

ŽIVOT **UMJETNOSTI**

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VIZUALNI ESEJ

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VISUAL ESSAY

FADE IN:

1. EXT. LOS ANGELES - AERIAL VIEW - DAY

MAN'S VOICE

(radio broadcast,  
voice over)

This is a personal note. No editorial we's. I just dialed Weather 3-1212. The official temperature at 2 o'clock on this Saturday is 95 degrees. That makes it about 100 in your NHC headquarters, conditioned by air blasts from the street. But all of that is down-right frigid when compared to the boiling temperatures within your reporter. This morning, the Senate-House Conference on the Independent Offices Appropriation Bill for the fiscal year 1954, tied the noose on the low-rent public housing program. They agreed for this fiscal year on a program of 20,000 new unit starts, to be made from existing loan and annual contribution contracts. No new loan and annual contributions contracts may be entered into. In other words, the program is in the process of liquidation. It is stopped dead in its tracks. It marks a completed victory on the Washington front for opponents of low-rent housing. It marks a disastrous defeat for those families living in slums, who believed their government in 1949, when Congress adopted a housing policy of a decent home for every American family.



FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

SUMMER 1953

2. INT. TELEVISION STUDIO - DAY

A group of men in suits are seated in comfortable mid-century modern chairs, in an early 1950's style television studio environment. Along with the men, we see one woman in a pencil skirt suit. A heated discussion is in progress.

CUT TO:

Close-up of a man (short grey hair, handsome, in his sixties). He speaks confidently in fluent English with a dense Viennese accent.

ARCHITECT

(in a defensive tone)

This was not a fantasy. It was a fully detailed and specified plan, from years of preparation with all calculations weighed heavily by my partner, associates and myself. The project was well considered and deliberate - designed for a site very unique to the world. Three years of immense

(MORE)





ARCHITECT (CONT'D)

effort and large staff work is vanishing into thin air. Such a momentous project of this kind for an American city has been lost to the metropolis of Los Angeles.

Camera pulls back to a very wide shot of the scene. We see the television studio with a second camera operator and some of the studio equipment. A man (short and stocky, dark hair flecked with grey, in his late fifties, very self-assured) is making a pejorative gesture with his hand.

COUNCIL MEMBER #1

(in a dismissive tone)

These sites are big enough for three or four golf courses that the city needs badly.

COUNCIL MEMBER #2

(shaking his head in bewilderment)

A golf course is a poor substitute for public housing planned for low-income families.

HOUSING AUTHORITY OFFICIAL

(nodding in agreement)

The real estate lobby picked California in general, and Los Angeles in particular, for a campaign to destroy public housing through local action. There will probably never be accounting for the millions of dollars that were poured into that effort. The Los Angeles Times, The Examiner and The Herald joined the lobby in its fight to maintain slums. There also followed some unexplained switches. Two years ago, one council member who had been an articulate supporter of public housing, left the city for a week and returned to announce that he had joined the opposition. Two weeks later, another council member who had supported low-rent housing for twelve years, voted for the program on Friday, only to reverse his position on the following Monday.

ARCHITECT

(frustrated, shaking his head)

It was a true scandal, like the Dreyfus case. Unfortunately there was not such a strong literary voice as Émile Zola, who brought the situation to greater public attention. Thousands of citizens and the electorate were affected by paranoia, misguided and false panic over concerns of encroaching socialism in the United States.

COUNCIL MEMBER #1

I object to the low-rent housing plan for the following reasons: First, it is privileged and  
(MORE)

COUNCIL MEMBER #1 (CONT'D)

discriminatory housing. Secondly, it will not clear slums. Third, the poorer folks will not be housed under this program. Forth, it builds a tremendous political machine. Fifth, it violates the rights of minorities. Sixth, it is excessive in cost and there are no brakes on this excessive cost. Seventh, it tends to destroy private homes and businesses. And eight, it tends to destroy our form of government.

SENATOR

American private enterprise – the most free in the world – has never eliminated slums, and I see no reason to think it ever will. And private enterprise has never provided housing for the lowest income group.

