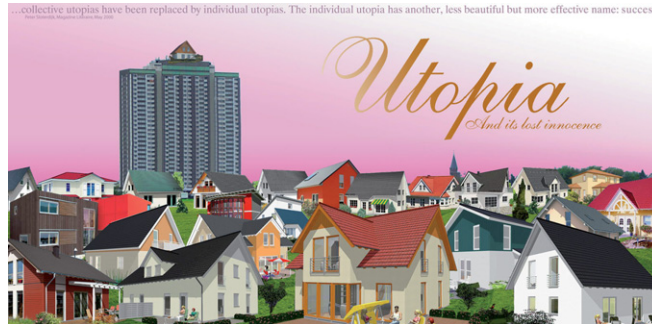


Reconsidering Utopias - Urban Challenges for Cologne



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Reconsidering Utopias – Urban Challenges for Cologne / 2005

Project	UCC
Client	Plan05, Cologne
Curators	M. Herz, I. Weizman
Status	Ideas Competition, Special Mention
Exhibition	Museum Ludwig

The competition asked to study, reposition and redesign architecturally relevant buildings of Cologne that were exemplary for their time within the contemporary economic, social and cultural context of Europe.

Six paradigmatic buildings were selected by the curators due to their central position within the actual debate and as representative examples of the discourse about an evidently failed post-war utopia. Each participant should encounter, comment or respectively redesign these buildings by means of one single image.

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High Rises

These days the City of Cologne gives place to a hot discussion on the future of its high rises. The threat by UNESCO to take Cologne Cathedral from the list of World Heritage Properties if new high rises are erected in its vicinity or disturb its views, has especially exacerbated this debate. Many of the high rises around the cathedral were built in the 60s and 70s.

Utopia

The utopia of the making, its final and complete stage: apocalypse. Cologne people have a saying: „When the cathedral is completed, it will be the end of the world.“ Where is the utopia without ideology? It could be a self-reference of a pure fantastic and constructed image reserved for the future, an image of a city of icons.

Iconography

Cologne Cathedral is meant to be eternal. The ones that started the project never expected to experience its completion. The iconographic quality of the cathedral is the result of a common utopian effort plus a dedication to an architectural style. Nowadays high rises become auto monuments, just as a matter of being high rises. Hence any (new) icon has to be either original or part of the iconological genealogy of its fashion.

Skyscraper

As the planning of a skyscraper is a projection into the horizontal psyche of a city, there is nowadays a common fear of any new high rise. In order to overcome this paranoia the positive effects of their presence as objects have to be increased, especially their visual contribution to the urban panorama.

Style and Fashion

Cologne Cathedral was built in gothic style taking the French cathedrals as example. This style was out of fashion 200 years after the start of its construction. For its completion the structural logic of gothic was undermined by the use of state of the art technology in the late nineteenth century, the use of steel structure for its towers.

Beautification

After its 'completion' beauty and aesthetics of buildings as collective desires have been neglected for centuries in the City of Cologne. The endangering of the cultural icon calls for a beautification of its alleged aggressors as the only realistic means of preventing being kicked off the World Heritage Cultural Scape while keeping developing the city. Aggressors become companions, to increase the visual quality of Cologne's panorama.

UNESCO versus Skyline

Cologne Cathedral was inscribed into the list of World Heritage Properties in 1997. In 2004, it was put on the list of World Heritage in Danger. This decision was based on a projected endangering of the visual integrity of the cathedral and the Cologne City panorama due to the planning of high rises on the other side of the Rhine.

There is a fundamental contradiction between both decisions. The first related to the cathedral as an object only, the latter targeted its context, but just in relation to the proximity of new high rises, not to their aesthetic relevance to the cathedral at all.