Public access description

Peter and Alison Smithson were a husband and wife team who developed a distinctive architectural style in Britain after the Second World War. Based around the minimalist ideas of early modernism, their architecture also embraced the technological opportunities afforded by mechanisation and new building materials.

The 'House of the Future' was a progressive idea for a modern home created out of plastic for the Daily Mail Ideal Home Exhibition in London in 1956. The Smithsons worked with the premise that this mass-produced, low cost, prefabricated mode of living would become increasingly popular as the twentieth century progressed. Primarily designed by Alison, the structural basis of the house was a double plastic shell, which would have come off the production line in its entirety and not in separate parts in the same way as a motor car.

The Smithsons believed that post-war design as epitomised by the Festival of Britain had become too frivolous and reacted strongly against this softer version of modernism. Their minimalist approach has meant that their work is often characterised as 'brutalist', a term often credited to their friend, the critic, Peter Reyner Banham. Reyner Banham believed that their 'House of the Future', was one of the first examples of what he dubbed 'pop' architecture, or architecture which engaged with the possibilities of mass production and the realities of mass media.

Descriptive line

Alison & Peter Smithson; architectural drawing for 'House of the Future'. 1956, London

Physical description

Two-dimensional, monochrome architectural drawing in pencil on paper depicting a rectangular three-dimensional structure at an angle, sectioned off into discrete curvilinear spaces with the words 'Ideal Homes' and 'House of the Future' and 'Note-This Drawing is Preliminary and Does Not Represent Final Scheme In Detail'. Lettered with scale and title and stamped with name and address of the architects. Numbered 'HF 5502'. Scale is 1/2 inches to 1ft.

Dimensions

Height: 960 mm, Width: 775 mm

Museum number

E.663-1978

URL

http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O155879/architectural-drawing-for-house-of-architectural-drawing-smithson-alison/