

Davide Deriu

Output 4:

Modernism in Miniature: Points of View. Exhibition held at the Canadian Centre for architecture, Octagonal Gallery, 22 September - 08 January 2012.

Abstract

The exhibition 'Modernism in Miniature: Points of View' explored the intersections between the model boom of the early twentieth century and the parallel explosion of mass media in architectural culture. The project was rooted in the preliminary work done by Deriu during his residence at the CCA Study Centre as a Visiting Scholar in 2007. He was subsequently invited to carry out further research at the CCA archives and to curate this exhibition. Drawing primarily, though not exclusively, on materials from the CCA collections, the show illustrated various means by which architectural models were produced, reproduced, and disseminated to the public. The exhibition was installed in the CCA's Octagonal Gallery and included photographs, magazines, film, and additional source materials that illustrated a variety of visual practices that contributed to position the architectural model as a preeminent tool of design and representation within European and American modernism. These objects were grouped according to six interrelated themes, which were presented in such a way as to create visual links between primary and secondary sources. The exhibition was widely reviewed in the international press and gained wider impact through a website, which has been further developed after the show to include selected images, installation

shots, and downloadable materials, along with the video of Deriu's curator's talk delivered on the opening day.

Deriu was invited to present his project at the conference 'Still Architecture: Photography, Vision and Cultural Transmission' at the University of Cambridge, 2012. The same year, he was also invited to give a lecture at Nottingham Contemporary Art Centre, in conjunction with the exhibition of model photographs by the German artist Thomas Demand.

Key Words

Photography, imagery, architectural models, modernism

Context

The exhibition 'Modernism in Miniature: Points of View' was conceived by Deriu as a guest curator at the Canadian Centre for Architecture (CCA) in Montreal and realised in collaboration with the CCA's curatorial and design staff (fig.01). It was proposed as an exhibition that drew primarily on the Centre's unique resources with additional items to be loaned or reproduced from other collections. The project underwent several iterations and was finally carried out in 2011. Deriu's curatorship included a further period of in-

depth research in the Centre's library and archives, during the spring 2011, during which he unearthed a larger body of historical materials illustrating the multiple encounters between architectural photography and model making in the period 1920-1960. The exhibition opened to the public from 22 September 2011 to 8 January 2012.

General Description

Drawing primarily, though not exclusively, on materials from the CCA collections, 'Modernism in Miniature: Points of View' illustrated various ways through which the miniature architectural model was reconfigured through photography and disseminated to the public. The exhibition was installed in the CCA's Octagonal Gallery (fig.16a,b) and included photographs, magazines, and additional source materials that illustrated a variety of visual practices that contributed to position the architectural model as a preeminent tool of design and representation within European and American modernism. These objects were grouped according to six interrelated themes. Each theme was presented through a selection of images displayed in large vertical cases and accompanying printed material in a horizontal case, thereby creating visual links between primary and secondary sources. The themes were:

Object and Image: Tools of Communication between Architect and Client (fig.10)
Foundations: Explorations of New Design Practices in Avant-Garde Schools (fig.11)
Shifts in Perspective: Model Photography and the Expression of Architectural Volumes (fig.12, 13, 14)
Recurrence: Image Circulation and the Making of a Modern Icon (fig.15)
Visual Constructions: Photographic Synthesis and Sequence of Model-Making Process (fig. 06)
Art of Simulation: Composite Photography and the Quest for Illusion (fig. 05)

The display comprised of 147 objects in total, including 34 original photographs, composite photographs, 83 contact prints on one frame, 16 books and periodicals, 1 video, 3 reproductions, 2 booklets, 1 digital interface for further readings. All texts were in English and French. It opened with B.V. Doshi's wooden model of the Villa Chimambhai, designed by Le Corbusier for

the mayor of Ahmedabad in 1951-53, along with a series of 84 contact prints of the model photographed by Lucien Hervé (fig.10). Other exhibits included rare footage from Pierre

Chenal's film, *L'architecture d'aujourd'hui*. To complete the display, a series of computers allowed visitors to read or download selected texts from the relevant literature of the period.

Research Questions

The following research questions were explored in the project:

- 1) How did photography impact the revival of model making in the early twentieth-century?
- 2) What was the agency of the 'model photograph' within architectural culture, and in particular with regard to modernism?
- 3) How was this imagery disseminated, and to what effects?

Aims and Objectives

- 1) To explore the historical relationship between photography and the architectural model

Architectural photography and architectural model making have been subjects of extensive research and scholarship over the past decade and a half, and yet their intersections have seldom been explored. The exhibition revisited the so-called model boom of the inter-war period, when the architectural model was reinstated as a preeminent tool of representation in architectural practice, after a period of decline during the nineteenth century. This historical phenomenon has largely been explained in practical and aesthetic terms, as the 3-D model responded both to the needs to communicate design to the client and to the modernist shift towards a new

objectivity. Technical innovation, such as the introduction of cardboard and other light-weight materials (fig.02), made the miniature architectural model more expedient than ever. (fig.09)

The research uncovered another aspect of this history that, however widespread, had not been investigated in depth before: that is, the impact of photography and mass media (exhibitions, magazines film) on the production and reproduction of architectural models. At the same time as photography exerted a profound impact on the development and circulation of modernist architecture, it also contributed to reconfigure the model as image. (fig.08) The exhibition showed that the historical encounter between photography and the model did not leave the latter unchanged.

Its object-hood was constantly mediated and transformed within the symbolic economy of representation inaugurated by the mass media, and in particular the illustrated magazine. No sooner was the model back in vogue than it was reduced to a two dimensional picture which could be manipulated and harnessed to endless visual effects. While photography helped to revive the role of the model, at the same time it destroyed its aura as a unique, original object and paved the way for its progressive de-materialization in the age of computer modeling and digital design.

2) To explore the characteristics of the 'model photograph', and its specific agency within the modernist image repertoire

By intersecting the histories of architectural photography and model making, the project explored the nature of the model photograph as a distinctive genre. This particular class of images embodied a new relationship between 2-D and 3-D media that emerged in the first half of the 20th-century, when the revival of model making was accompanied (and sometimes determined) by the medium of photography and its possibilities of reproduction. Photographs were used in different aspects of the design process, from the record of a study model to the presentation of a project to the client. The exhibition presented a variety of historical examples of these uses, ranging from architectural education to competitions and publications. Thus the introduction of model making in the curriculum of avant-garde design school in the 1920s, such as the Vkhutemas (fig.11)

and Bauhaus (fig.02), went hand in hand with the recording of models on camera and the diffusion of model photos in the books and magazines of the time. Rather than being a mere process of documentation and dissemination, the photography of models took a life of its own, as it were, bringing about an imagery that became itself an object of study and in some cases acquired a cult status. This was the case, for instance, of an iconic project such as Ivan Leonidov's Lenin Institute and Library (his graduation project at Vkhutemas), whose model photographs were exhibited in Moscow and quickly constructed one of the visual manifestoes of the constructivist movement. (fig.07)

The research brought up historical evidence of how the spatial and temporal qualities of the architectural model were both reconfigured in the field of photographic vision. A section of the exhibition dwelled on the visual possibilities offered by the camera to visualise the model from various points of view and to express architectural volumes either through single, synoptic images or through series of images taken from different angles. Photography made it possible to visualise the miniature model in ways that often abstracted it from its context as a pristine, platonic object – as, for instance, in the work of Le Corbusier and J.J.P. Oud. (fig.06, 13) Another section of the exhibition explored the temporal quality of model photographs, which gained prominence in the architectural press also through the cinematic use of strips and sequences. These served to demonstrate, for instance, the flexibility of interior spaces, the work of moving devices, or the assemblage of prefabricated buildings

(e.g. Fuller's Dymaxion House). Photography was instrumental to documenting modern architecture as a process, and it therefore produced images that were not only records of objects but veritable visual constructions. Conversely, the camera was also used effectively to capture the act of model making itself, by framing the model and its makers within portraits that have also become part of the modernist iconography. (fig.03, 04)

Finally, the exhibition cast a look at the composite image of model obtained through the technique of montage, a particular subset of model photography that emerged in the early 1920s and was later perfected in the hyper-realist montages produced in the 1950s and 60s by professional photographic studios such as Rafael Landau (for Oscar Niemeyer) and Hedrich-Blessing (for Mies van der Rohe). The highly sophisticated montages of van der Rohe's models of the 1950s constitute the apogee of this particular art of illusion, and at the same time mark an end point to the curatorial narrative.

