

俄罗斯新室内设计

(俄) 巴特・高德霍恩 (俄) 菲利普・莫瑟 编 丛立先 吴俊峰 译

New Interior Design in Russia

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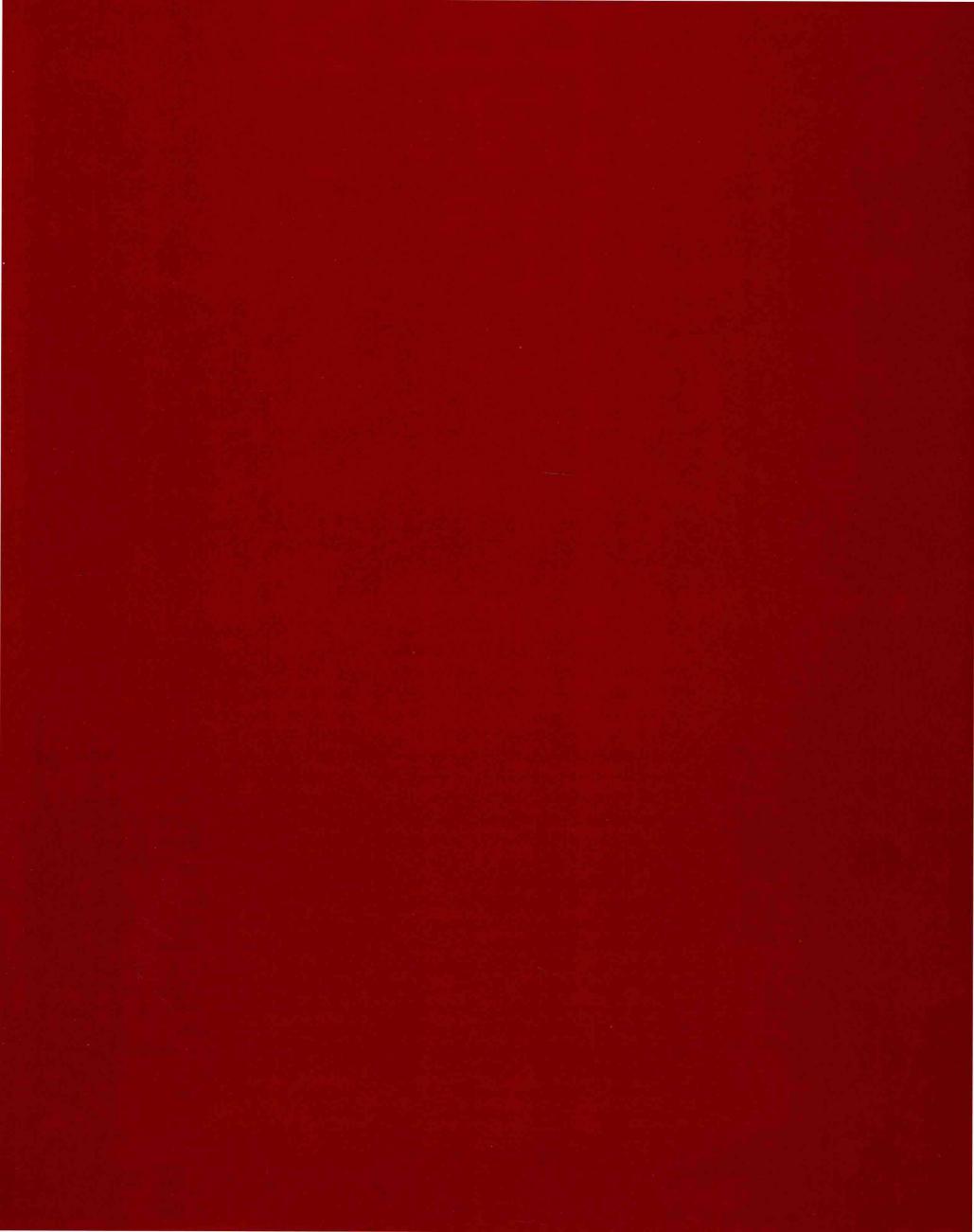
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∞ FREEING THE FLOOR PLAN BELL COURT



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Freeing the Floor Plan

The Rise of Interior Design in Russia

Bart Goldhoorn

自由式设计

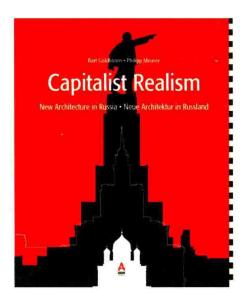
-俄罗斯室内设计的崛起

巴特•高德霍恩

中文摘要:

我亲历俄罗斯室内设计的发展始于1993年,当时我在荷兰文化部授权批准下来到了俄罗斯与一群年轻的建筑师一起工作。那时的俄罗斯由于受到体制的限制,建筑和室内设计的发展陷入窘境。建筑以实用为主,几乎谈不上设计。15年后,情况发生了改变,俄罗斯室内设计的鼎盛时期到来了,个性化的室内设计出现,紧追国时式公寓设计,它不仅是自从1980年代纸面建筑之后俄罗斯向国际建筑领域的第一份重要的贡献,也是俄罗斯室内设计走向繁荣的原因之一。俄罗斯

绝对数量的室内设计作品已经导致了大部分建筑团体活跃在这个领域。这意味着不仅可以在自由设计公寓中看到这些成果,也可以在那些旧式建筑公寓、餐馆、俱乐部和精品店中欣赏到这种设计的辉煌。相比而言,俄罗斯"真正的"建筑看起来比较黯淡,这可能是俄罗斯文化特性的结果。总之,室内设计仅仅是个场景的布置——它不可能像建筑物一样长久存在,但是它更符合俄罗斯艺术、文学、戏剧和电影领域创造的亦真亦幻的传统成就。



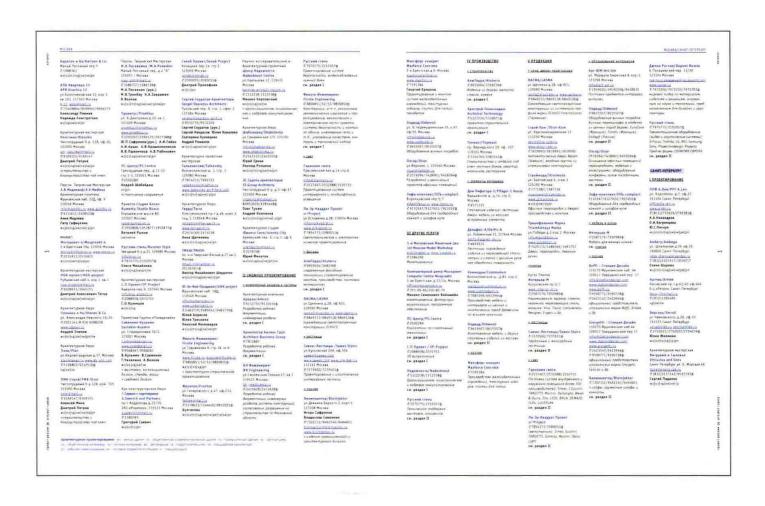
Goldhoorn/Meuser: Capitalist Realism. New Architecture in Russia, DOM publishers, 2006

My personal experience with interior design in Russia started in 1993, when I came to Russia on a grant from the Dutch Ministry of Culture and worked together with some young architects that had just started their own architectural firm. At that time, nobody had money and virtually nothing was being built in Moscow. The only realistic clients were small businessmen who wanted their shops or showrooms fitted out. The work of the architect in this situation didn't have too much to do with design, let alone beauty - his main task was to be sure that at least something was built. In the absence of small construction companies and a transparent market for building products, architects found themselves organising a »brigada« and roaming the markets trying to find building materials. Often the choice for a certain material was dictated by availability rather then considerations of design. Thus it could happen that a shop interior was completely painted in metallic blue since this was the only colour the architect had been able to get hold of. Another example: when a small window was broken in our office, the handyman that did odd jobs for us at the time came back with a German do-it-yourself package for framing pictures he had happened to find in a shop around the corner. This was the only possibility to actually get a

small piece of glass in Moscow – the only other way was to steal it or to order a truckload.

This illustrates the situation in architecture in Moscow at the beginning of the 1990s, and even more so the situation in interior design. Constructing buildings was an activity that was more or less compatible with the mechanisms of communist planning that were still operational by reasons of inertia. Interior design asked above all for a free market — a place where one can find a variety of different products to suit the taste of the individual consumer. And a market was exactly what was missing in Russia at that time.

opposite – if architecture still suffers from the bad quality of design and construction inherited form the Soviet period, interior design is blooming and has caught up with international developments. Russian interiors are published in foreign magazines, Russian designers are flocking the *Milan Salone di Mobile*, Moscow's streets are dotted with foreign interior showrooms and yes, the first monography on Russian interior design (that is, this one) is published.



