

Cities, Communities and Homes: Is the Urban Future Livable?

- **Paper / Proposal Title:**

Giant Dolls' House Project

- **Format:**

Paper/presentation

- **Author(s) Name:**

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- **University or Company Affiliation:**

Catja de Haas - Architect

- **Abstract (300 words):**

The Giant Dolls' House Project is an ongoing collaborative arts project that engages local communities in order to raise awareness of homelessness and the importance of a home for all. Each participant in the project is asked to make an individual dolls' house room in an empty shoebox. The finished boxes are assembled onto to a large black canvas and connected with ropes, ramps and ladders. The resulting conglomeration of dolls' house boxes forms a community that consists of an interconnected patchwork of spaces, ideas and colours.

Since the first installation in 2014, in TESTBED01, we've had several installations with different participants and in different venues: we were part of the London Festival of Architecture twice and will be again this year. During LFA2015 the installation was in the headquarters of the Housing and Homelessness Charity Shelter. During LFA2016, in the Maestro Art Gallery in Wandsworth, we had contributions from 'beneficiaries from the Red Cross Destitution Centre in Dalton, as well as from school children of varying ages and denominations as well as professional architects. Further installations were at

#Critical Values, London (2015); Dubai (2016, 2017), Universities in the UK and other galleries and venues.

The project encourages different groups of people to come and work together, it encourages making and thinking with ones hands in an era of division and digital distractions. When complete, the boxes facilitate an exploration of private and shared space as they are recognisable, tangible and three dimensional and appeal to the imagination. The result looks like the ideal community many architects have tried to make and theorise: Team10's Kasbah, the Metabolists' theories; the Mediterranean town and, to an extent, Colin Rowe's *Collage City*. The project is still evolving through the growing groups of participants and locations.

• **Author(s) Biography (200 words each):**

The Giant Dolls' House Project is the initiative of Catja de Haas and the result of her ongoing research into the use of dolls' houses and imaginary homes to explore domesticity and architecture. The home was the topic for her PhD by architectural design (supervisors Prof Jonathan Hill and Christine Hawley) which she finished at Bartlett school of Architecture, UCL, in 2013. *'The Dolls' house and the Enclave: a Toolkit'* was an investigation into the ideal home through the analysis of the 17th century dolls' house. Catja has exhibited her work, apart from the giant dolls' house installations, at TESTBED01 and the Bartlett and has presented her work, and has lectured about miniature and dolls'houses: in Florence, Dubai, AUL Chelsea, the Architectural Association (Intermediate Unit 2), Bournemouth University and the Bartlett. Catja is a regular visiting crit at universities in London, at AUB Bournemouth and the Netherlands. Catja is a qualified architect and studied at Delft University under Professor Herzberger and holds an MA in housing and Urbanism from the Architectural Association. She is a sole practitioner, collaborating with other offices. Prior to setting up on her own she worked for Itsuko Hasegawa in Tokyo and Alsop Architects in London.