3) To illustrate the various tools and channels of dissemination of this imagery

A further aim of the project was to chart the discourse on model making and model representation that emerged during the high modernist period. Hundreds of historical magazines, books, and catalogues were researched and a selection of this literature was included in the exhibition. (fig.09) Photographs of models became a pervasive means of architectural representation in the interwar period, either complementing architectural drawings through a novel form of three-dimensional view, or in some cases supplementing graphic media altogether. The image repertoire of the Modern Movement was saturated with model photographs, and some of the best-known projects of the modernist avant-garde were chiefly (if not only) known through such images. A whole section of the exhibition was devoted to the theme of 'Recurrence', whereby a very small number of model views in some cases established the canonical image of an architectural project and endowed it with cult status. Mies's Glass Skyscraper project was the case study on display. (fig.15) While the project shows how model photographs became a staple of architectural publications across the world, it focuses on few magazines that made a particularly prominent (and different) use of this imagery: *L'Architecture Vivante*, which acted as a clearing house of modernist architecture in 1920s France; and *The Architectural Forum*, which hosted not only a number of features about the virtues of the architectural model as a marketing tool, but also carried many such images to illustrate major projects (such as,

notably, the Rockefeller Centre in New York City) over the 1930s. Furthermore, the project also made reference to the use of architectural models in film, and the exhibition included an

extract from the rare documentary *L'architecture d'aujourd'hui* made by Pierre Chenal for and with Le Corbusier in 1930.

Research Methods

The research combines archival study and theoretical interpretation, informed by critical discourse on architectural media and representation. The search for primary sources was mostly conducted in the CCA collections, where Deriu had the benefit of working initially as a Visiting Scholar at the Study Centre then as a Guest Curator for the subsequent exhibition. Some objects that were required to complement the CCA's holdings were researched and obtained from other repositories (MoMA; RIBA; the Chicago History Museum).

The selection of objects for display was discussed in detail with the curators of the photographs and models collections at the CCA. The selection of Le Corbusier's Villa Chimambhai model and respective photographs by Lucien Hervé, as the opening feature of the exhibition, required detailed research into the circumstances of that project and the various iterations of the model as well as the correspondence with the client, which were enabled by the archival files at CCA. The ca. 90 original contact prints made by Hervé had themselves to be organised and curated in a specific case displayed next to the model. (fig.10)

A considerable part of the research concerned historical publications and required a comprehensive study of the literature that evidenced the discourse about architectural models (and the use of model photographs) in the period 1920-1960. The research, analysis, and selection of primary sources was corroborated by the study of contemporary literature on architectural representation and model making. Furthermore, the project gained its conceptual edge from the critical interpretation of the historical material that was based on theoretical research. Notions of miniaturization, simulation, and hyper-realism were central to this critical interpretation, as articulated in greater detail in the essay for the *Camera Constructs* book and the EAHN conference paper.

Dissemination / Impact

As outlined in the Summary, the overall research project led to two scholarly outputs as well as an exhibition project. The essay for the book *Camera Constructs* was based on a previous paper delivered at the eponymous conference held at the University of East London in 2006. The paper was largely revised for the edited publication, an interdisciplinary volume of the highest calibre that comprises the latest scholarship on architecture and photography. The other scholarly output was presented at one of the main conferences of architectural history in the

world, being the second biannual International Meeting of the European Architectural History Network. Furthermore, Deriu was also invited to present various aspects of this research at the University of Cambridge (international conference 'Still Architecture: Photography, Vision and Cultural Transmission', 2012) and at the Nottingham Contemporary Art Centre, where he gave a public lecture in conjunction with the exhibition of model photographs by the German artist Thomas Demand (2012).

The exhibition 'Modernism in Miniature: Points of View' was on show at the CCA Octagonal Gallery, Montreal, between 22 September 2011 – 8 January 2012 (P01). A permanent exhibition webpage was designed on the CCA website, which includes a bibliography, links to selected items in the CCA collections, and samples of period literature scanned for the reader's use:

<<http://www.cca.qc.ca/en/exhibitions/1487-modernism-in-miniature>>

The website also includes a clip of Deriu's Curator's Talk, which was held in the CCA Auditorium on 22 September 2011 and broadcast live on the internet.

A press conference was held at CCA the day prior to the exhibition opening. Articles and reviews in the architectural media include:

Caramellino, G. 'Il Modernismo in miniatura.' *Il Giornale dell'Architettura* 99, November 2011, p.28 (fig.P02).

Gharsallah, A. 'Review > Think Small.' *The Architect's Newspaper*, 23 November 2011. <<http://archpaper.com/news/articles.asp?id=5779>>

Hocherau, A. 'La médiatisation de l'architecture avant la lettre.' *Voir*, 13 October 2011, p.35 (fig.P03).

'Miniatür Modernizm: Bakıcı- Açıları.' *Arredamento Mimarlık*, December 2011, pp. 36-40.

Simonneau, T. 'Sur les traces de la troisième dimension.' *Le Délit*, 27 September 2011, p.15 (fig.P04).

Evidence

- Fig. 01 Exhibition poster, CCA building façade, Montréal, September 2011
- Fig. 02 Detail of a paper study for Josef Albers's preliminary course at the Bauhaus, Dessau, Germany, after 1928. Unknown photographer, gelatin silver print, CCA Collection
- Fig. 03 Theo van Doesburg working on the model for a private house, Paris, France, 1923. Unknown photographer, gelatin silver print, CCA Collection
- Fig. 04 Daniil Fridman and Gleb Glushchenko with a model for the Building of Industry, Sverdlovsk, Soviet Union, 1930–1931. Unknown photographer, gelatin silver print, CCA
- Fig. 05 Condominio di Sanremo, Italy, project by Carlo Mollino and Mario Roggero. composite photograph, 1946 or after. Photographer: Carlo Mollino, gelatin silver print, CCA Collection
- Fig. 06 Unité d'Habitation, Marseille, France, project by Le Corbusier, view of unassembled elements of a study model, 1945–1952. Photographer: Lucien Hervé, gelatin silver print, CCA Collection
- Fig. 07 Lenin Institute and Library, Moscow, Soviet Union, diploma project by Ivan Leonidov, model view, 1927. In *SA: sovremennaiia arkhitektura*, no. 4-5, 1927, CCA Collection
- Fig. 08 Centrosoyuz Palace, project by Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret, model views, 1929, In *L'architecture vivante*, Spring 1930, CCA Collection
- Fig. 09 Advertisement for the model making firm Perfecta. In *L'architecture d'aujourd'hui*, no. 9, 1935, CCA collection
- Fig. 10 Installation view: 'Object and Image' section. Model for Villa Chimambhai, Ahmedabad, India, project by Le Corbusier, 1953–1954. Wood with plastic inset and later balsa wood additions, joined with finishing nails and adhesive, CCA collection. Photographs of a model for Villa Chimambhai, Ahmedabad, India, project by Le Corbusier, 1951–1953. Photographer: Lucien Hervé, CCA collection
- Fig. 11 View of an exhibition of study models for caustic soda processing towers made by students for the exercise "Functionally Specific Task in the Demonstration of Volume and Space", Vkhutemas, Moscow, Soviet Union, after 1923. Unknown photographer, gelatin silver prints, CCA Collection
- Fig. 12 Installation view: 'Shifts in Perspective' section Wall frame: Building of Industry, Sverdlovsk, Soviet Union, project by Daniil Fridman and Gleb Glushchenko, four model views, 1930–1931. Unknown photographer, gelatin silver prints, CCA Collection. Johnson House, Pinehurst, United States, project by J. J. P. Oud, four collages of the model view, 1931–1932. Unknown photographer, cut-out gelatin silver prints mounted on cardboard, CCA Collection
Horizontal case: Selection of 1920s-1930s architectural magazines carrying illustrations of the Glass Skyscraper for Berlin, Germany, project by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe

