

Press release from 26.03.2013/11 p.m - Europa Nostra Award 2013

[Long version of paragraphs 1 to 5 = 3,200 / Summary Section 1 to 3 = 1,620 characters]

Berlin holiday residence "Taut's Home" wins European award for monument preservation

The "European Union Prize for Cultural Heritage / Europa Nostra Award" is the single most important prize for the preservation and promotion of Europe's cultural and historical monuments. As a rule, castles, cathedrals, museums and historic old towns are honored at a glamorous ceremony that is comparable to the film industry's Oscars. The awards will be hosted on 16 June by Placido Domingo, president of the organisation, in front of a landmark of Western civilization: the Acropolis in Athens, Greece.

One of this year's awards goes to a relatively small but dedicated project from Berlin: "Taut's Home," located in the suburb of Neukölln-Britz. This colorful holiday residence has been given a new lease of life by its private owners, landscape architect Katrin Lesser and graphic designer Ben Buschfeld. People can experience the spirit and cultural awakening of the 1920s not only by visiting the premises, but by spending the night. The restored home is part of the Hufeisensiedlung, a housing estate laid out in 1925-1930 by architect Bruno Taut. Declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2008, this monument ensemble is regarded throughout the world as an outstanding example of modern urban housing.

By winning the award in the conservation category, this modestly sized (65m²) terraced unit, furnished in 1930s style with great attention to detail, is filling some very big shoes. The last two Berlin award-winners were the Neues Museum, remodelled by British star architect David Chipperfield on the city's Museum Island (2010), and painter Max Liebermann's villa in the elegant Wannsee district (2008).

When the house with garden and veranda went up for sale, the couple – both long-standing residents of the estate and strongly committed to heritage preservation – were absolutely thrilled how much original material had been preserved inside. Over a two-year period, they invested to restore Taut's typically lush wall and floor colors, and meticulously renovated the historic tiled stoves, cupboards, flooring and windows. They stripped away newer layers of construction, researched in libraries, gathered original furnishings and even designed numerous pieces themselves, based on historical patterns. Modern comforts were discreetly integrated. All this was achieved without public funding, which they had tried and failed to obtain. The owners aim to recoup their long-term investment by renting out. This is a property by enthusiasts, for enthusiasts: so far, guests have been impressed by the high quality of living and special flair of the house, and in the guestbook virtually everyone announces they want to return.

Such passions for a project completed only in May 2012 helped win over the jury. No wonder, as Taut's Home meets the award's stated objective not only to preserve architectural heritage, but ideally to make it experiential. Architect Taut, who in just ten years planned around 10,000 Berlin homes and four of the city's six UNESCO-listed estates, has finally been given his own monument : a time-capsule of a house for architecture and design fans seeking to spend a few nights in Berlin's latest World Heritage property. More details at www.tautshome.com.

Complimentary pictures, press material and further info:

www.europanostra.org/heritage-awards

www.tautes-heim.de + www.tautes-heim.de/pressematerial.php

Press contact: ben@buschfeld.com, Tel. +49-30-259 229-63