

GRAHAM FOUNDATION

“Model Studies: Thomas Demand with Fernand Léger, Francis Bruguère, Thomas Scheibitz, and the VKhUTEMAS School” on view at the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts March 21 – June 1, 2013.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Chicago, March 13, 2013 - *Model Studies* is curated by and features a new body of work by artist Thomas Demand, here accompanied by selected works from Fernand Léger, Francis Bruguère, Thomas Scheibitz, and photos by architecture students at the Constructivist school VKhUTEMAS in Moscow. On view for the first time in the United States, *Model Studies* brings together over one hundred works that together dismantle a rigid, formal worldview and explore methods of representation other than realism. Seeking new ways to construct meaning, figuration and traditional forms of narrative give way to alternative approaches to making, seeing, and understanding the world. Central to this idea is the model, from its most literal to its most abstract manifestation.

Acclaimed German artist Thomas Demand is best known for his large-scale photographs that question the medium as a faithful record of reality. Up until now, Demand’s practice has largely focused on recreating scenes from images often circulated in media, making painstaking paper models of the architectural interiors and environments featured in the photos, photographing them, and then promptly destroying the models. “They have one peak of perfectness, of immaculate beauty, sometimes just for a day or two. If you don’t catch the shot on that day, it’s gone,” he says. The spaces depicted are often the scene of some cultural event, the identifying details of the spaces removed. Reflecting on the importance of empty environments in his work, Demand states, “architecture has always been the center of my attention, because it deals with utopias and ideas of a somehow better future.”

Model Studies features a new body of work by Demand that marks a departure from his most wellknown work. For the first time, Demand has photographed models that he did not make himself. During a residency at the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles, Demand worked with the archive of mid-century architect John Lautner (1911 – 1994). The twelve Lautner models photographed by Demand are not finished presentation models of final designs, rather they are working models—provisional, made of cheap materials, unresolved, and in disrepair. Demand’s large-scale photographs abstract the models beyond recognition. They are no longer buildings, but planes, color fields, and spatial relationships. “I tried to avoid making images of architecture,” Demand writes. “It’s the sculptural presence, and the traces of someone’s practice, of understanding and remodeling, which raised my attention.”

For the Graham Foundation, Demand has approached the exhibition as a site of experimental research. While the inclusion of bodies of work by Léger, Bruguère, and VKhUTEMAS students chosen by Demand to accompany his work reveal striking visual relationships, their juxtaposition summons reflection on how models work, not only as

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representative objects, but also as generators of ideas and form in their own right. Léger's small abstract sketches of soldiers and environments made during his service in World War I hinge on the double function of models: The drawings operate both as a medium for aesthetic projection and an analytical mode of distancing himself from the realities of the front lines. Bruguière's abstract light exposures of paper cutout constructions from the late 1920s, on the other hand, resonate with Demand's photos of the Lautner models in their willing confusion of perceived space through a disorienting investigation of abstract forms, light, and shadow. Finally, the VKhUTEMAS (Higher Artistic and Technical Workshop) photographs depict a range of models made by students, primarily for a course on "space." The models themselves are not of buildings, but rather solutions to spatial problems. Photographing the models was also an integral part of the learning process, underscoring a keen awareness of the impact of photography on the perception and distribution of architecture. Demand commissioned German artist Thomas Scheibetz to design custom vitrines (the only three dimensional objects in the exhibition), which house the VKhUTEMAS photos and copies of Yvan Goll's 1920 screenplay *Chapliniade* containing illustrations by Léger.

Thomas Demand (b. 1964) makes work consisting of photographs, films, and related artist books based on sculptures created from paper and cardboard; the sculptures themselves are representations of source images culled largely from mainstream media. In addition to addressing photo-sculptural media-specific concerns, Demand's work considers and engages the fields of design, architecture, music, politics, and contemporary culture in general. In cultivating a form of neutrality, exemplified in Demand's titling and the non-presence of animate objects in his lexicon, he opens a space in which collective memory, both recent and receding, is activated. Demand has been the subject of one-person exhibitions at The Museum of Modern Art, New York, and the Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin, and he has represented Germany at the Venice Biennale and the Bienal de São Paulo. Demand lives and works in Berlin and Los Angeles.