- Fig. 13 Johnson House, Pinehurst, United States, project by J. J. P. Oud, collage of the model view, 1931–1932. Unknown photographer, gelatin silver prints, CCA Collection.
- Fig. 14 Building of Industry, Sverdlovsk, Soviet Union, project by Daniil Fridman and Gleb Glushchenko, model view, 1930–1931. Unknown photographer, gelatin silver prints, CCA Collection Collection
- Fig. 15 Installation view: 'Shifts in Perspective' section
Horizontal case: Selection of 1920s-1930s architectural magazines carrying illustrations of the Glass Skyscraper for Berlin, Germany, project by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe
- Fig. 16a, b Exhibition Layout Plans

Press

- P. 01 Modernism in Miniature: Points of View Exhibition Press Release
- P. 02 Caramellino, G. 'Il Modernismo in miniatura.' *Il Giornale dell'Architettura* 99, November 2011, p. 28
- P. 03 Hocheràu, A. 'La médiatisation de l'architecture avant la lettre.' *Voir*, 13 October 2011, p. 35
- P. 04 Simonneau, T. 'Sur les traces de la troisième dimension.' *Le Délit*, 27 September 2011, p. 15

Video

- V. 01 Davide Deriu, 'Modernism in Miniature', Canadian Centre for Architecture, 23 September 2011 <<http://www.cca.qc.ca/en/exhibitions/1487-modernism-in-miniature>>



Fig. 01 Exhibition poster, CCA building façade, Montréal, September 2011

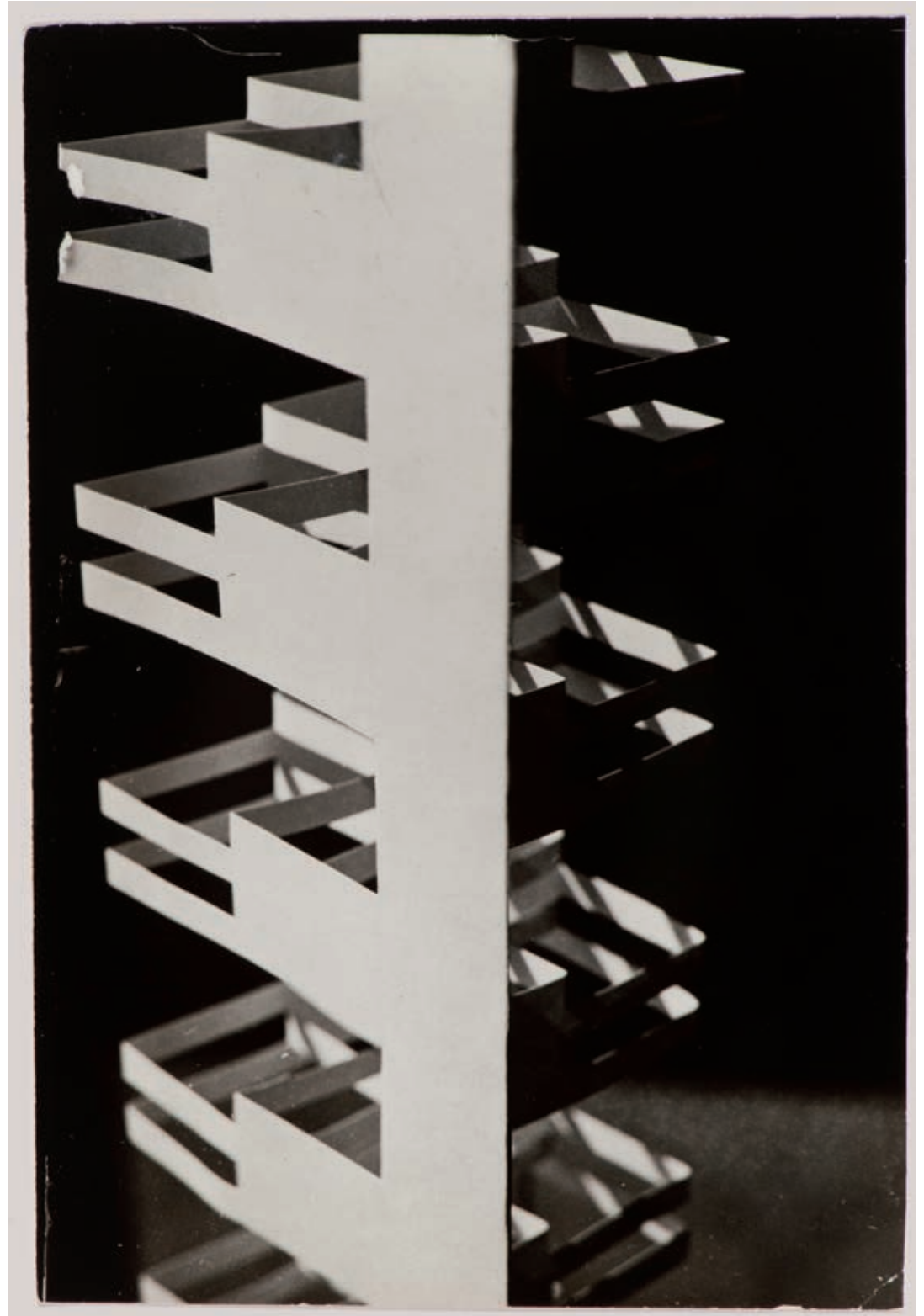


Fig. 02 Detail of a paper study for Josef Albers's preliminary course at the Bauhaus, Dessau, Germany, after 1928. Unknown photographer, gelatin silver print, CCA Collection



Fig. 03 Theo van Doesburg working on the model for a private house, Paris, France, 1923.
Unknown photographer, gelatin silver print, CCA Collection



Fig. 04 Danil Fridman and Gleb Glushchenko with a model for the Building of Industry, Sverdlovsk, Soviet Union, 1930–1931.
Unknown photographer, gelatin silver print, CCA



Fig. 05 Condominio di Sanremo, Italy, project by Carlo Mollino and Mario Roggero
composite photograph, 1946 or after. Photographer: Carlo Mollino, gelatin silver print, CCA Collection

