

A CREATIVE SOBRIETY

PRESS RELEASE

LOUIS BOSNY, ARCHITECT 1924 – 1983

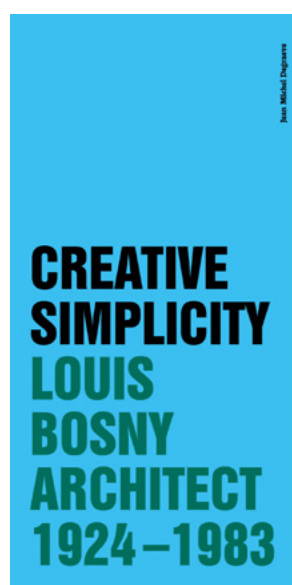
by Jean Michel Degraeve



LA CITÉ MIROIR
SAUVENIÈRE

MNEVA
asbl Cité Miroir

A BOOK



Celebrating their 20th anniversary, Fourre-Tout Editions are publishing a fascinating manifesto about one of Liège's most committed architects, Louis Bosny, and co-creating an exhibition with La Cité Miroir (Cultural centre & museum in Liège, Belgium) on the issue of social housing.

History is made by millions of anonymous men and women whose work contributes to our collective well-being. Louis Bosny is a visionary architect, a man of great conviction... and he's unknown ! But you may know him, without realizing it, through the places you frequent often...

What Bosny did was architecture. In a progressive spirit, he designed housing (In Liège alone, around a hundred units in the municipalities of Flémalle and Ans), hospital wards (Bavière hospital) and a school.

Focusing on everyone's needs. Concerned with building the best with limited budgetary means. Louis Bosny owes his sobriety first and foremost to his passion for social housing. But, in a modernist spirit, he is also sober by choice. His designs are simple and functional. His personal home in the Laveu district of Liège, a true reflection of his creativity, is brimming with innovative findings, testifying to his inventive spirit and deep conviction that everyone deserves decent living conditions. This exceptional home inspired the title choice for the book : «Creative Sobriety».

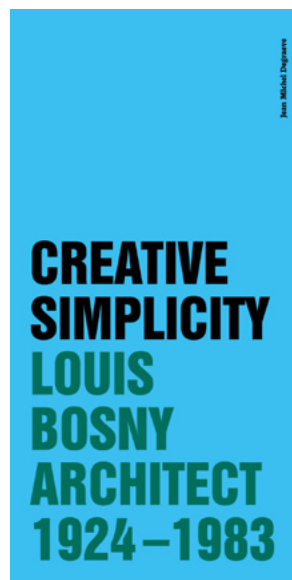
As a young man, he also fought against the Nazi occupying forces during the Second World War. When peace returned, he campaigned for social justice. To the very end, he remained an inventive creator and an activist convinced that everyone has the right to a decent living.

This year, to mark the 100th anniversary of Louis Bosny's birth, a book published in French and English, together with an eponymous exhibition, present to the public the breadth and depth of his commitments and architectural work.

AN EXHIBITION



A BOOK

AN EXHIBITION
AT LA CITÉ MIROIR

CURATORS
Éditions Fourre-Tout et
MNEMA asbl



LA CITÉ MIROIR
SAUVENIÈRE

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LOUIS BOSNY - CREATIVE SOBRIETY

From the reality of war in Europe and Africa to the housing crisis in Belgium, an investigation into one of Liège's most committed architects.

Editions Fourre-Tout, our publishing house based in Liège, has been promoting architectural creation for 20 years, highlighting its links with other artistic disciplines and with the field of political concerns.

In this lavishly illustrated monograph on Bosny, Jean-Michel Degraeve, himself an architect who worked for 12 years at the Société Nationale du Logement (National Housing society) and then the Société Wallonne du Logement, traces a family history and a professional career at a time of far-reaching social reforms. His meticulous investigation of this forgotten man has brought together original documents (plans and drawings) as well as photographs, revealing all the facets of a work which, through its creative sobriety and the political impetus behind it, can still serve as a model for today's decision-makers and builders. This book will appeal to all citizens concerned with their environment, public services concerned with the essential health, educational issues and housing for all, it will also reach architects, designers and teachers. The subjects covered are also of major interest to a readership that spans the whole of Europe, as the stories that unfold here portray the « Glorious thirty » and their Central European version.

