

Press Release

Modernity in Transition – At the beginning of 2026, Techne Sphere Leipzig presents two exhibitions that explore architectural aesthetics, programmatic utopias, and the complex realities of 20th-century architectural visions. The focus lies on architecture and urban planning as responses to the profound social, political, and economic upheavals of their respective periods. From the reform-driven ideas of the Bauhaus to Soviet-Armenian expressions and the utopian concepts of the Soviet avant-garde, modernity emerges as a design principle marked by programmatic, aesthetic, and ideological diversity.

Exhibition: January 10 – March 22, 2026

Opening: January 9, 2026, 1–9 pm

Exhibition I: *the spirit of past future*

Produced by the Goethe-Institut Armenia, *the spirit of past future* is presented at Techne Sphere Leipzig. It brings together photographs by Leipzig-based artist Margaret Hoppe with graphic and multimedia works by Armenian designer Nvard Yerkanian. The exhibition reflects modernity as a cyclical structure in which phases of repression and emancipation are not closed historical periods but are continuously reshaped through processes of reconstruction and overwriting. Drawing on their distinct perspectives, experiences, and memories, both artists approach the theme of modernity through differing formal languages.

Margaret Hoppe photographs key buildings of modernist architecture. Her series *Pair Unpair, Bauhaus Dessau* is complemented by images of Le Corbusier's buildings in Europe and India. Ranging from realistic depictions to overlays, fragmentary views, and abstract compositions of form and color, Hoppe condenses her architectural motifs into autonomous artistic interpretations.

Nvard Yerkanian investigates ornamental elements of Soviet-Armenian modernism in her graphic series *Transformations*. Industrial concrete elements are transformed into colorful, geometric patterns, placing them in a new context of modern, universal visual language. Graphics from her series *Fragile Concrete* present aestheticized depictions of iconic Soviet-Armenian modernist buildings from the 1960s to 1980s.

The juxtaposition of the two artistic positions invites reflection on societal visions for the future, as expressed through 20th-century design, architecture, and urban planning. At the same time, the exhibition highlights overlapping processes accompanying the disappearance of modern design forms and communist-era architecture.

Curated by Armenian curator and architectural theorist Ruben Arevshatyan, *the spirit of past future* was first presented in Yerevan in 2025 in cooperation with the Institute for Contemporary Art Yerevan. The collaboration between the artists grew out of an exchange program involving the Goethe-Institut Yerevan, the Institute for Contemporary Art Yerevan, the Saxony-Anhalt Art Foundation, and the Bauhaus Dessau Foundation, to which Margaret Hoppe was invited in 2024. In cooperation with the City of Leipzig and Techne Sphere Leipzig, the exhibition is now presented in Leipzig, marking the official start of the city's cultural year with the Armenian capital, Yerevan.

Exhibition II: Frédéric Chaubin – *Soviet Cosmic Modernism*

A selection of photographs by French artist Frédéric Chaubin complements *the spirit of past future* with images of postmodern architecture that merge futuristic science fiction and concrete monumentalism. Since 2003, Chaubin has gathered architectural testimonies all across several successor states of the Soviet Union, focusing on unusual, expressive, and idiosyncratic forms beyond stereotypical visions of monotonous Soviet architecture. This work revealed how the last generation of Soviet architects managed to experiment, despite economical exhaustion, an alternative to the International Style. Chaubin's photographs depict late Soviet architecture of the 1970s and 1980s, whose extraordinary formal language carries forward the utopian ideals of late modernism in combination with vernacular expressiveness. As striking witnesses of a bygone era, they continue to illustrate the last episode of a socialist utopia—radical and poetic alike.

Margaret Hoppe

Born in 1981 in Greiz, Thuringia, Germany, Margaret Hoppe studied photography at the Leipzig Academy of Visual Arts from 1999 to 2007, completing her diploma under Prof. Timm Rautert and becoming a master student of Prof. Christopher Muller in 2009. She studied at the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris (2005–2006) with Jean-Marc Bustamante and Christian Boltanski. Her awards include the Förderpreis der Wüstenrot Stiftung for documentary photography and a Cité des Arts fellowship in Paris. For 2026, she received the Max Uhlig Travel Grant from the Saxony Cultural Foundation for a project in Armenia. Hoppe's work focuses on architectural photography, often in historical and social contexts, exploring modernist architecture and the disappearance of cultural heritage.

www.margrethoppe.com

Nvard Yerkanian

Born in Armenia and currently based in Venice, Yerkanian studied architecture at the National University of Architecture and Construction in Armenia and completed a master's degree in graphic design in Florence. She is co-founder and curator of the WHY Graphic Design Festival in Florence and a founding member of Docomomo Armenia. Her book *Fragile Concrete* focuses on Soviet Armenian modernist architecture. Her work explores urban transformation, cultural heritage, and the intersection of art, architecture, and design.

www.nvardyerkanian.com

Frédéric Chaubin

Born in 1959, Frédéric Chaubin is an internationally recognized author and photographer. As editor of the lifestyle magazine *Citizen K*, he developed a strong interest in aesthetics, alternative cultures, and fashion in the late 1990s. From the 2000s Chaubin started publishing on the topic, combining text and photography. In 14 former Soviet republics, he documented buildings from the 1970s to the 1990s, capturing forms that appear futuristic, utopian, monumental, poetic and decaying all at once. Published in 2011, his work *Cosmic Communist Constructions Photographed (CCCP)* has been widely exhibited. In 2021, he published *Stone Age*, a book about medieval fortresses in Europe.

www.fredericchaubin.org

Joint Cultural Year Leipzig – Yerevan

On March 31, 2025, in Yerevan and in the presence of German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier and Armenian President Vahagn Khachaturyan, Leipzig Mayor Burkhard Jung and his Yerevan counterpart Tigran Avinyan inaugurated a joint cultural year between Leipzig and Yerevan. Running from October 1, 2025, to October 31, 2026, the program features exhibitions, concerts, theater performances, readings, films, workshops, and educational projects, with a focus on both traditional and contemporary culture.

www.leipzig.de/leipzig-strategie/internationales/internationale-kooperationen/jerewan-und-armenien/kulturjahr-jerewan

Goethe-Institut Yerevan

Opened in 2025, the Goethe-Institut in Yerevan serves as a central platform for dialogue and collaboration between Germany and Armenia through art, language, and ideas. Its activities focus on cultural exchange, educational initiatives, public discourse, and support for the local arts and cultural scene, with particular attention to architecture and urban development.

www.goethe.de/ins/am/de/index.html

Techne Sphere Leipzig

Designed by Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer (1907–2012), the Niemeyer Sphere was realized in Leipzig in 2020 in collaboration with Jair Valera, studio director of Oscar Niemeyer. The floating glass-and-steel structure integrates futuristically with the surrounding historic brick architecture. Its adjacent gallery hosts international exhibitions exploring the intersection of art, space, and architecture.

www.technesphere.de

Curators

the spirit of past future (Yerevan, 2025): Ruben Arevshatyan

the spirit of past future (Leipzig, 2026): Katrin Klietsch

Exhibition Dates: January 10 – March 22, 2026

Opening: January 9, 2026, 1–9 pm

Opening Hours: Fri–Sun 3–6 pm and by appointment

The exhibitions are not fully accessible.

Contact & Information

TECHNE SPHERE LEIPZIG GmbH

Niemeyerstraße 2–5, 04179 Leipzig

kultur@technesphere.de

www.technesphere.de

instagram: [technespherekultur](https://www.instagram.com/technespherekultur)

press images

<https://www.technesphere.de/presse>

