

**Pioneers in Model Home Exhibitions
The Women Advisory Committee in Rotterdam in the 1950s**

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WOMEN'S DISPLAY: FEMALE ARCHITECTS AND DESIGNERS PLANNING EXHIBITIONS
WORKSHOP, WEDNESDAY JUNE 15TH 2022, 15.30–18.00



The workshop intends to examine the conceptual work, as well as the design and plans of women in the production of exhibitions on various scales. The examined examples will range from the master plans of the exhibition area to the architecture of the exhibition buildings and the scenography of the display.

The topicality of women's exhibition design offers many different perspectives to approach the issue, combining architecture with scenographic display of internal and external space, which requests a comprehensive and creative disciplinary analysis mode. The focus on exhibitions dedicated to women's work, as well as on women-made exhibitions on housing, interior design, crafts and industrial products, handicrafts etc. – matters traditionally considered to be "feminine" – will give the opportunity to explore new aspects of the employment of materials, such as fabric or paper, or to reflect about the construction of a gendered iconography between ideology and commerce, or to verify the connection between the public display of an exhibition and the private one of a domestic interior. Another topic examines how exhibition designs were intended to support performative acts (from planned events to spontaneous informal activities) as a way of inscribing meaning or producing a particular space. Displaying feminine and sometimes feminist concerns thus made the exhibition a real laboratory for diverse theoretical approaches to architecture inside the "protected" and simultaneously highly visible environment of the exhibition. The workshop will address established historiographical and methodological issues as the concept of authorship, biographical narratives, and so on.

The workshop is curated and moderated by:

Katia Frey, Senior Researcher at the Swiss National Science Foundation project SAFFA 1958, ZHAW Zurich University of Applied Sciences Winterthur (katia.frey@bluewin.ch)

Eliana Perotti, Principal Investigator of the Swiss National Science Foundation project SAFFA 1958, ZHAW Zurich University of Applied Sciences Winterthur (e.perotti@bluewin.ch)

PROGRAM

15:30

Eliana Perotti
Greeting and introduction

15:40

Kathleen James-Chakraborty, University College Dublin
Chloethiel Woodard Smith: Exhibiting Architecture at Home and Abroad

15:55

María Novas Ferradás, Universidad de Sevilla and Delft University of Technology
Pioneers in Model Home Exhibitions. The Women Advisory Committee in Rotterdam in the 1950s

16:10

Inge Beckel, Zurich University of Applied Sciences
Martha Huber-Villiger's Furnishings: Shifting from 'Set' to 'Outfit'

16:25

Eliana Perotti, Zurich University of Applied Sciences
Close to the Body - From Underwear to Space. On the Exhibition Design by Lilly Reich

16:40

Laura Martínez de Guereñu, IE University
The Exhibition Project as Testing Ground: Barcelona 1929

16:55

Ana Tostoes, Técnico Lisboa
Display as a Manifesto

17:10

Svava Riesto, University of Copenhagen
Gendered Norms and Alternatives. The Exhibition "Alternative Architecture", Copenhagen 1977

17:25

Katia Frey, Zurich University of Applied Sciences
The Exhibition «Saffa 1928, 1958 ... 1988? Und heute». Architectural Reflections on Women's Identity and Work

17:40

Discussion

18:00

End

ABSTRACTS

Chloethiel Woodard Smith: Exhibiting Architecture at Home and Abroad

Kathleen James-Chakraborty, University College Dublin

Chloethiel Woodard Smith (1910-1992) was the most prominent female architect in the United States for much of the third quarter of the last century. Until she reached her fifties Smith struggled to get opportunities to build and – which mattered to her just as much – to work as an urban planner. Key to her self-promotion was her involvement in a series of exhibitions. Already in 1939, she spearheaded an exhibition on planning in Washington, D.C., that challenged the primacy of L'Enfant's plan for the city. Two years later she was the key instigator of the "City for Living" exhibition that prompted the creation of Montreal's city planning department. Working with the American Institute of Architects, she organized the exhibits they displayed at the Pan American Congress of Architects held in Havana in 1950, and at the International Union of Architects in Moscow in 1958. Her participation in these events was frequently cited in the letters that supported her nomination for AIA fellowship, which she achieved in 1960. Smith's service to the profession was widely recognized by male colleagues who were well aware that she always did more than her share, as men focused instead on designing and marketing their own work. However, once Smith was busy with commissions, largely for federally subsidized middle income housing erected as a result of urban renewal, she was widely profiled in mainstream media, and no longer engaged in such events.

Pioneers in Model Home Exhibitions. The Women Advisory Committee in Rotterdam in the 1950s

María Novas Ferradás, Universidad de Sevilla and Delft University of Technology

In the post-WWII period in the Netherlands, a women's organization set the agenda for improving the quality of social housing projects. Through bureaucratic procedures, the Vrouwen Adviescommissie (VAC, Women Advisory Committee) managed to open up a path for women's interventions at the Municipality of Rotterdam, while expanding its network to more than 285 VACs in the Netherlands from 1946 to 1994. Their expertise influenced building codes, regulations and policies in social housing and urban design. However, their early role as model home organizers remains unknown. This paper unveils the conceptual and design work of the VAC through the model homes exhibitions they produced in Rotterdam and its surroundings in the earlier 1950s — such as the one in Overschie (which attracted around 3,000 people), in Hoogvliet (around 2,700) and Schiebroek (1,500). The research reveals that, before the well-known model homes exhibited in the Netherlands by the foundation Goed Wonen (Good Dwelling) during the mid-1950s and 1960s, the VAC made pioneering efforts in strengthening the public's relationship with social housing and interior design. They displayed traditional and modern furniture in different combinations, focusing on the needs of women performing domestic (unwaged) work.