The book is available in both French and English in most bookshops and on the Fourre-Tout website.

INFOS

Price : 35€

<https://fourretout.pierrehebbelinck.net/>

LOUIS BOSNY — FOR A SOBER, CREATIVE ARCHITECTURE

La Cité Miroir (museum) joins the spotlight on this extraordinary architect.

This exhibition is the result of a free adaptation by Carmelo Virone of the book by Jean-Michel Degraeve. By devoting an exhibition to the architectural achievements of Louis Bosny from the 1950s until his death in 1983, La Cité Miroir aims to show the importance of all his behind-the-scenes work, and to question housing policies in Belgium today, at a time when rental rates are soaring and the number of people who are inadequately housed or homeless continues to rise.

Architecture isn't just about erecting walls, it's about designing functional, pleasant living spaces where everyone can flourish. With Bosny, the social dimension is at the heart of our concerns. The exhibition unfolds at the center of La Cité Miroir, in a minimal yet monumental scenography, based entirely on cardboard, making it both an aesthetic choice and an ethical statement.

INFOS

Friday, November 08, 2024 > Sunday, February 02, 2025

Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. | Saturday and Sunday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

7€ | 5€ concessions

EVENTS:

Meeting: *Social housing, housing for the future?*

A meeting conference on the issues of social housing and architecture, hosted by the magazine « Imagine Demain le Monde » editorial team.

Wednesday, November 20 | 8 p.m.

Price: €3

www.citemiroir.be

GUIDED TOURS

Information and reservations: reservation@citemiroir.be | 04 230 70 50 | www.citemiroir.be

A program by MNEMA asbl & les éditions Fourre-Tout

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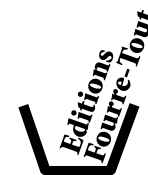
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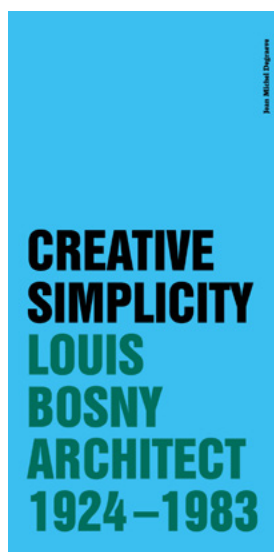
PRESS KIT



LOUIS BOSNY, ARCHITECT 1924 – 1983

by Jean Michel Degraeve

BOOK



Louis Bosny:
young architect



Remarkable draughtsman
and creative architect



Louis Bosny in Egypt (1943) in front of the
Ramses museum in Luxor, Upper Egypt

FROM THE REALITY OF WAR IN EUROPE AND AFRICA TO THE HOUSING CRISIS IN BELGIUM, AN INVESTIGATION INTO ONE OF LIÈGE'S MOST COMMITTED ARCHITECTS.

Louis Bosny was an architect from Liège. He died too soon, at the age of 59, and went unnoticed, even though his work is of exceptional creativity and social concern.

The relentless efforts of researcher Jean-Michel Degraeve, who has traced Bosny's family history and that of his successive clients, have resulted in a monographic work that sheds light on his extraordinary career as a member of the Resistance and then as a soldier in the Second World War. Between the ages of 17 and 21, Bosny crossed Europe and Africa before taking part in the first bombings in Italy in 1943, then joining Montgomery's army in the Desert War, finding himself at Bastogne in 1944, in the midst of the Ardennes offensive, before being sent to the front in Germany.

His return to Liège and his decision to become an architect led him to graduate in just two years, benefiting from educational «bridges» linked to his status as a Resistance fighter and soldier. He obtained the highest grades in his class.

This book tells his story, before investigating his work as a committed architect. Over the course of four decades, he has worked on housing for all, health and education projects, as well as a number of atypical and fascinating private projects.



© Robinayef, personal house of the Bosny family at Le Laveu in Liège. 1956

A CREATIVE SOBRIETY

PRESS KIT



LOUIS BOSNY, ARCHITECT 1924 – 1983

by Jean Michel Degraeve

BOOK



He travelled through Africa, the Middle East and the European fighting fronts, before returning to Liège in 1945, at the age of 21.