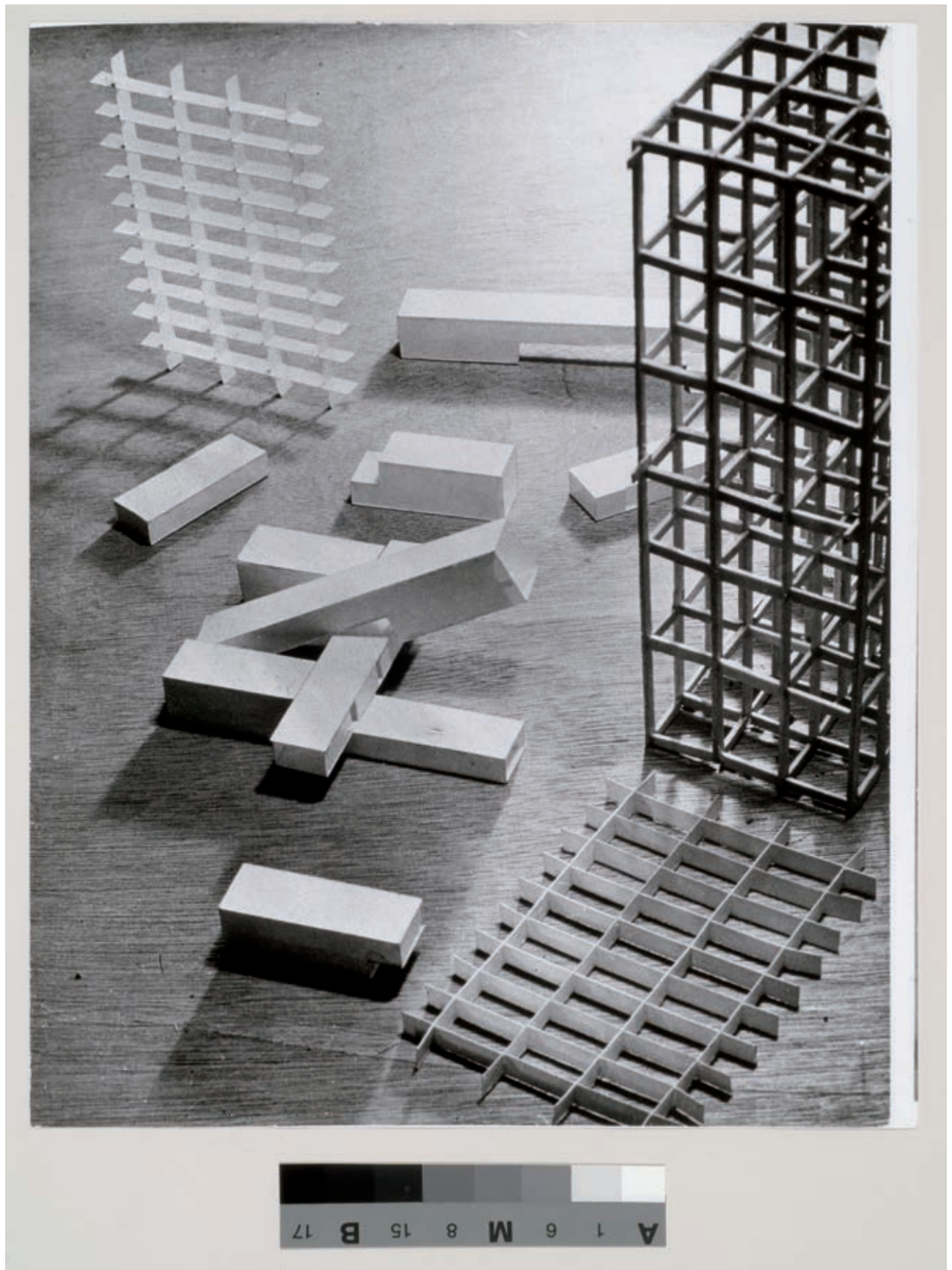
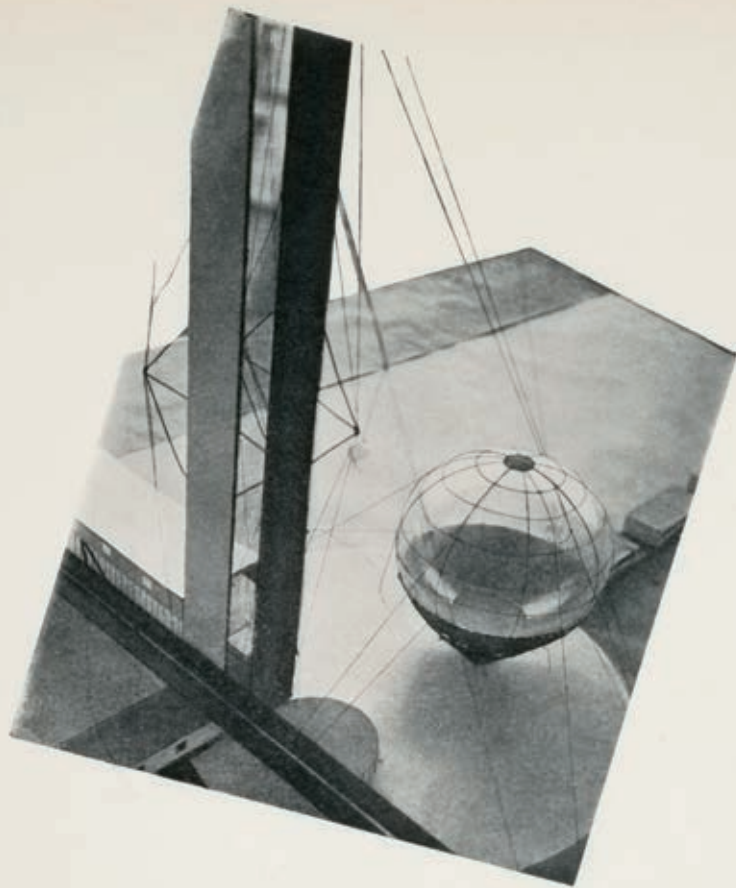


Fig. 06 Unité d'Habitation, Marseille, France, project by Le Corbusier, view of unassembled elements of a study model, 1945–1952. Photographer: Lucien Hervé, gelatin silver print, CCA Collection



ЛЕОНИДОВ И И

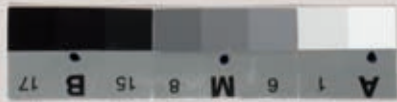
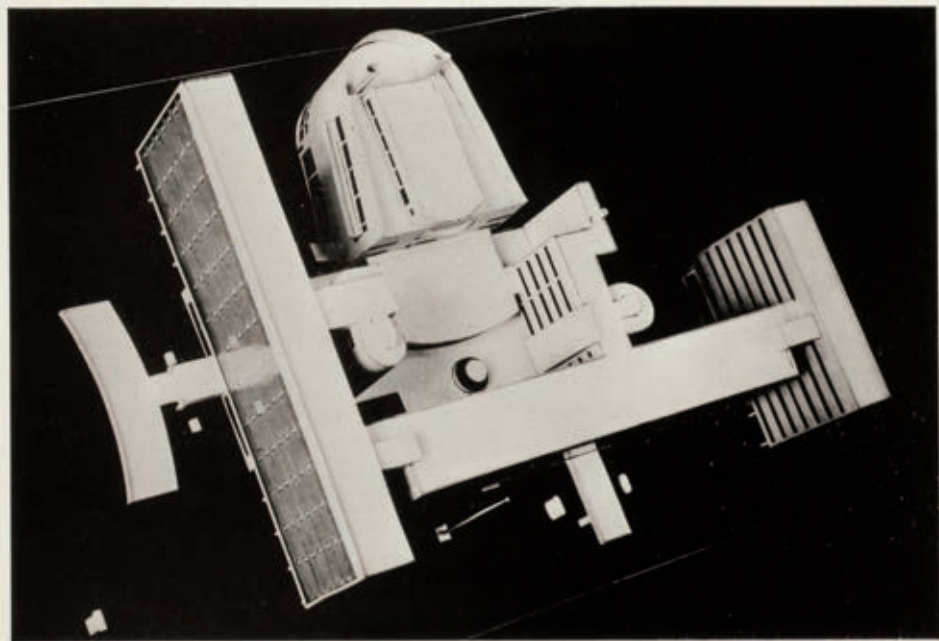
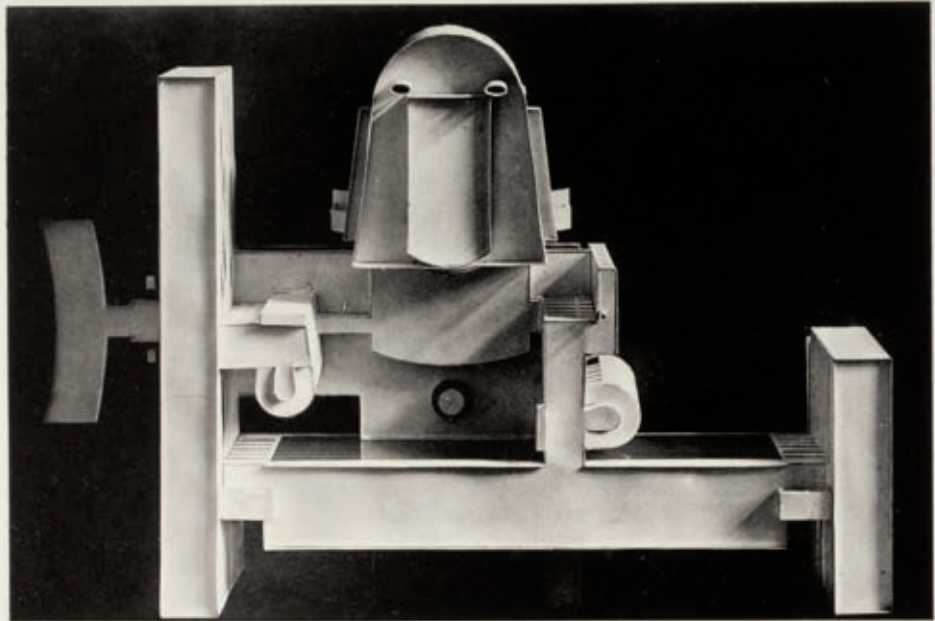


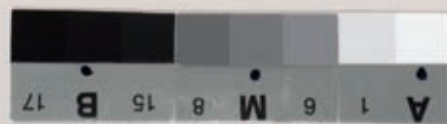
Fig. 07 Lenin Institute and Library, Moscow, Soviet Union, diploma project by Ivan Leonidov, model view, 1927.
In SA: *sovremennaia arkhitektura*, no. 4-5, 1927, CCA Collection



L'ARCHITECTURE VIVANTE
PRINTEMPS MCMXXX
ÉDITIONS ALBERT MORANCE

L. C. ET P. J.
LE PALAIS DU CENTROSOYUZ. A MOSCOU. 1929

2



A 1 6 M 8 15 B 17

Fig.08 Centrosoyuz Palace, project by Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret, model views, 1929
In *l'architecture vivante*, Spring 1930, CCA Collection

VOIR...



