Almost 30 years ago, I published an essay entitled ‘The Ruins of Representation’ in a catalog essay – itself written several years after the event – for an exhibition entitled ‘Idea as Model’, that had been held at the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies in New York. My essay attempted to address the duality of the model, as both a sign of something other than itself and as an autonomous project in its own right. The text explored the play between the two as an artistic strategy and sought to describe the link between them in terms of imagination and desire. Written at a time when the derealisation of the real was increasingly becoming a cultural preoccupation, the essay criticised the abuse of the model’s metaphorical capacities by postmodern architects invested in rewriting the history of their discipline as a return to a past that had never existed – a simulacrum. In its paraliterary ‘performance’, the essay displaced some of the ‘recovered memories’ that postmodern architects had projected into the model – fictional histories in masquerade – and condensed them into a world of Borgesian ironic insight.

Continued on p.18
The Rains of Representation
Christian Hubert

Of Invisibility in Science:...In that Empire, the craft of Cartography attained such
Federals that the Map of a Single province covered the
space of an entire city, and the map of the Empire an entire
Empire. In the course of time, these Extensive maps were
found somewhat unsatisfactory, and so the College of Cartographers
created a Map of the Empire that was the same size as
the Empire and was drawn on a single copper plate. Less attention
is the Study of Cartography, according to Cartographers to judge
by the Map of the Empire, which, because of its stupendous
scope, could not be crafted. Shattering an occasional Beast or
begetter in the whole Atlas, no one realized its left.

The Discipline of Geography.
From "Pamphlets of Presumptuous Men" (1878)
J.K. Barrow Norris

The errors of those ancient Cartographers are, of course,
dare. These extensive maps were not more accurate than their
predecessors, for size and scale are not so confused. Nor
could those errors ever cease to be important.
These maps were still to be found, showing an occasional Beast or
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architecture, in which works of art are no longer contained within exhibition spaces but become continuous with them.

The stage is a privileged area for a convergence between actual and representational space. Stereography is one of the energies of architecture in which the hardness between picture and object are effaced, and this convergence might also afford a more understanding of the writings of the model. In the Teatro Olimpico (figs. 10, 11), built to the designs of Palladio and Farnese, the spaces of statues, of Classical ruin, and of actuality are united through perspective, and the theater and the city are integrated as two aspects of a single paradigm. The Teatro constitutes a strategy for the recreation of the city, through an iconographic transformation of the city into a theater. Once we look at the theater as a three-room space opened up into a "street space" in which representational representation is a mise en scène surrounded by actuality and statues. This, perhaps, is the space of the model. The street scene can be revisited, yet its reification is rigidly formalized, so that its representational perspectivalization is destroyed by the immobility of the subject.

Palladio’s theater finds a contemporary counterpart in Ronch’s floating theater in Venice, which transforms the actual city into theater (fig. 12). In the case, the Teatro del Mondo is a full-scale model, but the model contains, in juxtaposition with the church of San Barnaba del Frate, a synthetic relationship to the city, and while it is large enough to contain a play面具, its real stage lies indiscernibly outside. At a smaller scale, Ronch’s Teatro di Scienza (1961) returns the city to the space of the model. Within the theater there is an implied continuity between the fragmentary "models" of the Galilean and the soaring backdrop of the Modernos curray. This example shows that representational landscapes of representational drawings, models, and buildings which are Ronch’s obsession, remains, Ronch’s work continuously presents and proposes. His analytical enterprise, like Forluis, punctures the "real" and the imaginary, allowing for a continual interplay, a constant subtraction. And like Forluis, his work finds any attempt to find a resting point is the real...
Yet the classical theater has a tradition of giving an inner
framework of reality, in which the theater’s essentiality lies.
Its play for the spectator, in its demand for willing suspen-
sion of disbelief, without disclosing its formal nature. At
the most recent Venice Biennale, entitled The Presence
of the Past, the theatrical suspensiveness of the model and its
potential for historical specification were only occasionally
subordinated by the model’s original potential. The Stadtv
Novissima purported to represent both the urban interven-
tions of the Renaissance—as in the Stadtv Novissima in
Crete—and their theatrical counterparts—as in the Teatro
Olimpico. But in this edition of City and Theatrical, “his-
tory” repeats tragedy in the form of horror. Like the recent
representation of the Chicago Tribune Competition, the “Post
Modern” nostalgia underlying this exhibition glorified the
failing promise of the edification. The Stadtv Novissima,
though the techniques of Cicero, was a triumph of
spectacular deception.