Louis Bosny on the left, contemplating the pyramids



Louis, Antoinette, François and Jean Bosny drawn by their father

FIGHTING SON, RESISTANCE FIGHTER FATHER

Louis (Jean Eugène) Bosny was born into a Liège family on January 5, 1924. He was the son of Louis (Jean Baptiste Arthur) Bosny and Emma Schmitz. The family lived in the Longdoz district of Liège. His father worked for the municipality administration and was politically active. He passed on his socialist values to his children.

He said about his son Louis that «he was rather unruly and turbulent, but he had an innate taste for drawing and was already doing portraits». In 1939, he began studying industrial design and took drawing classes at the Royal Academy Royale of Fine Arts in Liège. Louis was just 17 in May 1940 when the Germans invaded. But the defeat left a deep impression on him.

His father then advises him to move abroad «to avoid screwing up and getting caught». He left occupied Belgium in January 1941. Arriving in Spain, he was arrested and imprisoned in Franco's Miranda d'Ebro internment camp, in the Basque country.

In July 1941, he obtained a pass to reach the Belgian Congo via Spain and Portugal. He then joins the Congolese Public Force. But

he wanted to fight. After a spin as a navigator, he joined the ranks of the Para-Commandos of the British Special Air Service (SAS). In December 1943, he joined the Belgian Expeditionary Corps in North Africa, tasked with protecting the British rear in Egypt and Palestine.

He then took part in the Liberation campaigns in the Netherlands and Belgium, before joining the occupying forces in Germany. Eventually he moved back to Belgium, where, with an architecture degree in his pocket, he tackled the severe housing shortage in post-war countries.

«Louis Bosny began his professional career at a time of far-reaching social reform. The foundations of the welfare state had been laid out after the war. The measures adopted were designed to strengthen social cohesion by improving living conditions for working classes, while countering the influence of Communists, who had gained great prestige by fighting the Nazis. On the economic front, the Belgian Socialist Party and Christian Democracy, integrated into the Christian Social Party, are working together to make the state an engine for growth, by stimulating consumption through public investment.

By the end of the decade, 71,000 social housing units will have been built..»

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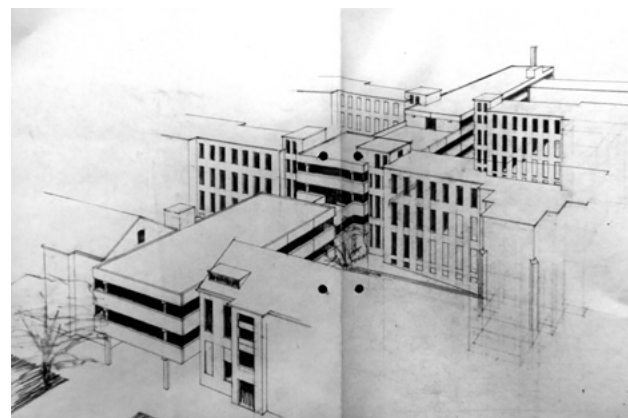
BOOK



Complexe Grand Pré: original drawings



Institut de stomatologie
(1962/69) / Hôpital de Bavière



Hôpital de Bavière: Central Alley / 1969/71. Not built

A SURVEY OF POST-WAR SOCIAL HOUSING THAT STILL ECHOES IN TODAY'S REALITY.

The author, Jean-Michel Degraeve, first becomes an investigator by tracking down Bosny's family and then his various institutional clients. He discovers and analyzes in detail the architect's very small house in the folds of Liège hills, behind the Guillemins train station in Liège. This exceptional house was to influence the choice of the book's subtitle: «Creative sobriety».

At a time of budget cuts in the construction sector, Bosny is leading the way to sensitive, concrete trade-offs that make it possible to build intelligently, both socially and technically. This house is a true laboratory for his research into the quality of social housing (Bosny will design and build hundreds of homes in the municipalities of Flémalle and Ans).

J-M Degraeve introduces us to the tireless work of this architect, who worked on 17 commissions to develop the Bavière hospital and reflect on developments in hospital care.