LES PHOTOMAQUETTES DE PRÉCISION **PERFECTA**

reproduisant à échelle réduite et de façon rigoureusement exacte le bâtiment à construire, permettent

A l'architecte : la mise au point définitive de son étude, car il peut, grâce aux photographies de sa maquette, en vérifier "comme sur le terrain" les diverses perspectives.

Au client : la compréhension parfaite du projet... et son adoption en toute connaissance de cause !

MAQUETTES PERFECTA

Pub. R. L. Dupuy

53^{bis}, rue de la Procession, PARIS-XV^e - Tél. Suffren 28-84

Fig. 09 Advertisement for the model making firm Perfecta. In *L'architecture d'aujourd'hui*, no. 9, 1935, CCA collection



Fig. 10 Installation view: 'Object and Image' section. Model for Villa Chimantbai, Ahmedabad, India, project by Le Corbusier, 1953-1954. Wood with plastic inset and later balsa wood additions, joined with finishing nails and adhesive, CCA collection. Photographs of a model for Villa Chimantbai, Ahmedabad, India, project by Le Corbusier, 1951-1953. Photographer: Lucien Hervé, CCA collection



Fig. 11 View of an exhibition of study models for caustic soda processing towers made by students for the exercise "Functionally Specific Task in the Demonstration of Volume and Space", Vkhutemas, Moscow, Soviet Union, after 1923. Unknown photographer, gelatin silver prints, CCA Collection

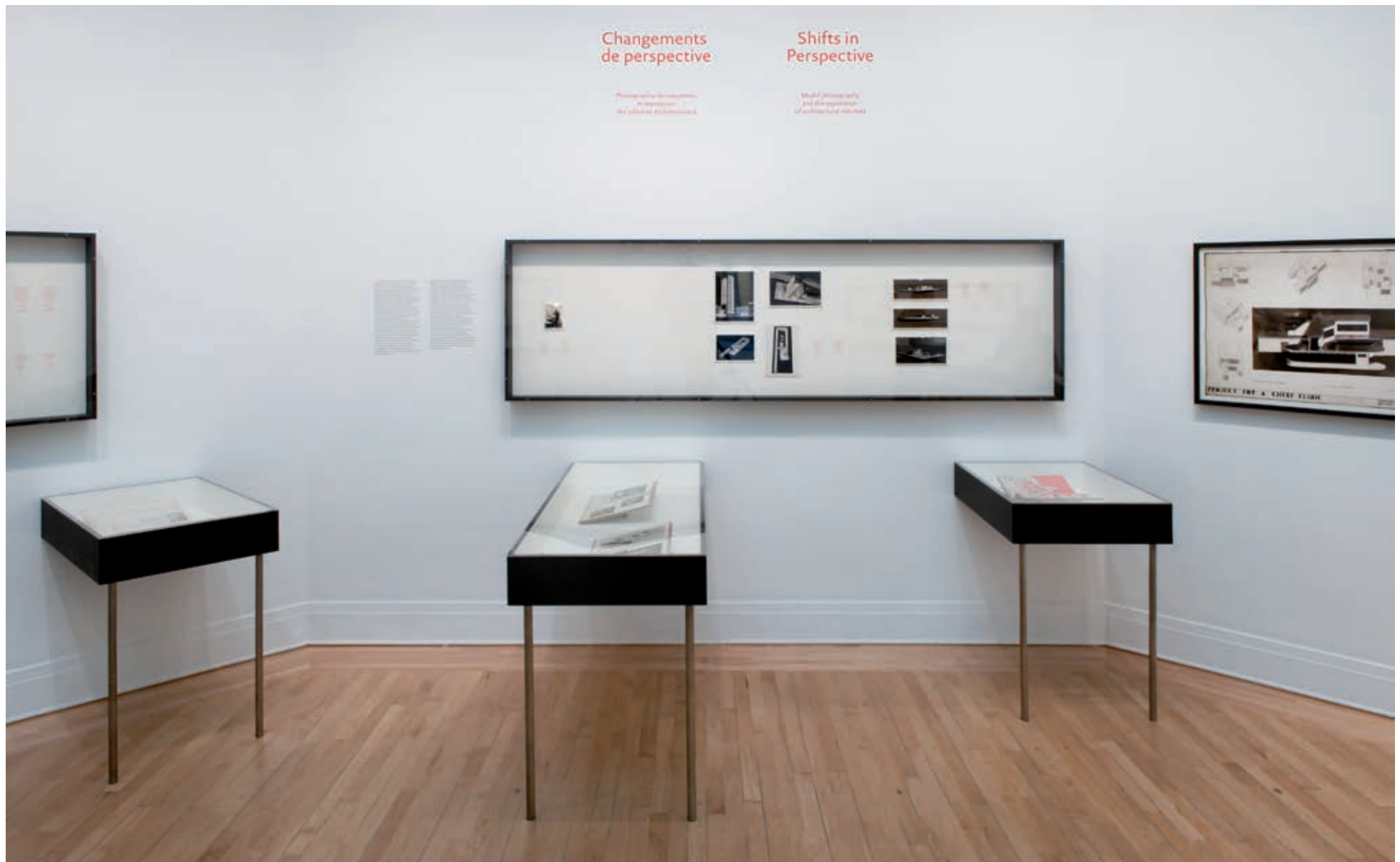


Fig. 12 Installation view: 'Shifts in Perspective' section.
 Wall frame: Building of Industry, Sverdlovsk, Soviet Union, project by Daniil Fridman and Gleb Glushchenko, four model views, 1930–1931. Unknown photographer, gelatin silver prints, CCA Collection. Johnson House, Pinehurst, United States, project by J. J. P. Oud, four collages of the model view, 1931–1932. Unknown photographer, cut-out gelatin silver prints mounted on cardboard, CCA Collection.
 Horizontal case: Selection of 1920s-1930s architectural magazines carrying illustrations of the Glass Skyscraper for Berlin, Germany, project by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe

