron Curtain" conceals the fact that in Eastern European countries architects have closely followed the architecture in the West, architectural books and magazines were available in the libraries of most design offices and were used in architectural education as well. Architectural magazines such as L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui or Domus were published in Russian. The International Union of Architects (UIA) played a leading role in the East/West contacts, making several attempts to launch a magazine based on East/West cooperation. Architects from East and West were working on international competitions and large-scale projects. The design "export" to other countries and continents (Africa) is a further topic to be investigated, as well as the role of global networks of funding for study, research or publication.
- Designing utopia: the critical stance toward reality, existing both in East and West, resulted in concepts for a better society. Such alternatives, showing the margins of freedom in East and West, were expressed in visionary architectural projects. Many of these imaginary projects emerged in the aftermath of 1968, and required new and inventive methods of visualization.
- The disciplinary framework of architecture: the organization of architectural education and design, the self-understanding of the profession, the sources of innovation and creativity. The scales of state-controlled, corporate and private practices and their output underwent during this period considerable changes. The role of architectural publications (magazines, and books) and their diversification (academic, professional, popular, sub- and transcultural etc.) will be shown as well as the influence of film and television in promoting images of the architect and the architectural profession.

The "resolution" of this system can be refined or reduced according to the size of the exhibition and the available means. Other areas can be added, but an emphasis on a smaller number of topics (described above as the "core part") is possible as well.

Today, as the price tag for being included in the camp of new Europeans becomes more visible, new tectonic shifts, new boundaries emerge, which are far from being purely metaphorical or imaginary: between the states that signed the Schengen treaty and those who are waiting 'outside'; the countries that are promised admittance to the EU and those put on hold. Before what is called 'the fall of communism', Western and Eastern Europe looked at each other as their own dark 'others': communism and capitalism, divided by the Iron Curtain, were the Twin Empires on the mythical map of Europe. The perfect symmetry of the image, however, had nothing to do with the reality. The Iron Curtain as a theatrical image was able to stimulate Western fear and desire, but in reality the curtain was far from being impenetrable. This semi-permeability that turned the Iron Curtain into an osmotic membrane refuted the supposed symmetry of the East-West division. In difference to the identification in the West with the concept of Western Europe and the corresponding values, the idea of a shared Eastern European identity has never been popular among residents of this region. But historians as well as politicians introduced theories to explain the historical structures of change in East and West, even introducing a third category of the Middle ("Central Europe").

Such previous attempts to conceptualize different patterns in the development of the big geographical regions of Europe show the necessity of an analytical and comparative investigation without accepting the popular metaphor of the Iron Curtain as a working hypothesis. This approach would also serve as a tool to reframe the history urban, architectural and object design during this period.

The architecture of the Stalinist period is already relatively well researched and documented. During the recent years, an increasing number of researchers turned their attention to the urbanism, architecture and industrial design of the decades preceding the fall of Communism. The success of recent exhibitions such as "Cold War Modern: Design 1945-1970" at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London shows the interest of the general public in this epoch of political confrontation and aesthetic experimentation. There are endeavors to set up an institutional basis for a systematic research of the period. However, these efforts are not coordinated and most of the research is focused on case studies. Most of them present archival photographs, visual propaganda material such as posters and products of design. They are, however, not able to provide an interpretational framework to explain the transformations in the Eastern and Western parts of Europe – although such an explanation seems necessary to grasp the recent situation.

- The transformation of the territory; its agricultural and industrial use, the instruments and effects of regional planning is the largest scale of the exhibition. The infrastructures of transportation, communication, energy production and -transfer contributed to both the concrete and imaginative reconstruction of nature as artificial landscape. Mountain landscapes, long considered as reservoirs of images intimately connected with national identity, became reshaped by technology, seen both as a tool of progress and amelioration as well as a destructive power, which annihilates differences.

- The transformation of the cities, their core areas and peripheries as the result of automobilization, centralization, suburbanization (sprawl), and more recently in some areas, shrinking will be demonstrated using models, photographs, and excerpts from films that thematized such processes. The development of the city center cannot be separated from new technologies of mobility (public and private transportation concepts and systems) and the recent boom of shopping malls in the vicinity of central areas. Concepts for "New Towns" in many European countries were developed as experiments in the 1960s and 1970s, their recent situation will be part of the exhibition.

- Leisure, tourism and their impact on urbanization and natural reserves is a particularly interesting topic. The spaces of "free time" are frequently described as zones of escape from workday pressures, alienation, or simply from the grayness and uniformity of everyday existence, regardless of the given political system. The spaces of leisure were conceived similarly in East and West, emphasizing the right of the masses to the pure pleasures of water, sun and mountain. The exhibition will address the question whether the dream of escape resulted in similar "heterotopias" despite different political systems. Do the spaces for leisure demonstrate the unity of interest behind different political orientations, or show once again that the fine capillaries of power control all spaces of society, including those for "free time"? The changes that such territories of leisure underwent after 1989 will be investigated.

- The transformation of the dwelling: mass housing, technological innovation and the question of public welfare represents the smallest scale of the exhibition. Large-scale housing estates were constructed in East and West, using prefabrication and advanced building technologies. Today, many of these developments became estates for migrants; their restructuring is a pressing issue. In many countries, the idea of state-supported housing estates has been abandoned in favor of private developments. The exhibition will also show the effects of gentrification, such as the emergence of gated communities in East and West.

It would be desirable to present the exhibition on contemporary architecture and design as an independent entity. There should be, however, no gap between history and the present and no methodological distinction between the "contemporary" and the "historical" part, the exhibits should be conceived according to the same theoretical guidelines. The "contemporary" exhibition would document the current stage of transformations of cities and territories, rather than building up a contrast with the material presented in the historical part. It could be organized as the result of a research based on the collaboration of young architectural offices in Europe, selected on the basis of an internationally distributed call for entries. This approach, focused on processes of change at various scales rather than on single environments and objects – while, of course, allowing and even requiring punctual elaborations by examining such objects – will represent a new approach in the research of European urban, architectural and object design and its social-cultural framework.

To realize these aims, a solid research base should be established, with sub-curators responsible for the larger topics (such as the transformation of cities or leisure developments) as outlined above. These researchers will identify the countries and examples chosen for the comparative case studies and will commission the production of new visual material. They will co-organize several workshops before the exhibition, and a large international conference during the exhibition itself. They will also participate in the editorial work of a comprehensive exhibition catalogue and a volume of scholarly essays. The curator of the exhibition will coordinate the work of these researchers.