This research has led to the discovery of original documents from his projects, as well as photographs that offer a thoroughly documented panorama of his life, his work and the reality of social housing in Belgium.

Book excerpt:

From the outset of his career, he has been particularly involved in social housing. A social housing architect has to create, on a given and sometimes ungrateful site, housing that offers a maximum of usability at a compressed cost. For many architects, this dual constraint is a hindrance to the development of quality projects, especially as the assignment is quite poorly remunerated. Some tend to over-simplify their projects to avoid complications.



© Robinayef, Complexe Grand Pré; Flémalle (1958/60)

A CREATIVE SOBRIETY

LOUIS BOSNY, ARCHITECT 1924 – 1983

by Jean Michel Degraeve



BOOK

THE AUTHOR

Fourre-Tout Editions called on architect Jean-Michel Degraeve, known for his commitment and expertise in the field of social housing for several decades, to produce this book. He has discovered his talent as a researcher and historian by producing this book within two years of work.

JEAN MICHEL DEGRAEVE

After obtaining his diploma in architecture and working in the urban planning unit of the « intercommunal development » in Occidental Hainaut, Belgium. He established as a freelance architect in Montigny-le-Tilleul in 1978. From 1981 to 2003, he worked in the public social housing sector for the « National Housing society » and then for the Walloon Housing Society.

In 1994, he was awarded the «Hélios - passive solar architecture» prize for the conversion of a barn into his own home. From 2003 to 2008, he worked as a housing policy advisor in ministerial cabinets and as Secretary of the Superior Council of Housing. As an independent consultant since 2008, he wrote the proceedings of the symposium on «The City of Tomorrow», and in 2011 the book «Habiter en quartier durable » (« Living in a sustainable neighborhood ») as well as numerous articles in specialized journals. He's also been a member of the Regional Planning Commission and European Belgium. He is also an amateur flute and saxophone player.

THE BOOK IS ACCOMPANIED BY AN AFTERWORD BY THE ARCHITECT AND TEACHER OF ARCHITECTURAL THEORY, GEORGES-ÉRIC LANTAIR, A GREAT CONNOISSEUR OF BOSNY'S WORK.

«I truly believe that the Bosny house (1957-fin 1958) sheds light on both the individual and his architectural practice, his modus operandi. This is true of all architects, of course, but here there's a real osmosis between personal lifestyle and collective vision. The family home is the place for playful experimentation that Louis Bosny allows himself, the laboratory that validates and drives his choices.»

THE BACK COVER IS BY MARC DUBOIS, GHENT'S RENOWNED ARCHITECTURE CRITIC.

«This is not the work of a 'grand master', but that of a fascinating personality who has helped to provide a better place to live for many people. An architect doesn't work in a vacuum, he's part of the zeitgeist of an evolving society.»

Marc Dubois' complete bio: <http://www.marcdubois.be/cv>

**A COLLECTION ENTITLED
"DOS HISTORIQUE"**

The book «Une sobriété créative | Louis Bosny» completes one of three collections at Fourre-Tout Editions.

The «Dos Historiques» collection is intended as a reminder of current issues. This book complements «L'Equerre», dedicated to a famous Belgian architecture magazine published from 1928 to 1939, and «Lifting the curtain», which examines architecture networks in Europe from 1914 to 2014, as well as «Pensées Constructives | Architecture suisse alémanique 1980-2000».

For these works, Fourre-Tout's main concern is to understand how a book of architectural history or criticism can form a «toolbox» that can be used to assess local or regional particularities, interpreted as a basis for thinking about strategies to develop cultures and policies. One of the aims of these publications is also to provide architects and students alike with tools for thinking about their practice.



A CREATIVE SOBRIETY

LOUIS BOSNY, ARCHITECT 1924 – 1983

by Jean Michel Degraeve

NAYEF HAZIMEH AND ROBIN NISSEN, ACTING UNDER THE PSEUDONYM «ROBINAYEF», SIGN A PHOTOGRAPHIC COLLABORATION TO ILLUSTRATE THIS BOOK, A TESTIMONY TO THE LIFE OF BOSNY'S WORKS IN 2023.