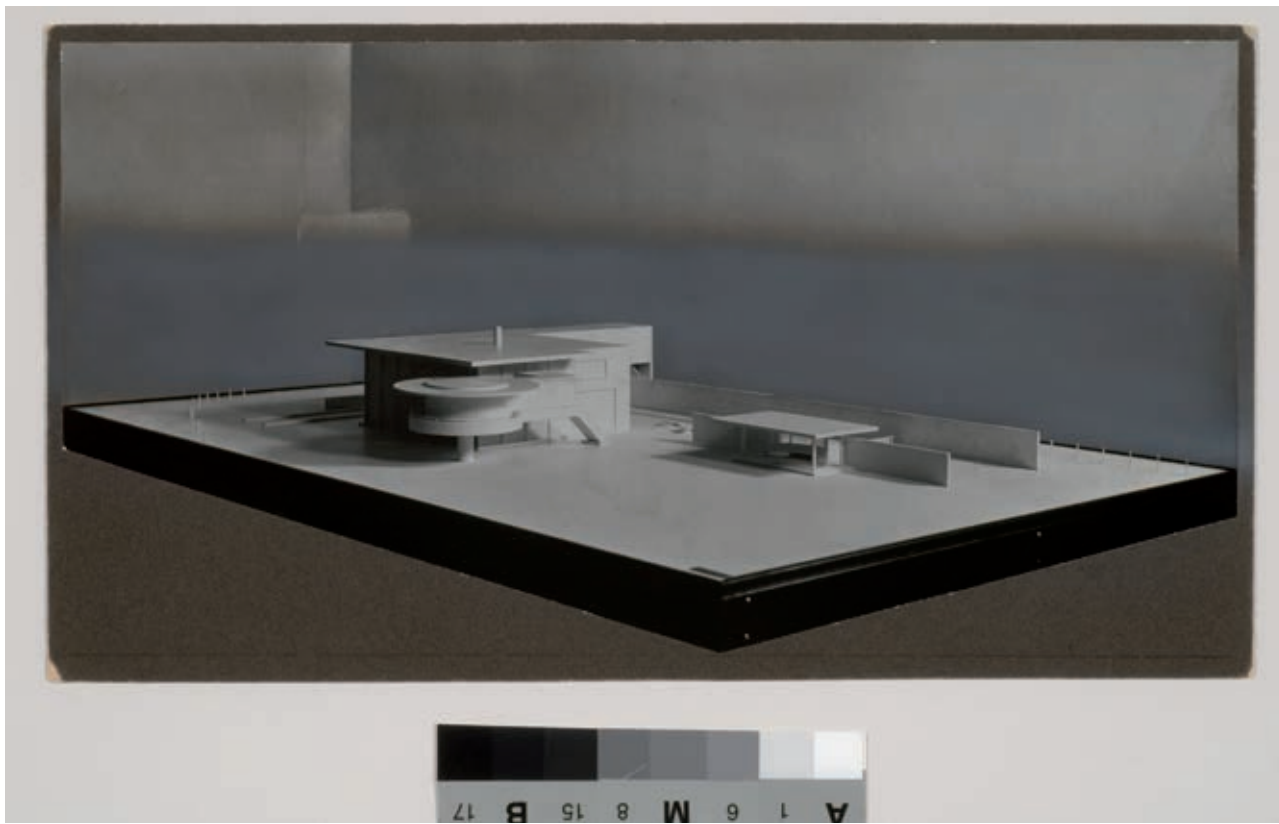


Fig. 13 Johnson House, Pinehurst, United States, project by J. J. P. Oud, collage of the model view, 1931–1932. Unknown photographer, gelatin silver prints, CCA Collection.

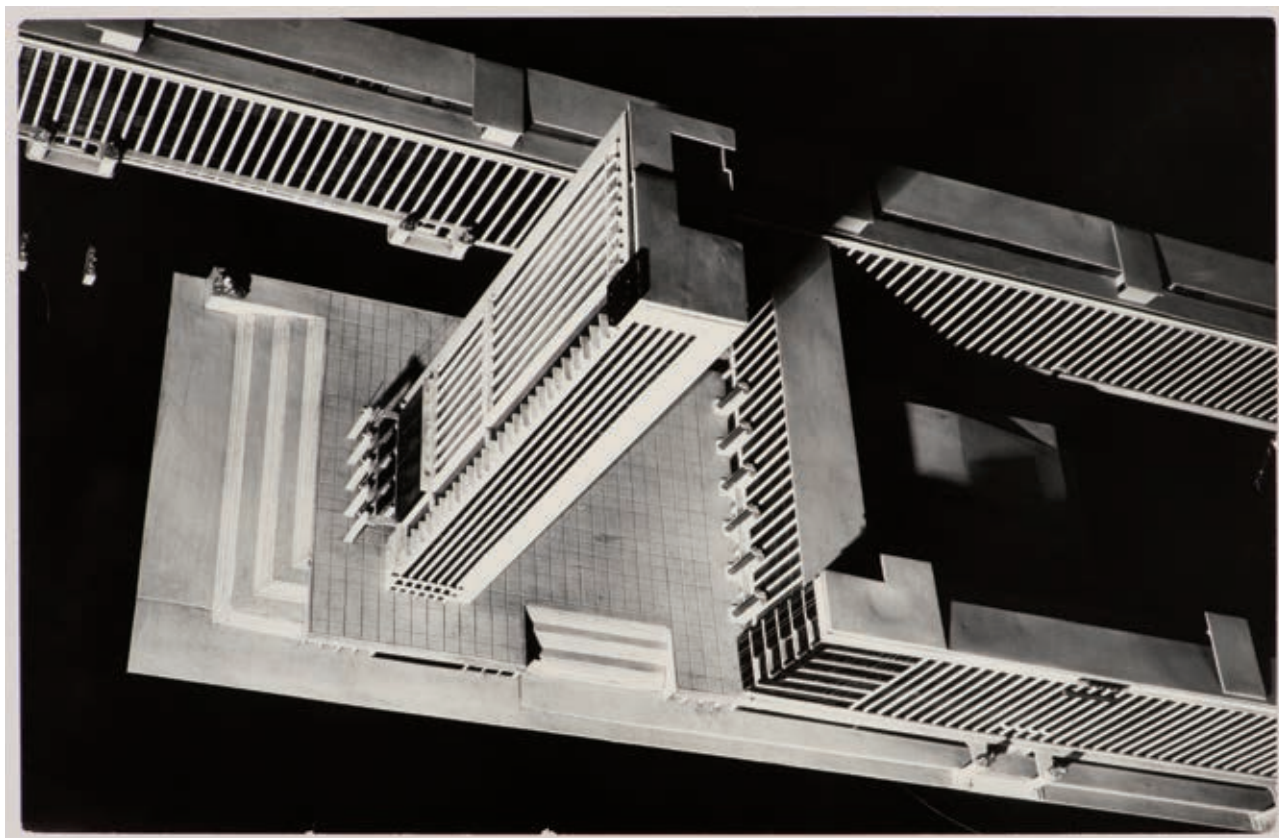


Fig. 14 Building of Industry, Sverdlovsk, Soviet Union, project by Daniil Fridman and Gleb Glushchenko, model view, 1930–1931. Unknown photographer, gelatin silver prints, CCA Collection Collection



Fig. 15 Installation view: 'Shifts in Perspective' section. Horizontal case: Selection of 1920s-1930s architectural magazines carrying illustrations of the Glass Skyscraper for Berlin, Germany, project by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe

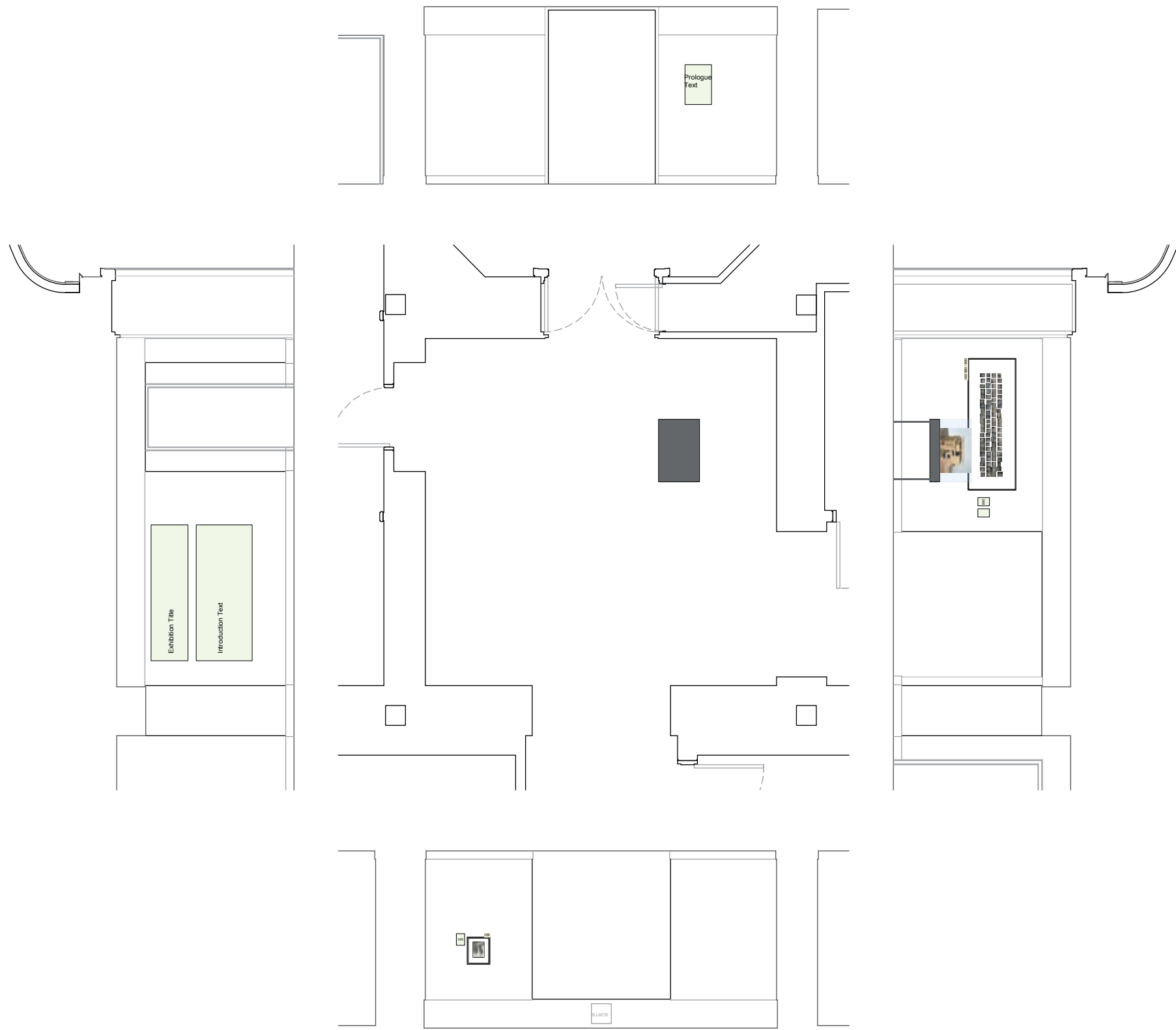
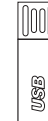


