

THE MELNIKOV HOUSE IN MOSCOW: SAVING AVANT- GARDE ICON

Wednesday, March 15, 2023
18.00

Live streaming
<https://epfl.zoom.us/j/65989729721>

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The Melnikov House, designed by architect Konstantin Melnikov (1890-1974) for himself and his family, is an icon of the Russian architectural avant-garde. The experimental cylindrical structure was built between 1927 and 1929 to test Melnikov's concepts for mass-produced housing. Melnikov believed that the essence of his house lay in the balance and equivalence of weight, light, air and heat. The original layout, elegant spatial arrangement, and ingenious engineering techniques are combined in a unique architectural form that still looks modern. Retaining numerous historic elements of the 20th century, the house also reflects the tragic life of this solo architect in a collectivist society.

Based on the results of the Getty sponsored pre-conservation research (2017-19) Pavel Kuznetsov will discuss design and construction specifics of the Melnikov House, its history from inception in the early 20th century through establishing the museum in 2014, the challenges and choices of its conservation project.

He will explore newly found archival materials that uncovered the architectural, engineering, and philosophical ideas lying behind Melnikov's ambitious plan to build an architectural manifesto in 1920s Soviet Russia.

PAVEL KUZNETSOV is researcher of the 20th century architecture, lecturer, museologist and curator of the exhibitions on Soviet avant-garde. Graduated from Moscow State Lomonossov University. Since 2014 he had overseen the collections and archives of the Melnikov House (Moscow) and its transition from a private home to a public museum. As director of the State Museum of Konstantin and Viktor Melnikov he also led the pre-conservation survey of the Melnikov House, supported by a grant initiative 'Keeping it Modern' (Getty Foundation). His book, 'The Melnikov House: Icon of the Avant-Garde, Family Home, Architecture Museum' was published in Berlin in 2017 and 2021. Curator of the exhibitions: 'Melnikov Revealed' (2015, Melnikov House, Moscow), 'Melnikov / Le Corbusier: rencontre à la villa Savoye' (2017, Villa Savoye, Centre des Monuments Nationaux, France). He fled Russia in March 2022 and later was endorsed the status of 'Scholar at Risk'. His last research contribution before exile was a monographic exhibition and a catalogue 'Melnikoff' (2022, Schusev State Museum of Architecture, Moscow). When not researching, he was the first Russian to successfully swim the English Channel (in 14 hours 33 minutes and 25 seconds)

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