In order to enable architects to find materials, of until 2005, each issue of *Project Russia* contained a catalogue of building products.

The Birth of the Interior Architect

One of the reasons is that talented young architects in the beginning of the 1990s got involved in interior design – they could not find employment in architecture. Architecture was (and partly still is) controlled by the older generation of architects, who are well connected in the former communist »nomenklatura«. As in any authoritarian system, age is the main prerequisite for getting something done. Older people know how to deal with the regulations and norms and unwritten rules that are governing the construction process – in the end it are the people of their own generation that are pulling the strings.

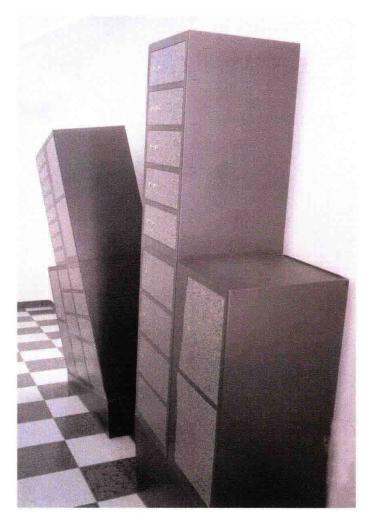
Interior architecture offered an alternative to the perspective of slowly climbing up in the hierarchy of the project institute, trying to get your project approved by an endless row of bureaucrats. In contrast, interior design offered independence and instant success, and in this sense interior design became a school of architecture for a whole generation of Russian architects. Some of them still work in this field, some of them have moved on and are now actually practicing architecture. One of the biggest differences of the interior with architecture

practice was the enormous freedom of the architect. In the Russian construction industry, architecs play a minor role since Khrushchev's reforms of the 1960s, and to a certain extent this is still the case. This freedom and independence also brought responsibilities. Architects would not only design the interiors, but also build them. In fact they became contractors, and they were forced to develop practical knowledge of materials and construction methods, when the market for interior fittings was still very underdeveloped. Often architects would design custommade details instead of just assembling standard elements. This was made possible by the availability of highly qualified craftsmen that would work for relatively low wages. These craftsmen could be found in very disparate fields: on the one hand you had artists with a classical schooling in the Soviet art schools, on the other hand the Soviet high tech defence industry that was desperate for work. There are many examples of furniture or lamps designed by architects and produced by companies that were involved in the Soviet space industry.

An exceptional case is Bioinjector, set up by Igor Safronov, an engineer that had been working on the Soviet space shuttle. After an attempt to produce a high-tech medical instrument for injecting insulin









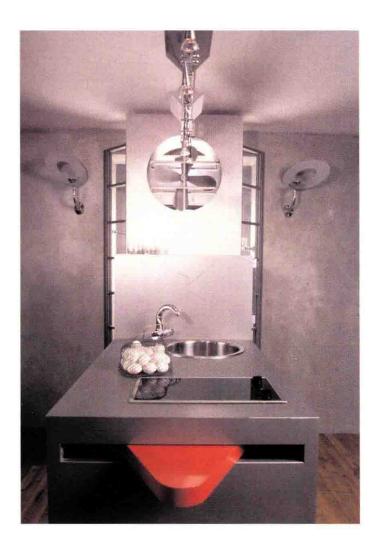
Igor Saronov's bank safes failed because he couldn't find a market for them, in the beginning of the 1990s, he decided to produce a product he was sure would sell – bank-safes. He invited some young architects to make the designs, and as a result he was – and still is – producing the only design safes in the world.

His contact with the architecture world led to the development of another line of work – the production of custom-made furniture and interior fittings. The works produced by his firm and other small metal workshops (often started by former employees) can be found in many works by young Russian architects of that time. The most extreme example are the works by Alexey Kozyr, such as his wairplane apartment« – a 30 square metres one room apartment that is fitted out with a door made of an old Soviet bomber, a bed with a removable steel bridge used to reach the balcony and a bathtub with an aquarium around it.

However, one didn't have to go into high-tech to get hands-on experience with realizing ones projects. Any architect working in interior design had to deal with material supplies, project management, working drawings and explaining builders what he wants them to do. This is even the case with the most popular material in interior design: gypsum board.

