# How do gay people want to live? Let's look at this dolls house for inspiration...



How do gay people want to live? That's the question Daniel Ovalle Costal has been asking... by using dolls houses.

Over the past four years, Daniel has examined the lived experiences of queer people in London, using interviews, detailed drawings, and - most excitingly! - the imaginative construction of dollhouses as a research tool.

Historically, the realm of queer studies has overlooked the domestic sphere, but a growing body of work - most notably the 2022 publication Queer Spaces, edited by Joshua Mardell and Adam Nathaniel Furman -signals a significant shift. This ‘domestic turn’ advocates for a deeper understanding how queer people want to live, not forgetting spaces that reflect different family set-ups and living arrangements. Costal's recent findings suggest a disturbing gap between the rigid standards imposed by frameworks like the London Plan’s Housing Design Guide and the dynamic realities of queer life.

As he analyses how LGBTQ+ families navigate their homes, Costal notes that while some flexibility exists within domestic architecture, many queer families encounter limitations that stifle their ability to express their identities authentically. 'These are not just joyful nice-to-haves,' he states, emphasising that such spatial creativity is essential for living one's queerness fully. Instead of merely being refuge, these homes need to serve as a nurturing ground for queer identities.

This urgent need for a rethinking of housing standards comes against a backdrop of a widespread housing crisis in the UK, which has led architects and planners to focus predominantly on increasing the volume of housing units, often at the expense of quality and diversity. Costal’s research argues that such trends inadvertently reinforce conservative ideals of domesticity and family life, neglecting the complexities of modern queer living and relationships. He advocates for a ‘disobedient dollhouse making’ approach—a framework that emphasises the active participation of users in the design process, enabling them to explore imaginative possibilities beyond conventional housing norms.

Additionally, the call for a more inclusive design philosophy has echoes in initiatives from institutions like the London School of Architecture, which launched a think-tank design module aimed at queering housing standards. This project resulted in a manifesto proposing adaptable living spaces, demonstrating a broader movement within the field to push for flexibility and representation in housing design, affirming diverse lifestyles and cultural identities.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/practice/culture/gays-and-dolls-how-an-architect-uses-dollhouses-to-imagine-homes-for-queer-people> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/news/opinion/the-case-for-queering-housing-design-standards> - This article discusses the need to move away from rigid housing design standards to accommodate diverse lifestyles and cultural identities. It advocates for flexible and adaptable living spaces that reflect the varied ways people live, including open-plan layouts and movable partitions. The piece highlights a think-tank design module at the London School of Architecture, which explored housing through the lens of queer identities, leading to a manifesto for change and a design proposal for a multi-generational, queer-affirming housing project in Waltham Forest.
3. <https://www.architectsjournal.co.uk/practice/culture/gays-and-dolls-how-an-architect-uses-dollhouses-to-imagine-homes-for-queer-people> - This article explores how an architect uses dollhouses to reimagine homes for queer individuals. By documenting the homes of LGBTQ+ people through interviews, spatial drawings, and dollhouse creation, the architect challenges traditional architectural model-making conventions. The research highlights the limitations of standardized design approaches and the need for a queer toolkit in housing design that allows future users to envision different possibilities beyond conventional standards.
4. <https://www.flavorwire.com/422006/innovative-dollhouses-built-by-the-worlds-best-architects-and-designers> - This article showcases innovative dollhouses designed by renowned architects and designers. Examples include Coffey Architects' 'Inside Out,' a concrete house with a bonsai tree and herb garden; Dexter Moren Associates' 'Haptic House,' which encourages sensory play; and Fat Architecture's 'Tower of Fable,' a miniature remake of the Balfron Tower. These designs demonstrate how dollhouses can be used to explore architectural concepts and engage with diverse audiences.
5. <https://www.wired.com/2013/11/20-unbelievable-dollhouses-designed-by-famous-architects/> - This article features 20 unique dollhouses designed by famous architects, including Zaha Hadid's 'This Must Be the Place,' a wooden puzzle structure made of wood and resin pieces. The dollhouses were created to benefit KIDS, an organization supporting disabled children and their families, highlighting the intersection of architecture, design, and social responsibility.
6. <https://www.home-designing.com/2013/11/dollhouses-designed-by-star-architects> - This article presents dollhouses designed by star architects, such as Coffey Architecture's 'Inside Out,' which features a concrete base with brightly colored wooden pieces; Adjaye Associates' 'Electra House,' a modern design with folding walls and skylights; and DRDH Architects' 'Play House,' which folds open to become a unique stage. These designs demonstrate the creative potential of dollhouses in architectural exploration.