

FROM

OPPOSITE OFFICE

22. Januar 2019

Her Majesty The Queen
Buckingham Palace
London SW1A 1AA
GREAT BRITAIN

Affordable Housing - AFFORDABLE PALACE

May it please Your Majesty,

I wish to inform you of an important occurrence I believe deserves your attention. The UK is in the midst of an affordable housing crisis: the deepest ever, centered on London. Large parts of the population are locked out of the housing market and will remain so for the foreseeable future. Property Guardianship and other precarious forms of living are on the rise, almost becoming the new norm. There are only a few who are satisfied with their homes.

That's why we need to change something and create more affordable living space. It is a fallacy that the market will regulate it. Rents are getting higher and investors are still trying to get the most out of it. In order to prevent this and London remains human, the problem of affordable housing must be solved politically and socially. But not only politics and laws help here, but one needs a social consensus. This is why I ask you: Citizens trust Your Majesty more than anyone else. Making affordable housing to top priority will have a huge impact on society. We, as architects, have come up with a conversion design that transformed Buckingham Palace into „Affordable Palace“, a shared palace for you and Your subjects to live in. A collective space!

We are very interested in the social part of architecture. I think, we live in times, where „architecture as sculpture“ as an end in itself isn't feasible anymore. The architecture generation before us, the so called „star architects“ such as Zaha Hadid and Frank Gehry, built spacial sculptures and elaborated representative buildings that are totally separated from social conditions. In the Middle Ages, cathedrals were in the focus of public and architectural attention, in the last decades the importance of cathedrals have been replaced by museums, cultural and sports

buildings. Elaborately constructed, partially amorphous and mostly expensive buildings were built. But instead of masterpieces, more and more formalistic buildings without meaning and atmosphere were created. Architecture becomes commerce! The architect follows the trail of money. FIFA World Cup 2022 in Qatar?! Great! Let's build spectacular stadiums! ...

I believe this can and will not continue for long. The gap between rich and poor is getting bigger and bigger. Eventually we come to a point where we can't ignore this anymore. And this point (in time) is now! Social Housing has to become the new Cathedral! The Cathedral of the 21st century is Social Housing!

So we thought radically. London ... UK ... What provokes Englishmen? And then we found You, Your Majesty...

Large cities such as London are in the midst of a housing crisis. Large parts of the population - the so called 'generation rent', immigrants and low-income earners - are locked out of the housing market and will remain so for the foreseeable future. Even someone with a good income will never catch up with the soaring housing prices. Property Guardianship and other precarious forms of living are on the rise, almost becoming the new norm.

There are only a few who are satisfied with their homes. One is the Queen. Buckingham Palace is great! With its 775 rooms and 79 bathrooms the population density is not representative to the rest of London and Buckingham Palace is waiting for repurposing.. The rooms are awash with sparkling candelabra, sumptuous carpets, marble columns, sculptures, and expensive artworks. So why not using your existing structure to fight the housing crisis?

OK... I understand: This seems to be a bit sarcastic and polemic to you but we live in weird times: In the US someone thinks about a wall (to Mexico), in your country about Brexit. If you consider all this, why shouldn't we think about transforming Buckingham Palace into Social Housing?! Is there only one reason?

I have the honour to be, Madam, Your Majesty's humble and obedient servant

Benedikt Hartl, Opposite Office