Notwithstanding the practical skills needed to realize it, this is where the interior comes closest to its primary purpose as a décor for living. In this way Russian architects were very well prepared to this field of work. In the 1980s, the fact that architects were cut off from the construction process led to the emergence of the Paper Architecture movement: young Russian architects won many international competitions with their beautifully drawn architectural fantasies. These works are not primarily representations of buildings, with floor plans, elevations and sections - they are works in itself, objects of art that require a direct involvement with material, colour and texture. The step from paper architecture to gypsum board architecture was not that big. Many architects from that movement got involved in interior design. A special mention must be made here of Mikhail Filippov, who managed to realize his incredible Piranesi-like architectural fantasies on the scale of apartment interiors.

In 1998, a group of well-known interior designers established a society called *Moscow Architecture Society* (MAO) – a name lent from the organisation thad had existed until 1939 and that included well-known constructivists like Ginzburg, Melnikov and Golosov. The aim of the new MAO was to establish an



Alexey Kozyr's »Airplane Apartment« organisation that would serve the interests of professional interior designers and discuss problems faced by the profession at the time when professional organisations in the field of architecture such as the Moscow and Russian Unions of architecture completely ignored this field. The older generation of architects saw interior architecture as something superficial that shouldn't be taken too serious. At the same time interior architects were making the most money – MAO established its own rate at 400\$ per square metre. Design costs – much higher then the prices that were to be received by their colleagues doing 'real' architecture, even not taking into account the fact that interior designers get percentages of the furniture they buy for their clients.

The Demand for Interior Desgin

So if interior designers were so successful, where did the demand come from? In order to understand this, one should be aware of the situation on the Russian housing market. Under communism, no private houses had been built in Russian cities. Even the members of the Politbureau lived in apartments. Moreover, the majority of the apartments were built after Khrushchev's reforms of the 1960s, meaning

that they were constructed on the basis of standard floor plans that were virtually the same for the whole country. If the floor plans of the first generation of these buildings were small but still more or less OK architecturally – they were designed by architects who believed they were finally able to solve the housing problem in Russia – the later ones deteriorated under influence of the power of the building industry. This is the Soviet reality where everybody, including the wealthy oligarchs came from, and this is the reality from which they hope to escape. The contemporary Russian wants something unique and personal and is ready to pay a lot of money for this.

It is telling that the same does not seem to apply to the buildings the apartments and offices of these new Russians are located in. There is a big difference in attitude towards private and collective space. At the root of this attitude lies again, Soviet history: Soviet propaganda monopolized anything that had to do with the collective. Since architecture belongs to collective space, no high value is put upon it. Anything outside of the apartment building is generally seen as something alien that doesn't really concern the inhabitants. Building budgets are generally very low, materials used are cheap. In contrast, budgets for fitting out the private interiors are almost limitless.



Why an interior architect?

The question that still remains unanswered is why you would actually need an interior architect. Although the demand for design furniture is also high in Europe, this doesn't mean that it is bought by interior architects. Consumers buy their furniture and interior decorations themselves, whereas for simple adaptations there exists a whole DIY industry enabling consumers to adapt their interior to their wishes by their own hands.

There is a number of reasons why the situation in Russia is different. First of all, it is the relative inexperience of Russian consumers with making choices. Well known is the story of the Soviet citizen who gets in a complete shock when he is confronted with the possibilities of choice in a Western supermarket. Although this is of course not the case with contemporary Russian citizens, some of this insecurity has remained. And if you feel uncomfortable in deciding what you want, you ask a professional designer to do it for you. Another factor related to the lack of choice in Soviet time is the absence of inherited or earlier bought furniture. In general, Soviet furniture was of bad quality and design, and when people can afford to move into a new apartment they will bring nothing with them - they start from scratch. The interior architect helps them to reinvent their life style. In many apartments in Moscow that are bought as second or third homes this factor is even more important - people will not live there very often and their purpose is more close to a hotel then a personalized space.

Another big difference with Western Europe is that notwithstanding the high fees of the interior designer, the difference between high and low income in Russia are enormous. Once you can afford to buy a new apartment, you are not going to do any renovations yourself but you will hire some workers (mostly immigrant workers from the former Soviet republics) and a designer to tell them what to do. In a European context, with the majority of the population belonging to the middle class, hiring workers is much more expensive and people tend to do much more themselves, including decisions about decoration and layout.

Probably the main reason why people need an interior designer is the fact that there is the earlier mentioned lack of variety in the housing they can buy in the city.

Firstly - the city itself is very homogenous. Apart from a small historical centre most of it con-