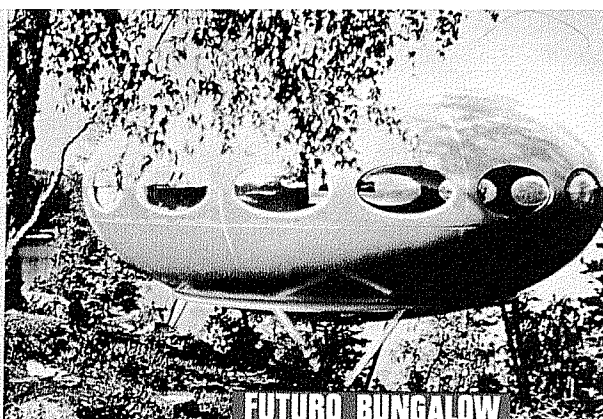


Matti Suuronen's Futuro House as a hotel, a leisure residence and a petrol station.



The Nostalgia of the Future. The architect Matti Suuronen's plastic house was to be the trademark of the new space age and of trendy neo-nomads.
By Susanna Pettersson

I REMEMBER A FRIEND of the family at the beginning of the 1970s telling us about an unbelievable car accident. He had driven into a UFO, the result being that the pajatso slot machine inside the UFO was broken and money poured out onto the floor. Later, on a trip to the summer cottage, I imagined I had seen a flying saucer-shaped building in the forest. In some vague way, the story and my own experience gave weight to each other.

Thirty years later, in his film *Futuro - A New Stance for Tomorrow*, the Finnish filmmaker Mika Taanila has resurrected the architect Matti Suuronen's plastic house. The painstaking research and script writing (in collaboration with Marko Home) took a couple of years, and the result, apart from the film, is files and files of anecdotes about the various phases of existence of the Futuro house.

The Futuro, launched in 1968, symbolised faith in the future and in technological development, and soon acquired a considerable international following. The round plastic house was to be the trademark of the new space age and of trendy neo-nomads. It was licensed to 24 countries, and even South Africa. The Futuro story began with a ski lodge designed for difficult terrain. The basic Futuro design emerged out of this ski lodge, and

was modifiable, with minor alterations, for numerous purposes: examples include a leisure dwelling, hotel and petrol station. The elements were light and the construction work was easy. Ready-built Futuro houses were transported from one place to another by helicopter. In the USA, people even believed that, once the Vietnam War ended, there would be more than enough helicopters to do the job.

The speakers in the film seem to be Futuro eccentrics, those who believed in the dream. For example, a man who bought a Futuro as a summer cottage describes the building like a person. He blesses it with various names, and ends up comparing the house to a womb. His voice radiates the enthusiasm for new technology of some decades back.

Slotted in between the interviews are Futuro newspaper cuttings, headlines,

snatches of cine film and photographs, which create an extraordinary collage of bright colours, big sunglasses, flared trousers, and belief in utopia and the future. The music of Ektoverde plays in the background, appropriately odd, quavery and electronic to hover alongside the visual material. Taanila's skill is evident in his ability to rhythmically interleave traditional interviews with archive material, so that the end result can be viewed both as a documentary that does justice to its subject and as an independent work of film.

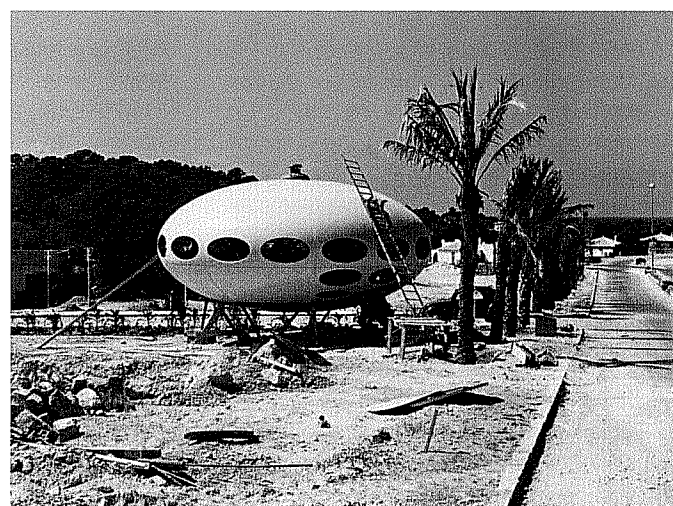
In terms of its content, one of the highpoints of the film is the German artist Charles Wilp's Futuro fantasy about the house as a fountain of creativity. He set up, on his roof, the residential Futuro house that he received as a gift, and moved his studio there. The artist's studio was visited by the likes of Andy Warhol, Claes Oldenburg, the Kuwaiti royal family and Christo (who also wrapped the house as *Wrapped Living Space*, 1971), before the local façade committee had its way and the Futuro was taken down from the roof in 1990.

The half-hour film is a visually interesting and totally absurd true story about the way a local invention can expand to become a global fashion phenomenon. The stylishly begun success story ended in 1973, when the oil crisis put an end to Futuro's future. The price of plastic shot sky high and it became unfeasibly expensive to produce the house. The flying saucer fell among the ranks of curiosities in architectural history, but Taanila's film has given Futuro a chance to fly again. ■

—Susanna Pettersson
translated by Michael Garner

Mika Taanila: *FUTURO A New Stance for Tomorrow*, 29 min, 35 mm. Producer Lasse Saarinen, Kinotar@kaapeli.fi

The music of the film is available on Ektoverde's CD "Music from the Film *FUTURO A New Stance for Tomorrow*".



The Futuro House in South Africa, 1968.