

Brutalism back in fashion

There probably isn't a West Londoner without an opinion on the infamous Trellick Tower over at Golborne Road. It's bold, tall, exposed with concrete and designed for the socially affordable future in the late 1960s as part of the British New Brutalism movement. After decades of bad press and demolitions, these brash concrete buildings are now back in style with more respect and admiration than ever.

Brutalism is currently featured in a special series by [Dezeen](#), starting from the basics of the architectural movement and continuing with for example an excellent list of the lesser-known [concrete gems](#), chosen by Michael Abrahamson, the editor of the Fuck Yeah Brutalism blog. And there is an extensive programme of art events presented by Bow Arts at one famous Brutalist piece by architect Erno Goldfinger, the [Balfron Tower](#), all the way up to mid October 2014. For example this weekend during the Open House London event, the building opens its doors and over 20 apartments to the public before its extensive renovation.



Image: Wikipedia

What makes brutalism fashionable after all these decades of negligence? Is it just the fact that nostalgia has finally reached even the most controversial architectural movements of our times? The article in Dezeen suggests that one of the reasons could be that the Brutalist buildings were designed with future in mind and the progressive socialist idealism behind them still appeals to the public as well as designers. Although at first perceived as idealistic, in the 1970s many of these

Brutalist housing buildings were met with increasing crime and poverty that led to the failure of the movement.

Although the movement is gaining new-found respect, a long road still lies ahead. While for example Balfron Tower is a listed building due to its architectural and historical value, the same has not happened to its neighbouring Robin Hood Gardens. What is the reason for this? It is interesting to follow how the Brutalist buildings - especially Balfron Tower after its renovation - will develop in the following years. And before that, to see what happens during the open doors at Balfron Tower, when over 20 artists open their flats and exhibitions to the general public for free. This and the whole Balfron Season has in fact been thanks to a housing scheme by Bow Arts Trust, which offers artists temporary residence in emptied flats - an excellent idea as well!

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