

**RENEWAL  
AND RE-  
THINKING:  
THE PAST  
TWO DE-  
CADES OF  
CONTEMPO-  
RARY HOUS-  
ING  
ARCHITEC-  
TURE IN  
SERBIA**

ILIJA GUBIĆ  
NEBOJŠA ANTEŠEVIĆ



Exhibition is organized in Kigali, Rwanda,  
10-31 October 2022

**Publishers:**

Center for Sustainable Urban Development and Culture “Structure”, Novi Sad, Serbia and School of Architecture and Built Environment, University of Rwanda, Kigali, Rwanda.

**For publishers:**

Bojana Gubić  
Dr Josephine Malonza

**Exhibition curators:**

Ilija Gubić  
Dr Nebojša Antešević

**Text authors:**

Ilija Gubić  
Dr Nebojša Antešević

**Reviewers:**

Dr Vladana Putnik Prica  
Dr Bogdan Janjušević  
Dr Stefanie Leontiadis

**Photographs:**

Relja Ivanić

**Graphic Design:**

Ilija Gubić  
Steven Niyigena

**Printing:**

Sajnos

ISBN: 978-86-900109-5-0  
COBISS.SR-ID: 79658249

Autori se zahvaljuju Muzeju primenjene umetnosti u Beogradu na ustupljenom materijalu i podršci u realizaciji izložbe.

Cover page: N1 Housing in Kragujevac (built 2015-2016)  
by Marija Simović and Petar Simović © Relja Ivanić

RENEWAL AND  
RETHINKING: THE  
PAST TWO  
DECADES OF  
CONTEMPORARY  
HOUSING ARCHI-  
TECTURE IN  
SERBIA

ILIJA GUBIĆ  
NEBOJŠA ANTEŠEVIĆ

After the Second World War and up to the early 1990s, single family housing in Serbia was largely built without any architectural or artistic pretensions. Typically, houses were gloomy structures of similar size rarely exceeding one hundred square meters, particularly in suburban areas. At the time, such houses were in most cases built according to various pre-existing designs that represented modifications of public architectural enterprises embedded within a socialist construction sector, resulting in relative uniformity and a lack of individual identity for most dwellings. In addition, single family houses that were built on the outskirts of urban centres were not often actively designed by architects and urban planners. The construction of such buildings usually commenced with a minimum budget, resulting in many houses remaining unfinished for years. Often the owners of these dwellings would complete the ground floor first in order to allow for a quasi-normal habitation of the building during the extended construction period.

Later, the situation with multifamily housing in Serbia changed due to the so-called Belgrade school of housing that developed in the 1950s among the Faculty of Architecture in Belgrade. The design practice that developed from this school of thought during the following decades significantly contributed to the improvement of the quality of residential architecture, especially in terms of apartment organization and the technical-technological possibilities of housing construction. Various experts (architects, urban planners, economists, and sociologists)

conducting research through the Institute for Urban Planning and Housing brought about a significant improvement in the quality of housing as one of the chief components of spatial planning for cities. Multifamily housing of the time became known for its organizational models of apartments, use of prefabricated elements and construction operations that improved the speed of construction. This period is also when architects and other engineers from Serbia were working on housing development in countries in Africa as part of a framework for collaboration through the Non-Aligned Movement.

In the 1990s, both during and after the war in this region and during the years when international sanctions were being imposed on all the countries of the former Yugoslavia, the housing sector stagnated—largely because the transition underway to a new system of social and economic organization had brought radical changes to the planning and construction of apartments as well as to the maintenance of the existing housing stock. Many design and construction companies that had been the backbone of social housing construction closed due to lack of opportunities and the privatization of the housing sector. Researchers have claimed that this is also when the collapse of the quality of the housing stock (i.e. multi-family housing) occurred.

At this same time, massive social changes led to a new generation of rich families willing to invest significant funds into their single family



houses in an effort to show off their acquired wealth. It is worth noting that the majority of Serbians did not benefit in this way from these social changes. These new living spaces were created with the assistance of architects, who appeared for the first time as complete authorial personalities together with clients. Such examples were seen in Belgrade first, with the list of architects involved being relatively short. Nonetheless, the architecture of many family houses built at the time was heavily influenced by the demands of private investors, so the role of the architect as a professional was often minimized.

