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Moscow—Hanoi: Landscapes of Optimism: A new international exhibition opens at GES-2

On 21 May, GES-2 House of Culture will unveil Moscow—Hanoi: Landscapes of Optimism. The exhibition explores how standardised social housing projects in Hanoi and Moscow during the second half of the twentieth century gradually gained individuality by adapting to the climates, cultures, and daily habits of their residents.

Modernist architecture serves as a catalyst for a broader dialogue on the environment and how people inhabit it. By drawing parallels between the USSR and Vietnam, the project—developed in collaboration with Vietnamese architect and researcher Trung Mai—assembles archival materials, contemporary artworks, and personal narratives from both countries.

The exhibition's architecture is a three-part labyrinth. The first section details Moscow's standardised mikrorayons (micro-districts built in 1950s–1970s) and housing models developed for other nations, including Uzbekistan, Ghana, and Vietnam. The second part centres on the Vietnamese collective housing, the KTT, featuring archival and research materials. Linking these two chapters is a section dedicated to the lives of the Vietnamese diaspora in Moscow and the Russian diaspora in Vietnam.

Facts about the exhibition

- Co-curator Trung Mai, a participant in the Venice Architectural Biennale of 2025, is also an artist in this project and the author of its architectural concept.
- The architectural concept reproduces the plans of 16 Muscovite and Vietnamese apartments in 1:1 scale, superimposing them upon one another to produce a many-layered collage.
- The main structure is crafted from more than 1,500 square meters of sheer, translucent fabric.
- Artist Kamil Sazhensky filmed 14 hours of footage while exploring the streets of Hanoi and meeting with the Vietnamese community in Moscow.
- To bring some 3D-printed elements of Sanya Sazhenskaya's installation to life, the team used 10 liters of resin and 14 kilograms of plastic filament.
- Photographs by Alexey Bogolepov span 79 different buildings and 88 shooting locations. His most massive work is a detailed mosaic made from 43 individual photos.
- Visitors to the exhibition will learn the story of Salon Natasha, the first centre for contemporary art in Vietnam, founded by the Vietnamese artist Vũ Dân Tân and his wife, Soviet philologist Natalia Kraevskaia.

Trung Mai, exhibition curator, architect, urbanist, founder of Hanoi Ad Hoc research bureau:

"The exhibition's architecture functions as a discursive apparatus: a 1:1 superimposition of Soviet and Vietnamese apartment plans that generates a field of overlap, drift, and mutation. The transition from mikrorayon to KTT is staged as a spatial translation of ideology, refracted through memory and diaspora rather than reproduced as form. The installation operates simultaneously as an archive and a projection, where past ambitions and standards are reconfigured into present spatial practices."

Moscow—Hanoi.
Landscapes of Optimism
Exhibition
21 May—9 Sep 2026
Gallery C7
6+

Press kit

Curators

Trung Mai
Mark Akopyan
Artem Timonov
Elena Yaichnikova

Artists

Alexey Bogolepov
Hà Nguyen Long
Nguyen The Son
Nguyen Vũ Hai
Pham Ngoc Lân
Sanya Sazhenskaya
Kamil Sazhensky
Anastasia Tsayder

Research authors

Hanoi Ad Hoc:
Trung Mai
Ylan Vo
Nikolay Erofeev
Natasha Kraevskaia
Ira Maslova

The exhibition is organised in collaboration with

Kamensky District
Local History Museum
Museum of Moscow
Personal archive of Natasha Kraevskaia
RIA Novosti
Russian State Archive of Economy
Russian State Archive of Samara
Russian State Archive of Scientific and Technical Documentation
Sakhalin Regional Museum
Shchusev Museum of Architecture
Museum of Contemporary History of Russia

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GES-2 House of Culture
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ges-2.org

Entry to the House of Culture is free of charge, by prior registration.

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Mark Akopyan, exhibition curator, art and architecture historian:

"Drawing on the concept of 'ad hocism'—designing for the immediate needs of a specific place—this project looks at how people adapted new housing to their personal needs. This includes tiered extensions to expand living space, communal gardens on roofs and between stilts, and the placing of tropical plants on windowsills. This is a vernacular, folk approach to inhabiting a space. The exhibition explores the immense adaptive resilience of 'no-frills' modernist housing."

Artem Timonov, curator of exhibition programmes at GES-2 House of Culture:

"The two-part title Moscow—Hanoi does more than just mark the exhibition's geography; it echoes legendary art projects like Paris—Moscow, Moscow—Paris or Moscow—Berlin. It reimagines the idea of international cultural exchange for a new era and a different context. Meanwhile, Landscapes of Optimism revisits the modernist architecture of the mid-to-late twentieth century—a time when mass-produced housing was a symbol of hope, promising a better quality of life for people all over the world."

Elena Yaichnikova, curator of exhibition programmes at GES-2 House of Culture:

"The focus on Vietnam extends the 'Other Modernisms' programmatic direction at GES-2 (previously seen in exhibitions such as Split Together, Merged Apart and If These Walls Were Water: Lina Bo Bardi). We focus on the visual forms through which modernity expressed itself outside of the Western context. Furthermore, the project continues the House of Culture's series of architectural exhibitions previously featuring Alexander Konstantinov and Lina Bo Bardi—yet, unlike those predecessors, it seeks to examine Modernism not through the lens of biography, but through a broad multidisciplinary analysis of the phenomenon and the birth of the modern city."

Reference information

GES-2 House of Culture is an international institution opened in 2021. Its primary mission is to create conditions for the development of contemporary culture and the artistic community within the context of the city, country, and world, drawing on the values of accessibility, interdisciplinarity, and engaging everyone in cultural production.

GES-2 is the main venue of V—A—C Foundation, which has been operating since 2009. The House of Culture includes the Vaults Centre for Artistic Production, where new works are created for the GES-2 programme. The GES-2 programme encompasses exhibitions, cinema, theatre, music, dance, and publishing projects. The public programme combines academic formats with lectures, meetings, workshops, and other events for adults and children.

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