Leon Krier’s insinuations upon real materials in his segment
can be seen as the most detailed of all in its denial of the in-
herent representationalness of the model. On the other
hand, the suspension of disbelief instilled by Krier was
understood in Isaac’s holistic reification of the dual
identity of the model as both object and representa-
tion. Leon’s Tribune “Towns” proposal of 1992 paralleled the
iconographic and proportional problems of the skyscraper
by identifying them with those of the “primary sign” of ar-
chitecture, the column. Rizzi’s “progress” of Leon (fig.
11) is a scale model of the skyscraper which also happens to
be the site of a column. It situates the history of architec-
ture within a brokenentanglements, between nature and culture,
and the Leon, makes denial the strongest affirmation.

In the world of Borgesian imagination, Saurel’s Mires
turns out to be as much of a fiction as the Empire he visited.
Borgier’s quotation is finally revealed as a “quotation,” a
writing literally digitized in reading. Through this cliche
desire Borgier recovers in his own elements for a liturgy
whose problematic is not as different from that of the
model. A history permeated by nostalgia, which seeks to
recover a lost origin of architecture, can only succeed in
denying the conditions of its own making. Like the theater
and the dehistorization, it can only nourish the suspension of
disbelief in order to distract and compensate for the loss
of a genuine sense of history. It seeks to defy its own
presence by a reification in the name of the real, and pro-
poses history as a book, open for personal and quotation,
without admitting that history is in the writing.
It was not until long after the publication of my catalogue essay that I learned of Gordon Matta-Clark’s ‘intervention’ at the Institute in relation to the ‘Idea as Model’ exhibition. Matta-Clark had been asked to participate in the first exhibit and had ‘shot out’ some of the windows of the exhibition space on the twentieth floor, apparently using a pellet gun borrowed from the sculptor Denis Openheim. His intention had been to paper over the broken windows with images of smashed windows in a housing project (see image). But when Peter Eisenman learned of the act, he compared it to the Nazi rampage of Kristallnacht, and any trace of the episode was fully expunged from the documentary material I had received on the exhibit.

When I learned about the event, I felt that the whole structure of my essay had suffered a traumatic shock, that my own call for history writing was based on a repression of actual events. I felt that that my writing had been a form of carefully fashioned ‘wishful thinking’. Yet even in his anarchitectural attack, Matta-Clark had employed some of the same artistic strategies that I had examined in my ruminations on models. While the social conditions that Matta-Clark wanted to address at the Institute were very different from the more purely architectural concerns of the other models on display, the symbolic forms of the act were nonetheless not so dissimilar from my conception of architectural models. Even an act that had been conceived as an attack on the discipline of architecture still employed the symbolic power of the model to communicate – to be both immediately present and refer to an ‘other’.

The ‘Idea as Model’ exhibition was held at a moment that some architects were attempting to introduce their models and drawings into the cultural and commercial circuits of the ‘art world’ – through museum exhibitions, specialised galleries, or thematic exhibitions in established galleries such as Leo Castelli’s, while some artists, particularly sculptors, were simultaneously ‘poaching’ in the thickets of the architects. Architects such as Aldo Rossi or Walter Pichler were able to present their drawings and personal imagery as works of art for sale or exhibition, although there was only a limited market for these works. Frank Gehry and Michael Graves were able straddle the worlds of art, architecture and design, while sculptors increasingly addressed the physical context of their works, through installations or interventions in what Rosalind Krauss would subsequently call the ‘expanded field’.

