

# Architecture Film Festival Rotterdam

**ROTTERDAM (NL)** — The seventh edition of the Architecture Film Festival Rotterdam (AFFR), a biennial event that this year will run from 10 to 13 October, takes 'Time Machine' as its theme. Through perspectives offered by around 100 films, documentaries, shorts, animations, art-house gems and cult hits, the festival explores the past and future of urban development and cultures in the city.

The organization found its inspiration for the theme in the present: the global economic crisis that, since the previous edition in 2011, has worsened and become broader. According to Wies Sanders, director of the AFFR, 'We've been in a crisis for a while now, and it only seems to expand and deepen. We cannot go back to things as they were, but then the question is: Where should we go? Looking back, everything can be better put in perspective.' Here's our preview of six films from this year's line up. (ZAIRA MAGLIOZZI, KIM HOEFNAGELS)

## ↓ ESTATE

Fifty years ago, gallery flats were the epitome of optimism, the actualization of a malleable society with a modern home for everyone. Nowadays, they more often symbolize degradation and socio-economic problems, and are coming down in droves. The blocks that make up the Haggerston estate in Hackney, East London, are one example. *Estate* follows a number of tenants who must move out to make way for eventual demolition. We become acquainted with their everyday reality, and the individuals challenge stereotypes of those who live in so-called 'sink estates'. The film's images are interspersed with dreamy, almost poetic footage depicting a costume play that is set on the foundations of the new (replacement) housing estate. The result is a subtle examination of the utopian promise and an unconventional reflection on the topical issues of regeneration, gentrification and architecture. (KH)



## ↑ DOM NOVOGO BYTA

The Russian capital is rapidly modernizing. *Dom Novogo Byta* takes us on a journey through the most vulnerable group in Moscow's hunger for innovation: the modernist buildings that Russian architects built in the first fifteen years after the Revolution, such as the Narkomfin building by Mosej Ginzburg and Ignatii Milinis. Through interviews with former residents, archival footage and propaganda material, a colourful picture emerges of the history of this apartment, which was to be the materialization of the communist ideal of communal living. How great is the contrast with the current state of Narkomfin, a ruin in which only a dozen apartments are occupied. The film is required viewing for those who wish to discover the consequences of Russia's transformation from a communist to a capitalist society. (KH)



## ↑ THIS SPACE AVAILABLE

Nowadays, commercial messages invade the public space of our cities more than ever, most of them illegally placed. It is a visual pollution that affects the majority of urban areas, an intrusion in the lives of citizens, and fully out of control. *This Space Available* ironically quotes the well-known phrase to investigate this controversial issue. Influenced by the writing of Marc Gobé (*Emotional Branding*), Gwenaëlle Gobé, his daughter, directs a film that gathers various opinions and experiences in the world of advertising; above all, from among those who are trying to change the current situation. This is the case with 'street art takeover' groups, activist movements that desire to express their point of view by sending a message to society. In the end, when analysing its graphic style, cutting and editing, the film itself emerges as an advertising message: stop wild commercial posting. Let's fight to reclaim the dignity of our cities and of our architecture. (ZM)



## ↓ UNFINISHED ITALY

Stadiums without spectators, dams without water, hospitals without patients and garages without exits. This is the 'unfinished style', one of Italy's most prominent architectural features, according to the documentary *Unfinished Italy*. The 27-year-old director, Benoit Felici, was born in France, yet his Italian origins pushed him to explore the architectural landscape of Italy. The result is a peculiar and poetic journey into the most famous modern ruins of the Mediterranean nation. Besides raising awareness about the current situation, the director tells the story of the people who gather around this unfinished architecture. It is a way to see things from another point of view. Firstly, from the aesthetic side, and secondly, through changing the function for which the architecture was conceived: from a useless polo field to a football field for young talents; from an incomplete bridge to a community garden. Ultimately, it shows creative ways to give these places new life through slight alterations and without damaging their value, however debatable that might be. (ZM)