The production of the book was the catalyst for a photographic commission to two young authors. Emmanuel d'Autreppe, advisor to photography book publisher Yellow Now, suggested the names Nayef Hazimeh and Robin Nissen. The two authors will merge their names in the form of «Robinayef», recalling the universality of creation, as Picasso and Braque had done a century earlier. The photographers immersed themselves both in Bosny's housing estates and in his home with his own children. Their work, committed and rigorous, translates into black and white all the nuances of living conditions within these architectural environments. They restore an uncommon authenticity to human sensibilities. This highly topical approach highlights issues of social inequality, the sharing of space and the passing of time (they photograph the major work of social housing on the eve of its demolition...). An exhibition at the La Châtaigneraie contemporary art center will pay tribute to their work in 2026.

Biography of Nayef Hazimeh and Robin Nissen:

Both are photography graduates from ESA Saint-Luc liège, where Nayef Hazimeh teaches computer graphics and printing techniques, and both photographers are interested in documentary photography in the broadest sense of the term. While Robin Nissen (currently studying for a master's degree in Performing Arts at the University of Liège) takes a more experimental approach to photography, Nayef Hazimeh is more interested in alternative printing techniques. Through their photography, the two photographers place a strong emphasis on the social dimension, all underpinned by an authorial vision. Alongside their artistic activities, they are also very interested in cultural mediation, using photography and/or video as tools. Nayef Hazimeh is currently focusing his research on scientific mediation using photographic techniques, while Robin Nissen is interested in film analysis and film education as a means of cultural mediation.



BOOK



A CREATIVE SOBRIETY

LOUIS BOSNY, ARCHITECT 1924 – 1983

by Jean Michel Degraeve

PUBLICATION INFORMATION

Louis Bosny was an architect committed to social construction: social housing, hospitals and basic schools. Architect Jean Michel Degraeve has immersed himself in his life and gained access to archives that have enabled him to trace the history of an era, the singularity of a discreet man and his conceptual thinking translated into sober but creative architecture. The book is accompanied by two young photographers, Naef Hazimeh and Robin Nissen, who produce direct, sensitive black-and-white work on all these subjects. Architect Georges-Eric Lantair has written the afterword.

PRESS KIT



BOOK

Published February 2024, in the *Dos historique* collection.
This edition was produced by Editions Fourre-Tout, with the support of the Cellule architecture de la Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles and Wallonie-Bruxelles Architectures (WBA).

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Hazimeh Nayef & Robin Nissen

FOREWORD

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AFTERWORD

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4TH COVER PAGE

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LOUIS BOSNY, FOR SOBER, CREATIVE ARCHITECTURE

PRESS KIT



LA CITÉ MIROIR
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MNEMA
asbl Cité Miroir

by Éditions Fourre-Tout, MNEMA asbl, Carmelo Virone and Pierre-yves Jurdant

EXHIBITION



Cité Grand Pré, demolition in 2023.

LOUIS BOSNY, FOR SOBER, CREATIVE ARCHITECTURE

Faced with today's soaring construction costs, but also with ecological challenges, sobriety is essential. How can we transform this constraint into a source of creativity?

This exhibition shows how architect Louis Bosny, driven by deep social convictions, made the most of the means at his disposal to create quality housing accessible to the working classes, and to build and improve various hospital structures. However, from the 1950s, when Bosny began his work, to the present day, the context has changed considerably, to the extent that the neoliberal vision of the world has succeeded in obliterating, distorting and undermining many social policies right down to their very foundations. The exhibition focuses on these contexts and their historical transformations.

This exhibition is a back-and-forth dialogue between politics and architecture, showing how public policies have influenced architectural thinking and the development of urban buildings, and how architecture can, in its own way, contribute to improving living conditions for the community.

We know that history is generally written by the dominants. Here, the aim is to write the story of an (almost) anonymous man and by rescuing him from the oblivion to which he is (almost) doomed, to show that this history is collective from the outset, that it concerns us all, because the issues it raises are acquiring a new relevance today.

By devoting an exhibition to the architectural achievements of Louis Bosny from the 1950s until his death in 1982, La Cité Miroir aims to show the importance of this behind-the-scenes work, and to question housing policies in Belgium today, at a time of soaring rents and ever-increasing homelessness.