In 1999 Serbia was bombed by NATO, and as a result a portion of the country's housing was damaged. New opportunities for housing in Serbia came after 2000, when international sanctions were lifted, the private sector was strengthened and investment in housing construction was reinvigorated by demographic changes and a gradual increase in living standards. This is also when the architectural competitions for social housing projects were reestablished, encouraged by international donations for housing construction and the renewed availability on the local market of required construction materials. The new realities brought about the establishment of private architectural bureaus that focused on single-family and multi-family housing projects. Housing became the focus of various architectural activities (e.g. exhibitions, conferences, panel discussions, expert meetings and publications).

N8 residential building in Kragujevac (built 2017) by Studio Simović © Relja Ivanić







VU Family House in Novi Sad (built 2017-2019) by Dijana Adžemović Anđelković, Vladimir Anđelković and Aleksandar Bogojević © Relja Ivanić



House on the river in Progar (built 2016) by Remorker Architect © Relja Ivanić



At the annual Exhibition of Architecture [Salon arhitekture], organized by the Museum of Applied Arts in Belgrade, the majority of awards went to residential buildings, pointing to yearly architectural productions. Other established awards for architecture in Serbia promoted a new and improved approach to residential architecture that reflected a departure from postmodern influences and the ascendancy of perspectives from architects new to the scene. Many residential buildings that were shown at the time did not strictly follow the established trends of architectural aesthetics, which were a direct reflection of an investor's social status, often involving the investor finalising the construction of a house planned several years before. Within just a few years' time and despite what were the sometimes catastrophic results of social planning, a new crop of investors—often educated in the west and influenced by the western understanding of a “house as a dwelling machine”—emerged, bringing a higher quality, richer architecture that more properly reflected the complexity of society.

After the global economic crisis, in the last decade a new flywheel effect has appeared in the construction sector, in which architectural services have an increasing share. Serbia is facing an increased demand for apartments that has fostered new and larger investments in the housing construction sector. This demand has also brought about the appearance of residential

complexes and residential blocks (condominiums), first through foreign investments and then later through the projects of large domestic construction companies. The evolving state of the housing market led to the establishment of new architectural studios with a focus on residential architecture. The real estate market thus influenced the improvement of design solutions and the overall quality of housing construction. The younger generation of architects who entered the design scene after 2010 have brought with them new approaches to design practice, which is particularly visible through award-winning solutions of residential architecture that utilize modern materials and apply modern technological solutions in housing construction, especially for the purpose of achieving greater sustainability and energy efficiency. New architectural studios in Serbia increasingly follow global design trends and are introducing research approaches in their work (e.g. Zabriskie, Re:a.c.t, Model art, 1X2 Studio, and Remorker). Serbia now urgently needs to carry out renovations and reconstructions of the existing housing stock so as to meet new standards of sustainability and to satisfy technological imperatives.

Despite all the unfavourable circumstances Serbia experienced in the past century, including wars, international sanctions and NATO bombing, Serbian architecture has yielded a broad range of quality, original housing solutions during the first two decades of the twenty-first century. Both single-family and multi-family housing architecture in Serbia has been marked by the willingness of architects to follow new trends and to develop their own practices, influenced by Serbia's unique social context. The residential buildings that have risen will remain unique monuments to architectural thought and resistance, as Serbian architects have, often despite troubling realities, accomplished these works of high creativity and imagination in an attempt to adapt to a new age.

Blok 32 residential and office building in Belgrade (built 2018-2020) by Dejan Miletić © Relja Ivanić





Remodeled Serbian Chalet in Divčibare (built 2015) by  
Tijana Mitrović and Andreja Mitrović © Relja Ivanić





Two penthouses in Belgrade (built 2016-2018) by Ela Nešić and Danilo Nedeljković © Relja Ivanić

CIP - Каталогизacija y публикацији  
Библиотеке Матице српске, Нови Сад

728:069.9(497.11)“2000/2020”(083.824)

RENEWAL and rethinking : the past two decades of contemporary housing architecture in Serbia : [exhibition is organized in Kigali, Rwanda, 10-31 October 2022] / [text authors Ilija Gubić, Nebojša Antešević ; photographs Relja Ivanić]. - Novi Sad : Center for Sustainable Urban Development and Culture “Structure” ; Kigali : School of Architecture and Built Environment, 2022 (Novi Sad : Sajnos). - [10] str. : ilustr. ; 25 cm

Tiraž 100.

ISBN 978-86-900109-5-0

a) Стамбена архитектура -- Србија -- 2000-2020 --  
Изложбени каталози

COBISS.SR-ID 79658249