Fig. 16b Exhibition Layout First Floor Plan

Video

V.01 Davide Deriu, 'Modernism in Miniature', Canadian Centre for Architecture, 23 September 2011

<<http://www.cca.qc.ca/en/exhibitions/1487-modernism-in-miniature>>



Press

YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED TO ATTEND THE PRESS VISIT OF THE EXHIBITION

Modernism in Miniature: Points of View

22 September 2011 – 8 January 2012

Thursday 22 September 2011, 11 am
Octagonal Gallery
Canadian Centre for Architecture
1920, rue Baile, Montréal

In the company of Davide Deriu, curator of the exhibition

Modernism in Miniature: Points of View, an exhibition curated by Davide Deriu, Senior Lecturer in architecture at the University of Westminster, London, explores the encounter between photography and model-making in the period between c.1920–1960. Focusing on model photography as a distinctive genre, the exhibition suggests that the so-called 'model boom' was inextricably bound up with the explosion of modern mass media. Channelled by the illustrated press, miniatures reached out to a wide public and in some cases, acquired a cult status that has endured to this day. By revisiting a widespread yet often neglected imagery, the exhibition provokes questions about the relationship between media in architectural culture and the specific impact of photography on the perception of miniature.

Kindly confirm your attendance by contacting:

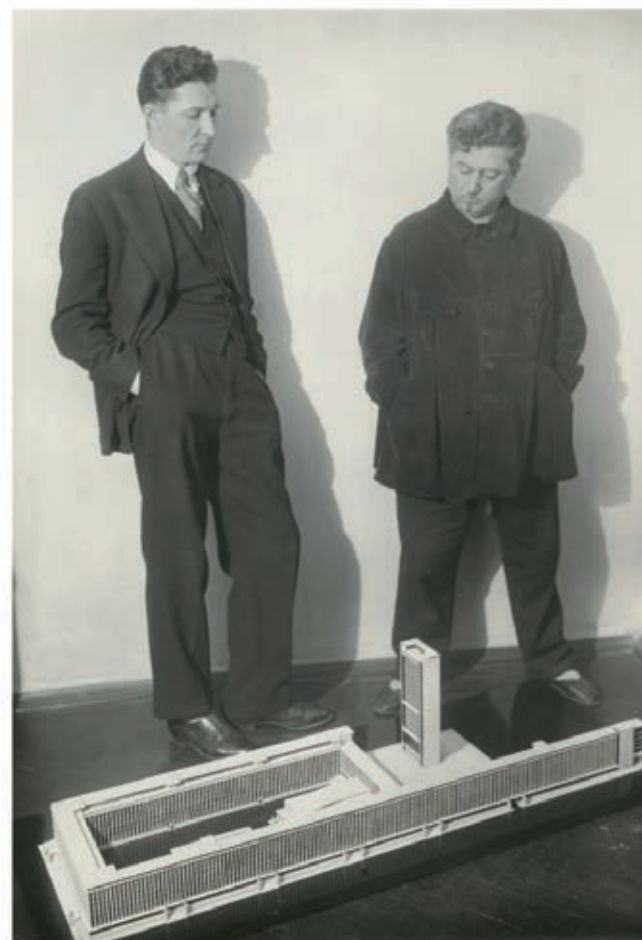
Isabelle Huiban
Head of Press Relations
(514) 939 7001 ext. 2607
ihuiban@cca.qc.ca

CCA

Centre Canadien d'Architecture | Canadian Centre for Architecture
1920, rue Baile, Montréal 514 939 7026 www.cca.qc.ca/minimodernism



The CCA gratefully acknowledges the support of the ministère de la Culture, des Communications et de la Condition féminine, the Canada Council for the Arts, the Conseil des arts de Montréal, the Department of Canadian Heritage, and Hydro-Québec.
photo: Unknown photographer; David Friedman and Oleh Glazchenko with a model for the Building of Industry, Sverdlovsk, Soviet Union, 1930-1931. Gelatin silver print. FH1993.0215 CCA Collection



P.01 Modernism in Miniature:Points of View Exhibition Press Release

Il Modernismo in miniatura

Punti di vista: fotografia e modelli di architettura tra il 1920 e il 1960

MONTREAL (CANADA). È un ritratto di Daniil Fridman e Gleb Glouchtchenko, intenti a osservare il plastico del loro progetto per l'Industria Sverdlovsk, ad aprire la mostra «Modernism in Miniature». Un'immagine più che eloquente, che non solo sintetizza il complesso rapporto che da sempre lega l'architetto al suo plastico, ma riassume i temi di questa **piccola e raffinata esposizione dedicata all'incontro tra la fotografia e il modello di architettura**, che raggiunse la sua piena affermazione nel secondo dopoguerra.

Oggetto di attenzione crescente negli ultimi decenni, la *maquette* vanta una gloriosa tradizione, offuscata lungo il XIX secolo dall'affermazione del *beau dessin* di tradizione Beaux-Arts e dalle nuove tecniche di riproduzione. Saranno gli anni venti a inaugurare una fortunata stagione, marcata dall'incontro tra la riscoperta del modello da parte della cultura architettonica e la diffusione dei mezzi di comunicazione di massa. È al nuovo *status* acquisito dal plastico con la sua riproduzione (e al ruolo che la sua immagine assume nella



Daniil Fridman e Gleb Glouchtchenko con il modellino per l'industria delle costruzioni Sverdlovsk (Unione Sovietica, 1930 1931)

costruzione del repertorio visivo dell'architettura moderna), che guarda la mostra allestita dallo studio 1218 A all'interno della Octogonal Gallery, dove trova posto parte del **ricco corpus di fotografie, plastici e pubblicazioni provenienti dalla collezione del CCA, costruito dal curatore Davide Deriu a partire dal 2007**. Una selezione critica e rigoro-

sa che restituisce la complessità del panorama attraverso cinque sezioni tematiche (*Origini, Cambiamenti di prospettiva, Ricorrenze, Costruzioni visive e Arte della simulazione*), introducendo altrettante questioni: **il nuovo uso «popolare» del modello per l'insegnamento e la pratica d'architettura** (si pensi alle immagini dei lavori degli atelier di design, tra Bauhaus e Vkhutemas); **l'influenza di alcune vedute**, talvolta manipolate dall'architetto, **che hanno fatto la fortuna critica dei progetti**; la presenza d'**immagini ricorrenti sulle riviste d'avanguardia** che hanno contribuito a creare icone e immaginari del Movimento moderno (è il caso dei progetti europei di Mies van der Rohe); **il ruolo della fotografia nel documentare attraverso sequenze la realizzazione del modello** (dal monumento alla III Internazionale alla Dymaxion di Buckminster Fuller), ormai protagonista indiscusso della stampa specializzata per la visione idealizzata dell'architettura che permette. Rivelatore, infine, **l'uso del fotomontaggio** che prende forma sin dagli anni venti (Cor-

bett) e acquista una sua autonomia disciplinare divenendo una vera e propria ossessione per gli architetti nel dopoguerra (da Mies a Oscar Niemeyer a Carlo Mollino).