## ← THE CITY DARK

What do we lose, when we lose the night? This question marks the beginning of a search for the effects of light pollution on the realm of humans and animals. In his research, amateur astronomer and filmmaker Ian Cheney travels to America's brightest and darkest corners, speaking with astronomers, neuroscientists and ecologists, all of whom address the impact of 24/7 illuminated cities. Weaving together cutting-edge scientific findings with a personal, searching narrative – reflecting upon the human relationship to the sky – this feature documentary provides a refreshing introduction to the meaning of the dark. (KH)

## ← HAUS TUGENDHAT

Mies van der Rohe's Villa Tugendhat is widely considered to be an architectural icon. Stylistically, it is perhaps the highlight of European modernism. This documentary, however, focuses not on its art historical value, but tells instead the personal experiences of residents and users of the house, the beauty of which left profound traces through several generations. The Jewish Tugendhat family was only briefly able to enjoy their new home. In 1938, they were forced to flee the Nazis, and there begins a story that has played out across so many places in Europe. Their house was looted by the German Gestapo, and later seized by communist Czechoslovakia. It served as a ballet school and sophisticated guest house, then wrangling over restitution to the family took place, and finally, the villa became a museum. Besides being a wonderful and personal time capsule, the film shows the manner in which the museification of a house occurs – from impressive family home to 'properly furnished dollhouse'. (KH)

## New Town narratives 6

### Milton Keynes calling

**MILTON KEYNES (UK)** — In this final episode of the New Town narratives series, Rachel Keeton of the International New Town Institute (INTI), examines Milton Keynes, a British New Town established in 1967 that has struggled with the same problems that often plague the post-war generation of masterplanned communities.

Establishing a strong identity and challenging a uniform demographic can become major feats for New Towns that were planned in (and for) a specific period of time. And as young families grow up, a wave of teenagers can wreak havoc on even the most liberal communities.

From the beginning, however, Milton Keynes set itself apart with a dedication to modern architecture, public art

↓ Professional graffiti by local talent at Tinkers Bridge.



and creative expression. That commitment continues today. In fact, the New Town is now home to the UK's largest collection of contemporary art, with more than 200 public pieces. In an effort to engage its disaffected youth, this New Town has also claimed a niche as a haven for the alternative art scene. Embracing street artists as legitimate fore-runners of a 'new media', the Milton Keynes Youth Service has even sponsored a scheme to grant young vandals legal access to public places and provide them with instruction from established spray can artists like David Fenton.

The annual Milton Keynes Festival Fringe is another example. This much-loved summer fair stages 'new and experimental work, including street arts, performance, outdoor theatre, visual arts, music and dance'. MK Gallery, a critically acclaimed contemporary art gallery, has been pushing boundaries since its creation in 1999. A recent programme included an outdoor screening of the Chemical Brothers' *Don't Think*, complete with an after-party featuring DJ Slyde. By activating its youth rather than ignoring them and engaging the public in the creative process of identity-creation, Milton Keynes has effectively transitioned from avant-garde New Town to established cultural destination. (RACHEL KEETON)



## Clean swimming

**MAASTRICHT (NL)** — Historically, the ceramic industry has played a prominent role in the economic development of Maastricht, in the south of the Netherlands. The city once again honours its name as a ceramics town with the newly opened 'Geusselbad' swimming pool. The facade of the cradle-to-cradle (C2C) building, designed by Slangen + Koenis, is lined with ceramic elements of sustainable raw materials, which have been produced so that they can be endlessly recycled in a safe way. A nice detail is that the factory that, together with the architects, developed the tiles is located just a stone's throw away from the pool. The design is thus not only completely in accordance with the C2C philosophy but also stimulates local production. (KIM HOEFNAGELS)

'Geusselbad' C2C swimming pool, 2008 – 2013 Architect Slangen + Koenis Client Municipality of Maastricht Ceramic tiles Mosa Address Discusworp 4, Maastricht Info: www.slangenkoenis.nl