

## BAUhahaHAUS

Opening May 4th 2017 7pm

Exhibition from May 5th through June 17th

Wed-Sat 2pm – 5pm, Fri until 8pm

Guided tours with curator Rositza Alexandrova:

\* May 9th, 5.30pm

\* May 17th 5pm

Despite 'organic' urban sprawl, skyscrapers 'sprouting' in the desert and moss-bedecked concrete on highways with 'green lungs' and asphalt 'tongues,' seldom anything says inanimate more than the built environment. Inanimate and inert. Indisputably indeed, the only time construction actually comes to life and moves is when it crumbles... Ha!

Paradox, absurdity and humour have often been our way of coming to terms with human fallibility — including by extension the fallibility of those same chiselled stones that we create not merely to live in, but to outlive us. Architecture enters high entropy invariably and hilariously. Ironists bait it with gravity to a ground zero levelled in sarcasm and cement. But beyond this existential Schadenfreude of knowing that the pharaoh's new pyramid will also vanish traceless in its turn, there are redemptive notes for the funny bone to hit in the homo sapiens habitat: ludic play, experimental provocation, the sheer joie de vivre that propels our Pygmalion hopes and hubris. For building booms and busts may come and go, yet the Sisyphean silliness remains of putting stone upon stone to only see it fall — like in the old slapstick routine of the banana peel. Walls that simply will not stand, towers that tilt, roofs irrepressibly leaky — a litany of mishaps and calamitous designs instructs us in humility.

Plummet now to the profane: what is a joke in architecture? Is it the practical one of petty vindictiveness — when accidentally-on-purpose the chimney-sweep forgets his tall hat in the smokestack and slighted decorator mixes rotten eggs into the wall paint (not quite the client's idea of eggshell finish)? Or is it the systemic 'prank' of pre-planned obsolescence — 'on an industrial' scale? Alternatively, in grand-theoretical arenas, might the joke not be on the deliberate mischief and contrived banter of postmodern pastiche? We no longer think of the primitive hut as 'a joke of a house' but in a post-truth world, neither does it matter that we consider the kitschy mansion 'ridonculous'. Was the genre of the architectural folly ever conceived in irony? Can certain large-scale urbanist projects amuse us despite and not because of the enduring Art Atrocious? Must social housing always end up so serious and the smart house so insufferable?

If throughout the First Machine Age, automata were inherently comedic in their jerky mechanicity and made us 'roar' with laughter 'like an engine', how does the digital domus make us smile in its seamlessness? How do we deal with digital derision? Short of living inside a marsupial's pouch, our homes are neither as modular and mobile, nor as bionic and intelligent, as the current rhetorical overlays envision. Certainly smart signaletics are not as fool-proof as they are elaborate. And building blocks are not stem cells, but still we strive to make them sentient: creating architectural environs with sensors, switches, proprioceptive surfaces. Is it even possible to parody this bravely distributed neurobiological New World where consciousness tries to transmogrify from the CPU (and its prerogative for speed) to the no less efficacious paradigm of placenta-periphery. If our machines for living have given way to urban envelopes and 'Einfamilien' pods of wonderful and womblike provisions, must we poke fun? Or ought we simply grin with contentment that there's an app accountable for our every whim?