In subsequent years, I found some particularly striking instances of art works that resonated with the representational strategies of the model in the work of sculptors like Glen Seator or Charles Ray. Seator’s replica of the Whitney Museum’s director’s office, made with salvaged millwork from the office itself and exhibited in the same building in the 1997 Biennale, transformed an architectural space of the museum into a sculptural object that was both minimalist and ‘site specific’. The piece both belonged there and belonged nowhere. It turned the model’s desire for physical actuality into a kind of anxious conundrum, and the vertigo one felt looking into the tilted room so delicately poised was matched by its conceptual instability at the dividing line between the worlds of art and architecture. Charles Ray’s play with both size and scale (such as his striking figures of giant women or of children the same size as adults) have gently parodied the human body as a measure of scale. His sculpture of a fire truck, a toy truck enlarged to full size and parked on the street in front of the Whitney Museum, remind one once again of Borges’ maps, and our deep desire to take our models for reality.

Today ‘The Ruins of Representation’ essay brings back memories of the ‘Idea’ of the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies as a ‘model’ for acts of intellectual imagination in the face of the reductive banalities of architectural practice and the lack of critical discourse in America at the time. The Institute was a laboratory experiment in the creation of a conceputalised reality, in which form and myth collided. It was no accident that Rem Koolhaas was working on Delirious New York there, while Peter Eisenman and his colleagues tried to transform architecture into a purely intellec- tual and formal construct. ‘The Ruins of Representation’ is a relic from that far-off empire, but hopefully it retains some immediacy as well.
Maar toen Peter Eisenman dit hoorde, vergeleek die de ingreep met de manier waarop de periode van de Kristallnacht huishoorden, en in het documentatiemateriaal dat ik van de tentoonstelling ontving was elk spoor van deze episode uitgewist.

Toen ik van deze gebeurtenissen hoorde, voelde ik het als de hele structuur van mijn essay een trauma-these had opgelopen, dat mijn argument naar de stilte van de tentoonstelling een andere vorm van geschiedschrijving was gebaseerd op een verdringing van werkelijke gebeurtenissen. Ik kreeg het gevoel dat ik het had geschreven vanuit een vorm van zorgvuldig gevisualiseerd wishful thinking. Toch hanteerde Matta-Clark zelfs in zijn ‘architectonisch’ aanval enkele van de artistieke strategieën die in mijn overpeinzing over maquettes had aangevoerd. Hoewel de sociale omstandigheden die Matta-Clark op de tentoonstelling aan de orde stellen, hemelsbreed verschilde in de wisselwerking tussen beide aspecten en die van de maquette misbruiken om zo de geschiedenis van hun vak te kunnen herschrijven en als het ware terug in de louter architectonische kwesties waar het bij de andere tentoonstelleden maquettes om draaide, verschillen de symbolische vormen van zijn daad niet eens van zoveel van mijn opvatting over de rol van architectuurmaquettes. De tentoonstelling ‘Idea as Model’ als aanval op het vakgebied van de architectuur bedoelde, hij wendde de archiitectuur als symbolische macht om zijn maquettes aan om te communiceren – om zowel direct aanwezig te zijn als te verwijzen naar ‘iets anders’. De tentoonstelling ‘Idea as Model’ werd gehouden op een moment dat sommige architecten probeerden met hun maquettes en tekeningen te toegankelijk voor de cultuurle en commerciële circuits van de ‘kunstwereld’ – via museum-tentoonstellingen, gespecialiseerde galeries, of thematentoonstellingen in gevestigde galeries als die van Leo Castelli. Tegelijkertijd gingen sommige kunstenaars, in het bijzonder beeldhouwers, ‘op stoepocht’ in het kruipendhout van de architectuur, en zijn vandaag de dag gebeurd op een plek die voor het Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies tot een ‘maquette’ voor anderen dan de vandaag de dag gebeurd op een plek die voor het Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies tot een ‘maquette’ voor anderen dan de vandaag de dag gebeurd op een plek die voor het Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies tot een ‘maquette’ voor anderen dan de vandaag de dag gebeurd op een plek die voor het Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies tot een ‘maquette’ voor anderen dan de vandaag de dag gebeurd op een plek die voor het Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies tot een ‘maquette’ voor anderen dan de vandaag de dag gebeurd op een plek die voor het Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies tot een ‘maquette’ voor anderen dan de vandaag de dag gebeurd op een plek die voor het Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies tot een ‘maquette’ voor anderen dan de vandaag de dag gebeurd op een plek die voor het Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies tot een ‘maquette’ voor anderen dan de