REAL ESTATE DEVELOPER

We just completed some two-bedroom apartments at a cost of \$5,000 each. That is less than half the cost of these projected public housing units being built reputedly for only the poorest of the poor. Why it would be even cheaper to buy, on the open market, an already existing home, selling for less than \$8.000, than to go ahead with this public housing project?

HOUSING AUTHORITY OFFICIAL

The 1950 United States Housing Census reports that  
(MORE)



HOUSING AUTHORITY OFFICIAL (CONT'D)  
65,929 substandard dwellings are classified as dilapidated and unfit for human habitations. 169,000 people live in substandard housing in Los Angeles, including 54,475 children. Over 25,000 of the families with children, living in substandard housing in Los Angeles, have monthly incomes averaging only \$149 per month. These families cannot afford private housing.

ARCHITECT  
(clarifying)  
Of course it appears luxurious to design a suburban development or garden city directly into the inner part of a major metropolis like Los Angeles, but this project has an exceptional and unique character: the topography and natural scenery, together with the large abundant parkland and other natural conditions makes this location potentially one of the finest housing sites in the country, possibly in the world. At present it can be considered, however, as one of the worst slums. It is an area densely covered with makeshift substandard dwellings, in need of remedy. This prime central location, in relation to employment, seems ideal and superior to all other housing sites in the city [...]

FADE TO BLACK.



TIME CUT:

SPRING 1943

3. EXT. MODERNIST HOUSING COMPLEX - DAY

Black and white establishing shot of a large modernist housing development with geometrically ordered housing structures – a mixture of high and low-rise buildings broken by a mountainous topography, lush park land and panoramic vistas. The white plaster facades of the buildings are combined with unpainted redwood, creating a bold abstract design. A tree branch is jutting into the edge of the well-composed shot.

MAN'S VOICE  
(reporter, voice over)  
Coming upon the buildings on the shoulder of the green hills is like coming upon a vision of the future – of a postwar world where all workers will enjoy decent homes and surroundings. Units at this project rent for \$27.50, \$28.50, and \$31.00, for one, two and three-bedroom apartments. Made of redwood and plaster, these apartments are tilted at angles specified to permit the maximum of sunlight. All have their own level terrace, but no two are built at the same elevation. Orientation was a most important factor in the site plan: Each house is so placed that the living quarters face the ocean and the blank ends face the prevailing wind, which is frequently too violent for comfort. The diagonal placing of the units was developed to increase car maneuverability on the access roads and to gain privacy for the tenants.  
(MORE)

CUT TO:

3B. INT. MODERNIST APARTMENT - DAY

Black and white medium close-up shot of a young woman (very attractive, about 30 years, brunette pinned up hair). She is wearing a 1940's style white blouse with padded shoulders, nipped in the high waist of an a-line skirt.

TENANT  
(enthusiastically, to reporter)  
I have never realized before how much we live by our senses, and how pleasant a good design can make that living. What is visible and what is not; from where and how the light falls, and on what; what good illumination really means – all these count so much on maintaining a balance of nerves. I don't understand all the technicalities of rheostatic control and gradual intensification, but I can tell you that headaches and eyestrain are forgotten ills at our house. And so are colds. Sometimes I think  
(MORE)



TENANT (CONT'D)

the best thing of all is our extensive heat-radiating floor and ceiling. No attempt is made at our house to heat and moisten a large volume of air and then to live in that stuffy blanket. And it does make a difference if the whole neighborhood is planned, as well. Practically we don't live on a street at all, but on a park; no windows open to any but our own gardens...

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

SPRING 1944

3F. EXT. COMMUNITY MARKET - MORNING

Black and white wide shot of four women chatting in front of the large glass façade of a supermarket — a modern building structure with a cantilevered roof and clerestory rear windows. The women (a buxom little woman with a pug nose, in her mid-forties; a tall, gaunt woman with red-rimmed eyeglasses, about thirty-five; and a middle-aged Mexican-American woman with a rutted face) are dressed in a simple early 1940's everyday fashion, with knee length high waisted skirts and functional pants. One of them — a pert and attractive looking young woman in her late twenties — is wearing dungarees and a blue machinist's cap. In the background of the group we see bold state-of-the-art aluminum lettering "MARKET".

TENANT #1

Haven't we got some old farmers among us? Why couldn't some of us start planting vegetable gardens on our back plots to help tide things over, or even some flowers to pretty up the place a bit?