LOUIS BOSNY, FOR SOBER, CREATIVE ARCHITECTURE

PRESS KIT

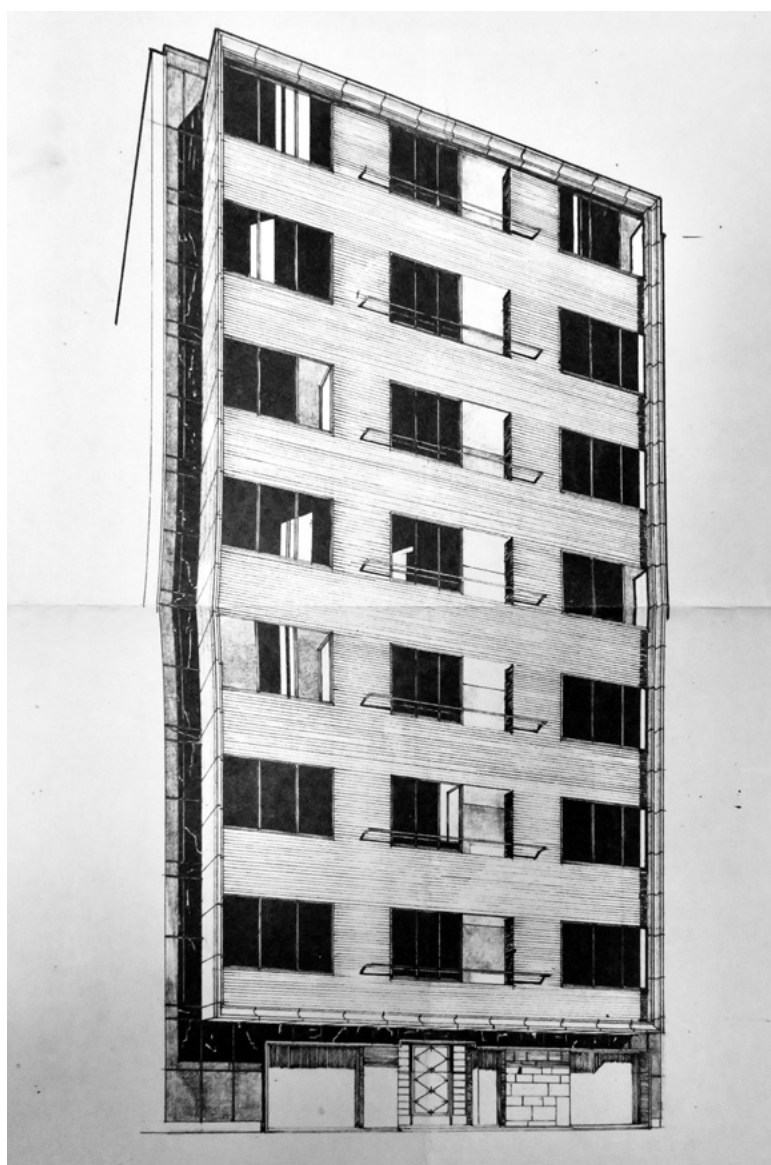


LA CITÉ MIROIR
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by Éditions Fourre-Tout, MNEMA asbl, Carmelo Virone and Pierre-yves Jurdant

EXHIBITION



Building quai Sainte Barbe, Liège, 1954/60.



Model of the building La dentisterie, Bavière site.

An exhibition by La Cité Miroir Museum and Fourre-Tout Editions.

Curators: Éditions Fourre-Tout et MNEMA asbl

Exhibition script (writing and documents): Carmelo Virone

Set design: pierreyvesjurdant

PRACTICAL INFO

Date: November 8 to February 2, 2025

Opening hours: Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. / Saturdays and Sundays, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Price: €7 | €5 (reduced) | Art. 27

Reservations and tour information on the La Cité Miroir www.citemiroir.be

SATELLITE PROGRAMS AT THE EXHIBITION

Meeting: *Social housing, housing for the future??*

A meeting on the issues of social housing and architecture, hosted by the Imagine Demain le Monde magazine team.

Wednesday, November 20 | 8 p.m.

Tarif: 3€