A illustrare il rapporto tra l'oggetto e la sua immagine (e il nuovo ruolo che il modello assume come strumento per la comunicazione con il cliente e con un pubblico più esteso) è la splendida *maquette* in legno della **villa Chimambhai progettata da Le Corbusier** ad Ahmedabad, cui fanno da sfondo i **90 scatti** del modello di lavoro a opera di **Lucien Hervé**. Molteplici sono i temi che la mostra introduce, come **l'uso strumentale del modello «urbano» da parte di architetti e urbanisti del Movimento moderno per promuovere le proposte utopiche e visionarie** che anticipano la città del futuro, tema qui solo abbozzato attraverso il video *L'architecture d'aujourd'hui*, che ritrae Le Corbusier intento a illustrare la sua Ville Contemporaine.

Gaia Caramellino

«Modernism in Miniature. Points of View», a cura di Davide Deriu, Cca, Montreal, fino all'8 gennaio

© RIPRODUZIONE RISERVATA

ARTS VISUELS

critique

LA MÉDIATISATION DE L'ARCHITECTURE AVANT LA LETTRE

Au-delà de son apparente aridité intellectuelle, la nouvelle exposition du Centre canadien d'architecture (CCA) aborde un phénomène que nous vivons au quotidien: comment les moyens de communication modernes ont fait en sorte que l'architecture nous paraisse aujourd'hui si familière!

★★★★

ALAIN HOCHEREAU /

Lorsqu'on pénètre dans la petite salle octogonale du CCA, où se tient l'exposition, on a presque envie de repartir aussitôt sur la pointe des pieds en s'excusant de ne pas être un expert en architecture. Autant la sobriété de sa présentation (quelques photos et publications d'archives) que la nature de son sujet digne d'une thèse («les interactions entre la photographie et la maquette architecturale des années 1920 aux années 1960») peuvent nous faire croire qu'elle est réservée à des spécialistes, ou du moins à des étudiants en architecture il n'en est rien! Car, au-delà de cet apparent érotisme académique, il faut y voir une évocation très accessible (parfois même amusante) des origines de la médiatisation de l'architecture.

Comment se fait-il que nous ayons déjà vu les édifices des plus grands architectes de ce monde sans avoir nécessairement voyagé? Réponse: par la photographie et les



Daniil Fridman et Gleb Glouchtchenko avec une maquette de l'édifice de l'Industrie, Sverdlovsk, Union soviétique, 1930-1931.

photo CCA

magazines (écrits ou virtuels). Comment pouvons-nous savoir à quoi vont ressembler la nouvelle salle du GOSM, l'extension du Musée des beaux-arts ou la Maison du développement durable avant même qu'elles ne soient inaugurées? Grâce à la modélisation. Eh bien, tous ces moyens de communication qui nous semblent si naturels sont apparus dans les années 1920, avec les débuts du mouvement moderniste, et ont amorcé une démocratisation de l'architecture après la guerre.

L'exposition du CCA nous montre ainsi comment la photographie de maquette a permis aux architectes de communiquer sur leur démarche conceptuelle, en la diffusant largement dans des publications spécialisées ou non et en orientant le regard des lecteurs selon l'angle de la prise de vue. D'ailleurs, à l'époque, elle était aussi utilisée pour vendre les projets architecturaux, avec notamment l'apparition des premiers photomontages de l'histoire. Il faut dire que les projets d'alors étaient parfois si mégalomanes qu'il s'agissait d'être un bon vendeur! Le petit film promotionnel du projet fou de Le Corbusier présenté à l'exposition (il voulait, dans les années 1930, raser le centre de Paris pour y édifier des tours de béton reliées entre elles par des voies rapides!) fait peut-être aujourd'hui sourire. Pourtant, il y croyait à l'époque! Et pour ceux dont la curiosité aura été piquée, le CCA met aussi à la disposition une interface virtuelle pour s'envoyer à la maison des articles de fond sur le sujet... I

Jusqu'au 8 janvier 2012
Au Centre canadien d'architecture
Voir calendrier Arts visuels

ARTS VISUELS

Sur les traces de la troisième dimension

Modernisme et maquettes au Centre d'architecture de Montréal.

Thomas Simonneau
Le Délit

Le modernisme paraît déjà bien loin de nos jours, mais c'est sans compter le riche patrimoine architectural qu'il nous a légué et qui nous entoure quotidiennement. C'est en effet pendant cette période que se développe une nouvelle perception du volume, de la maquette et de l'architecture en général. Vendredi dernier, le Centre Canadien d'Architecture (CCA) proposait aux mordus d'architecture, comme aux simples curieux, de découvrir des travaux miniatures qui sont à l'origine de projets colossaux comme celui du monument à la troisième Internationale à Petrograd.

Deux salles ont suffi pour accueillir cette exposition modeste mais finement mise en forme. Parmi la centaine de personnes présentes, beaucoup de jeunes griffonnent, bloc-notes à la main. Quelques imprimés rouges sur les murs accompagnent les différentes photographies de maquettes signées Le Corbusier ou encore Buckminster Fuller. Une des œuvres principales de ce dernier se nomme la «Dymaxion House», conçue pour réaliser d'importantes économies lors de la production en chaîne des maisons mais aussi de garantir un environnement moderne et confortable au client. Les photographies des maquettes exécutées par Le Corbusier révèlent quant à elles le génie de l'architecte à travers le concept du «système modulaire d'unité d'habitation».

Dispersés sur tout le Vieux Continent, ce sont en fait de grands bâtiments à la fois fonctionnels et design, une véritable révolution à la fin des années quarante.

Au-delà de l'aspect purement lié à l'architecture, l'expo souligne également

la maquette est transposée dans un champ visuel où elle semble flotter, libre de toute gravité. La photographie de maquette permet donc de représenter l'œuvre sur un arrière-plan neutre à une échelle ainsi indéfinie que seul le specta-

de médias importants et ces photographies singulières et décalées. La société en général est en pleine période de transition ainsi que son art et ses artistes. Ils découvrent et innovent, permettant ainsi à la plupart des édifices photographiés de s'approprier des formes jusque là inimaginables. On croise donc des formes insolites, ovales ou pointues et l'usage de matériaux et de techniques qui rompent totalement avec les normes de l'époque.

Sur un ton un peu plus détendu, le CCA accueillait également le duo de DJs Leboeuf et Laviolette dans le cadre de l'exposition. Mélange réussi d'un style musical contemporain et d'Art moderne dans un bâtiment chaleureux. Le vernissage de Modernisme en miniature avait donc de quoi attirer l'attention des amateurs d'événements culturels de la métropole montréalaise, quels que soient leurs intérêts. ☉



Photographe inconnu. Gracieuseté du Centre Canadien d'Architecture, Montréal; Don de Howard Schikler et de David Lafayille

une «visibilité nouvelle du travail en maquette qui coïncide avec l'avènement de la photographie», selon l'introduction de l'exposition écrite sur un des murs. Ces photographies reconstituent les différentes étapes de construction de la maquette, illustrant ainsi le véritable processus à la fois artistique et mécanique. Par un jeu minutieux de cadrage et de compo-

teur peut déterminer. Il s'agit de laisser courir son imagination et son interprétation personnelle tout au long de l'exposition.

Les propos du commissaire Davide Deriu lors d'une conférence aux alentours de dix-neuf heures suggère également un lien fort entre le traumatisme de la Première Guerre mondiale, l'apparition

Modernisme en miniature
22 septembre 2011 au 8 janvier 2012
Centre Canadien d'Architecture

Image: Vue d'une exposition de maquettes de tours traitées à la soude caustique réalisées par des étudiants dans le cadre de l'exercice «Tâche fonctionnelle spécifique pour la démonstration du volume et de l'espace», Vkoutemas, Moscou, Union soviétique, après 1923.