TENTANT #2

(with a sneer)

Who wants to plant a garden, when you don't know if you are going to be leaving tomorrow, or maybe next week at the latest...?

TENANT #3

(in agreement)

As a federal project, I feel the government owes us special consideration. Some of us gave up pretty nice homes to come out here. We aren't living here because we want to and we can't be responsible for the kind of people that happen to be living near us.

TENANT #1

I don't see what difference it makes as long as people are clean and friendly. In our project we have a number of Negro families as well as representatives of various other national and racial groups, all of whom have lived peaceably with the other residents.

TENANT #4

Somebody ought to do something about the people in this project. We ought to have a dance or something. Any old thing to break the ice. How did they ever think of building projects like these, bringing thousands of people out and providing absolutely nothing besides bare walls and a roof?

A man in a suit (about forty-five, big and flabby, with a wine colored face) walks by and nods a good morning towards the women. He obviously overheard the last comment of the conversation and can't help to make a remark.

HOUSING MANAGER

Well you've got to remember that a lot of people in and out of Congress are still opposed to public housing. They are watching us awfully closely. Any false move and they'd crack down on us.

TENANT #1

(to Housing Manager)

And fostering residents activities would be a false move?

HOUSING MANAGER

Well they don't like encouraging that sort of thing. It might put ideas in people's minds.

FADE TO BLACK.



FALL 1946

FADE IN:

3G. EXT. COMMUNITY CENTER - EVENING

Black and white establishing shot of an elegant, typically modernist building with a large glass façade topped by a massive angled redwood soffit. Emphasizing the interaction between inner and outer space, the sliding glass front opens into a wide assembly lawn with a magnificent view over the harbor.

CUT TO:

3H. INT. COMMUNITY CENTER AUDITORIUM - EVENING

Black and white wide shot of a resident council meeting in progress. The large bright, glass walled room is crowded with people – a mix of men and women with multiple ethnic backgrounds. Most of them are casually dressed in functional everyday, plain apparel. The men are wearing open-collar shirts and slacks, the women blouses and skirts, some also pants. In the mixed crowd, we see a few overdressed seemingly official looking white men in suits. People are engaged in a heated discussion when a tall, striking looking woman in her thirties is rising from her chair to speak up.

WOMAN FROM CROWD #1  
(upset)  
Calling us communists! What’s so communist about  
a nursery school, a prepaid medical plan or even  
mutual home ownership?



MAN IN SUIT

Wait a minute. It is not any of these things individually that is wrong, but the combination. I can see an honest American could be in favor of one of them, or even two. But all three?

REALTY BOARD REPRESENTATIVE  
(aggressive)

It was private construction that built this country up!

MAN FROM CROWD #1

Well, how are you going to solve the housing problem without government help today?

REALTY BOARD REPRESENTATIVE  
Listen here! As long as government keeps its nose in this, we’re not going to solve it. People are going to have to get away from the habit of being coddled by the government. Even if they have to learn it the hard way, they’re going to have to learn, that’s all there is to it.

MAN FROM CROWD #2  
(passionately)

We consider it fortunate, besides that, that our project has been open to all races, religions, and nationalities, since this has given us the advantage of sharing the different cultural heritages that all these people brought with them. And in the end we have learnt to be more tolerant and understanding of each other. That, we think, is our greatest accomplishment.

WOMAN FROM CROWD #2

At the Museum of Modern Art in New York, when I was back for a visit some time ago, I was delighted to see a model of our project on display. It was complete in every detail and I was thrilled to note the large crowd admiring it. I was proud to be able to say to myself: that is my home. Let us hope that we can compose our differences and go through with our mutual ownership program, so that some day this project will – in the fullest sense of the word – be a model to the rest of the country, and the world!

MAN FROM CROWD #3  
(enthusiastically)

We’ll be able to make our project the garden spot of California!

REALTY BOARD REPRESENTATIVE  
Never you mind. We’ll take care of ourselves and as for these mutual ownership plans, they’re contrary to every American tradition and concept of doing things.

