

Pavel Otdelnov. ***Estates: Fragile Utopia***

Lewisham Arthouse

140 Lewisham Way

London SE14 6PD

9–20 April 2026

Open daily, 12–6pm (And defo open on 19th?)

Private View: Thursday, 9 April, 6–9pm

Pavel Otdelnov's *Estates: Fragile Utopia* is an artistic investigation of post-war British council housing as a material residue of a now-fractured social contract. Developed from the artist's dual perspective as a Londoner who was born and brought up in the USSR, the project frames these estates not as part of a national architectural heritage but as remnants of a broader transnational modernist utopia.

In the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, British housing policy positioned council estates as a collective responsibility and a cornerstone of the drive towards social equity. Urban plans from the 1940s, most notably those drawn up by the architect and urban planner Patrick Abercrombie, were grounded in the belief that architecture could shape social relations, foster equality and build stable communities. Conceived as dignified housing for a broad swathe of society, these estates embodied an optimism that was shared across ideological borders. Otdelnov, who grew up with the Soviet Union's own large-scale modernist housing programme, recognises in British estates a parallel faith in progress, standardisation and social justice through the built environment — a rational and optimistic vision that has ultimately proven fragile.

Many of these estates have long existed under the weight of an imposed image — they have come to be seen by many as symbols of social decline and deprivation. Media representations, political rhetoric and redevelopment discourses have gradually recast them as sites of failure or danger. Against this backdrop, Otdelnov turns back to the moment when these estates were conceived as portents of a bright and stable collective future, anchoring his work in extensive research on Geoffrey Jellicoe's *Motopia*, the *Aylesbury Estate*, destruction of *Robin Hood Gardens* and other key episodes in the post-war history of public housing.

Otdelnov's project resists both nostalgia and linear narratives of decline. Instead, it situates these spaces in an unresolved present: after utopia yet indelibly shaped by its residue. By reactivating the founding aspirations of post war council housing, these works invite reflection not only on abandoned ideals but also on the contemporary housing crisis.

Press enquiries: otdelnovpavel@gmail.com

Website: <https://otdelnov.com/en/gallery-estates>

Pavel Otdelnov (b. 1979, Dzerzhinsk, USSR) lives and works in London. Working across painting, drawing, installation and research-based projects, his practice explores the afterlives of modernist architecture and industrial landscapes, with a particular focus on Soviet and British post-war contexts.