



Booth Bloc

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF THE UBIQUITOUS K67 KIOSK

When somebody takes the tram in Minsk, eats a hamburger in Bratislava, makes a couple of photocopies in Belgrade, visits a relative in the state hospital of Ljubljana, parks their car in Zagreb, buys flowers in Sarajevo, participates in the Christmas lottery in Struga, goes sailing on the Croatian coast, eats a döner kebab in Dresden ... this person is definitely travelling in Eastern Europe. But whatever people are doing, there is a good chance it is done in front of or inside a small coloured plastic booth with curved edges. The K67 kiosk is one of the objects that link the urban spaces of the region.

Text by Helge Kühnel.

THE ORIGINAL DESIGN

The Slovenian architect and designer Sasa J. Mächtig introduced the K67 design in 1966. Its system was based on poly-fibre reinforced modules, which could be used as single units or combined to form larger configurations, and its function was inherently flexible. Reflecting a number of design projects of the period that were experimenting with mobile and modular structures - like the Futuro House (1968) by Matti Suuronen - the fact that it was mass produced sets it apart. The cubicle and modular K67 was also a manifestation of structuralist tendencies in architecture, such as Aldo van Eyck's orphanage in Amsterdam (1958-60) or Herman Hertzberg's Centraal Beheer in Apeldoorn (1968-72). Although it is the metabolist Kisho Kurokawa who comes closest to Mächtig's ideas, with his Nakagin Capsule Tower in Tokyo (1970-72) incorporating prefabricated dwelling cubes.

After being patented in 1967, K67 was prepared for mass production in 1968, with the first prototypes exhibited in the Slovenia provincial town of Ljutomer. In April 1970 K67 was featured in an English design magazine article 'Low Life From the Streets', and as a consequence the Museum of Modern Art in New York included it in its collection of 20th century design. Production of the K67 was only stopped in the early Nineties by Imgrad Ljutomer as a result of radical changes in the Slovenian economical system.

THE SPREAD

While the distribution of certain street furniture is largely limited to a local or regional scale, the K67 was widely exported abroad. Using clever marketing strategies the K67 was sold in large quantities not only to the countries of former Yugoslavia, but also to the COMECON countries and other continents (Japan and New Zealand). And due to the fact that the K67 principle has been copied several times by other companies (e.g. by Treska, Macedonia), K67 came to embody Eastern European kiosk culture.

The successful spread of a specific design was also positively influenced by the system of united socialistic planned economies that operated in the Eastern Bloc countries. Between 1949 and 1990 Europe

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