FALL 1953

5. EXT. LOS ANGELES - AREAL VIEW - DAY

MAN'S VOICE  
(radio broadcast,  
voice over)

Plans to make the most pretentious park in America out of the abandoned 237 acre public housing site on Chavez Ravine were outlined by the mayor's office yesterday. The abandoned housing site adjacent to the Hollywood and Arroyo Seco Freeways would become the site of a major league baseball park and a zoo – comparable to the best in the country – and an 18 hole golf course, among other things, if the preliminary plans discussed are fulfilled.

6. EXT. LOS ANGELES COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT - DAY

A small crowd of people are gathering in front of the building. A few official looking men in suits are exiting. We see a reporter collecting statements from the people in the crowd, as well as the men in suits.

COUNTY SUPERVISOR  
The city's sport fans suffered from a minority complex because their city, the third largest in the nation, did not possess a major ball club. The great overall benefit to Los Angeles cannot be estimated, and anyone who is against the Dodger agreement belongs to some hick town and not this modern marvel Los Angeles.

JUDGE  
The city council has no right or power to give a private organization carte blanche with respect to the spending of public money.

COUNCIL MEMBER #1  
I don't care if these people own half of Los Angeles. The way their private property was confiscated through the guise of public use only to be turned over to a private corporation is a miscarriage of justice.

COUNCIL MEMBER #2  
(to council member #1)  
How much money did those Red Mexicans give you? If you ever attend a baseball game, I hope that you are hit in the head with a bat.

FADE IN:

TIME CUT:

SUMMER 1959

RESIDENT

If it was for public housing and not for private use, we wouldn't mind leaving. You take from the poor and give to the rich. Los Angeles is getting to be a hated city. This whole deal from beginning to end was handled just the way they do things in Russia. We brag about justice in the United States - Bah!

MAYOR OF LOS ANGELES

If you are not prepared to be part of this greatness, if you want Los Angeles to revert to pueblo status, then my best advice to you is to prepare to settle elsewhere.

FADE TO BLACK.

TIME CUT:

APRIL 1962

7. EXT. DODGER STADIUM - AREAL VIEW - EVENING

MAN'S VOICE  
(radio broadcast,  
voice over)

Those who want to admire its architectural magnificence will go out to Chavez Ravine to gape at the new baseball stadium, an excellent example of urban renewal and development. It is a show place built on an ancient enclave of dinginess, which 10 years ago, seemed to have no future except as an institutionalized slum of low-rent public housing.

FADE TO BLACK.





1953. godine urbanistički plan novog modernističkog oblika utopije – grada unutar grada za 17.000 stanovnika, sjeverozapadno od središta Los Angelesa – bio je neizbježno ukinut nakon što je prouzročio žestok sukob na temu lokalne stanogradnje, pokrenut od privatnih poduzetnika, lobista na području nekretnina i utjecajnih medija. Razvivši se iz politike koju su zastupali pripadnici Red Scare i propaganda, lokalni je sukob konačno utjecao na stanogradnju čitave nacije posluživši kao primjer kraja, jednako kao i početka, jednog novog razdoblja...

.....

1953. je snimljen na lokacijama Parka Elysian, Sjevernog San Pedra, Oblasnog umjetničkog muzeja Los Angelesa (LACMA) i VDL Istraživačkog centra (Cal Poly Pomona fakultet za oblikovanje okoliša).

1953., *MOGUĆI SCENARIJI DISKONTINUIRANE BUDUĆNOSTI* (ISJEČAK),  
TEMELJENO NA POVIJESNIM SNIMCIMA OD 1942. - 1962.

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1953, *POSSIBLE SCENARIOS OF A DISCONTINUED FUTURE*  
(EXCERPT), BASED ON HISTORIC RECORDS FROM 1942 - 1962

In 1953, a master plan for a new modernist form of utopia – a city within a city, for a population of 17.000, just northwest of downtown Los Angeles – was inevitably abolished after causing a vicious local public housing war, initiated by private developers, real estate lobbyists and the power of the media. Deploying Red Scare politics and propaganda, this local battle eventually affected housing programs throughout the nation, exemplifying the end, as well as the beginning, of a new era ...

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1953 was filmed on site at Elysian Park, North San Pedro, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) and the VDL Research House (Cal Poly Pomona College of Environmental Design).