

ICI Lecture Series Models – 8 January 2024, 19:30, In English

Theodore Conrad was an architect and master craftsman. His miniatures of Plexiglas and aluminum modelled a post-war landscape of glass-and-steel skyscrapers, sprawling business campuses, and domestic mid-century modernism from the 1930s onward. With the help of electrified tools and cameras, a vision of a world in Kodachrome arose long before it existed. Architectural modelling — long before the digital turn — became a powerful tool for testing, constructing, rendering, and selling novel architectural ideas.

Teresa Fankhänel is an associate curator at the Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum at Michigan State University and editor-in-chief of the *Architectural Exhibition Review*. Her recent exhibitions include *African Mobilities* (2018), *The Architecture Machine* (2020–21), *Built Together* (2021), *Shouldn't You Be Working?* (2023), and *Andrea Canepa: As We Dwell in the Fold* (2023). Among her interests are the use of technology and media for architectural design, and the history, theory, and practice of architecture exhibitions. She was a curatorial assistant for the exhibition *The Architectural Model* (Deutsches Architekturmuseum, 2012) and has published two books on models: *The Architectural Models of Theodore Conrad* (2021) and *An Alphabet of Architectural Models* (2021). She is co-editor of the book *Are You A Model?*, a collection of new research on analog and digital models, which will be published in 2023.

Lecture Series Models: A model can be an object of admiration, a miniature or a prototype, an abstracted phenomenon or applied theory, a literary text — practically anything from a human body on a catwalk to a mathematical description of a system. It can elicit desire, provide understanding, guide action or thought. Despite the polysemy of the term, models across disciplines and fields share a fundamental characteristic: their effect depends on a specific relational quality. A model is always a model of or for something else, and the relation is reductive insofar as it is selective and considers only certain aspects of both object and model. Critical discussions of models often revolve around their restrictive function. And yet models are less prescriptive and more ambiguous than codified rules or norms. What is the critical purchase of models and how does their generative potential relate to their constitutive reduction? What are the stakes in decreasing or increasing, altering or proliferating the reductiveness of models? How can one work with and on models in a creative, productive manner without disavowing power asymmetries and their exclusionary or limiting effects?

Teresa Fankhänel

Analog World-modelling: Anticipating a Post-war World Through Architectural Models

