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Moisej J. Ginzburg & Ignatij F. Milinis: Narkomfin: Moscow 1928–1930 (O'Neil Ford Monograph)



Synopsis

This volume documents the House of the Narkomfin, built (or “montaged,” as the Constructivist architect Moisej J. Ginzburg (1866–1946) preferred to call it) between 1928 and 1931. It is therefore contemporaneous with Le Corbusier’s Villa Savoye, as well as with Le Corbusier’s visit to Moscow. But the Narkomfin is more than a housing block with a recognizable style. It is the converging point of the history of Constructivism, where purposefully reassembled functional spaces were given an active role in transforming everyday social life. It is also the zenith of five years of intensive experimentation under Soviet Russian government sponsorship, from 1926 and 1930, with new ways of dwelling, boasting emancipatory social relationships for women in particular. Intended for the working class, these industrialized dwelling types sought ways to raise numbers without sacrificing quality. Widely transcending the confines of Soviet architectural practice itself, the Narkomfin anticipated by 20 years Le Corbusier’s own experimental housing block in Marseille, which resulted directly from his visit to Moscow in 1928. The Narkomfin was also the last building Ginzburg’s Society of Contemporary Architects (OSA) built with its team of brilliant young professionals, trained at the VHUTEMAS (the Soviet Bauhaus). The 1930 Bolshevik Central Committee decree condemned the experimentation as “phantasies that would alienate people from the very idea of Socialism.”

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