

## Domènec



Cover of *Die Wohnung für das Existenzminimum*  
Frankfurt, 1930

### Existenzminimum, 2002

Installation with sculpture, video and leaflet

For the last decade, Domènec's artistic practice has focused on the debate that, since the 1960s, has surrounded the historical process called the crisis of modernity. Domènec's particularity lies in the fact that, on the basis of a conscious and deliberate expansion of the field of sculpture, he has developed a universe of his own that reflects the loss of the social visibility of the great modern narratives. His work is a model in that it has revealed the decline of these narratives by extolling the metonymic power of modern architecture. In Domènec's previous work, Le Corbusier's Paimio Sanatorium (by Alvar Aalto) and the Unité d'Habitation already provided a basis for a critical re-reading of the utopian side of modernity.

In essence, the *Existenzminimum* project is also a part of this operation that aims to show the current marginality of modernity's ethical and social principles. Nonetheless — and despite the lack of efficacious instruments to overcome the paralysis of resistance caused by the neo-conservative, aggressive nature of late capitalism — scepticism plays a limited role in Domènec's work. For instance, when he deals with the fusion of the minimum dwelling — a concept debated at the CIAM architectural congress in Frankfurt in 1929 that sought to establish universal guidelines that would provide the entire world with a decent dwelling — and the alteration of the dimensions and the re-adaptation of a commemorative piece designed by the architect Mies van der Rohe in homage to Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, leaders of the German Communist Left assassinated in 1919 by forces supported by the police.

The monument loses all its original grandiloquence when it is turned into a minimum dwelling and literally rendered, at the hand of the artist, a bricolage kit. Thus, the monument becomes the basis for highly playful, micro-utopian daily experiences in real time, as was Domènec's installation in the Parc de la Devesa in Girona. Much smaller in size, the replica he has built gives new life to the monument destroyed in 1933 by fascist barbarism; on a human scale, it traces a connection between the utopian power of modernity's liberating ideologies and its hypothetical critical re-adaptations. The small, almost bunker-shaped nomadic dwelling suggests that it is possible to undertake practices that resist and crack the reigning consensus.

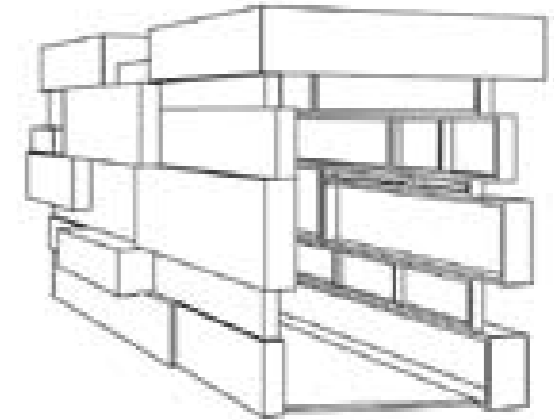
Jordi Font Agulló

*La Vanguardia* (suppl. *Cultura/s*), 15 January 2003, p. 17.



Mies van der Rohe  
Monument to the November Revolution, Berlin (Lichtenberg)  
(also known as Monument Karl Liebknecht and Rosa  
Luxemburg), c. 1926, destroyed in 1935

Inauguration of the monument, Friedrichsfelde, Berlin  
13 June 1926



*Existenzminimum*, 2002  
Construction drawing from the leaflet

For a few years now, my work has been situated in the dilemma of participating in the debate on the limits, fissures, successes and failures of the modern movement, and on how we have managed to deal with this awkward legacy in contemporary times. Prior to the project *Existenzminimum* (2002), I had already chosen different buildings that are emblematic of modernity as elements to create projects related to these very questions. >



Installation in Parc de la Devesa in Girona,  
October 2002

For example, in 1998 I created the project *24 Hours of Artificial Light*, a full-scale replica of a room in Alvar Aalto's Paimio hospital that was stripped of all the 'humanist virtues' of the initial programme and converted into a 'useless' blind sculpture. In so doing, I wondered about the limits of the 'modern programme' (in aesthetic terms as well as ethical and political ones) for systematically transforming and improving daily life. In summary, I tried to make visible the disconcerting paradox that, in the end and despite the good intentions and needs that exist, the great stories of modernism, no matter how heroic they may be, almost never obtained the desired results.

*Existenzminimum*, the recreation of the monument to Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht (leaders of the failed Spartacus revolution and what was perhaps the most sincere attempt to install a fairer society in Germany) in a humble hut, a small and fragile refuge, connected this original design for a site of commemoration by Mies van der Rohe, by means of the work's title, to the key concept of the second CIAM congress (1929): The proposal of the most advanced architects of the modern movement to establish a scientific basis for guaranteeing a universal and dignified minimum level of existence. Today, when millions and millions of people live in subhuman conditions in shanties that surround the great cities of triumphant capitalism, it seems altogether like a cruel irony of history. □