John Lautner (1911-1994) practiced architecture for more than 55 years, designing residences in and near Los Angeles, including Silvertop (1964), the Chemosphere (1960), the Sheats/Goldstein residence (1961-1963), the Levy residence (1990), and the Elrod residence (Palm Springs, CA, 1968), as well as many others around the world. Lautner worked as an apprentice to Frank Lloyd Wright and joined the first group of Taliesin Fellows before establishing his own practice in Los Angeles. His buildings have been featured in numerous exhibitions, publications, documentary films, and in the James Bond and *Diehard* films, among others. *Model Studies* includes twelve projects by Lautner including Beyer House (1975), Concannon House (1960), Franklyn House (1973), Goldstein Office (1971), Haagen Beach House (1988), Hope House (1980), Kirk Wood House (1991), Marina Fine Arts Store (1991), Segel House (1979), Townsend House (1990), Turner House (1982), and Wood House (1993).

Fernand Léger (1881–1955) was a French painter whose work spanned the entire first half of the 20th century. He exhibited at the Salons d'Automne et des Indépendants and took part in the La Section d'Or group. In 1914 Léger enlisted in the First World War, and was later discharged after being hospitalized. His work signaled a return to the figure and the development of decorative research in close liaison with architecture. Six drawings by Léger from 1916 during the First World War will be shown in *Model Studies* courtesy of the Centre Pompidou in Paris. Additionally, four copies of the expressionist and surrealist poet Yvan Goll's 1920 screenplay *Chapliniade* containing illustrations by Léger will be exhibited courtesy of the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin and a Private Collection, Berlin.

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Francis Bruguière (1879–1945) was an American photographer. He ran studios in San Francisco and New York and photographed for *Vanity Fair*, *Vogue*, and *Harper's Bazaar*. In his noncommercial work Bruguière experimented with multiple exposure images. In 1928, while living in London, Bruguière started a new series of abstractions and produced the first British abstract film, *Light Rhythm*. Nineteen of Bruguière's abstract, black and white photographs taken between 1925-1930 will be shown in *Model Studies* courtesy of the George Eastman House in Rochester, NY.

Thomas Scheibitz (b. 1968) is a German sculptor and painter living and working in Berlin. Together with Tino Sehgal, he represented Germany at the 51st Venice Biennale in 2005. Solo shows include the Institute of Contemporary Art, London (1999), Berkeley Art Museum, San Francisco (2001), Museum der bildenden Künste, Leipzig (2001), the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (2001), Centre d'Art Contemporain, Geneva (2004), IMMA Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin (2007), Camden Arts Centre, London (2008) and Musée d' Art Moderne, Luxembourg (2008). Group shows include the Whitechapel Art Gallery, London (1999), the Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco (2003), Centre Pompidou, Paris (2004), the Museum of Modern Art, New York (2005), Tate Modern, London (2007) and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (2009).

VKhUTEMAS, or Higher Artistic and Technical Workshop (1920–1930) was a Russian art and technical school founded in Moscow by government decree. The school became known for its association with Constructivism and its radical pedagogical approach that combined visual arts, architecture, and design. It is often thought of as the Russian equivalent to the Bauhaus. In its short ten-year lifetime, VKhUTEMAS included a notable group of faculty architects such as Moisei Ginzburg, Vladimir Krinskii, Nikolai Ladovskii, Ivan Leonidov, Konstantin Melnikov, Ivan Zholtovskii, Alexei Shchusev, and the Vesnin brothers. Sixty vintage gelatin prints of architectural models taken by VKhUTEMAS students will be shown in *Model Studies* courtesy of the Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montreal.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Graham Foundation is grateful to the Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal; Centre Pompidou, Paris; George Eastman House, Rochester; Private Collection, Berlin; Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin; Esther Schipper, Berlin; Matthew Marks Gallery, New York; and Sprüth Magers Berlin London for their generous loan of works and collaboration, without which this exhibition would not be possible.

This will be the first presentation of *Model Studies* in the United States. Previous institutional presentations have been exhibited at Nottingham Contemporary, London (2012) and Common Ground, the 13th Venice Architecture Biennale (2012), which included an installation by Martin Boyce.

RELATED EVENTS

Opening reception with Thomas Demand
Thursday, March 21, 6-8PM

6PM opening remarks with Thomas Demand and
Graham Foundation director Sarah Herda
6-8PM Opening Reception

Additional events will be announced throughout the run of the show.

For more information about upcoming events, visit: www.grahamfoundation.org/public_events

ABOUT THE GRAHAM FOUNDATION

Founded in 1956, the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts makes project-based grants to individuals and organizations and produces public programs to foster the development and exchange of diverse and challenging ideas about architecture and its role in the arts, culture, and society.

The Graham Foundation was created by a bequest by Ernest R. Graham (1866-1936), a prominent Chicago architect who was a protégé of Daniel Burnham.

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THE MADLENER HOUSE

Since 1963, the Graham Foundation has been located in the Madlener House, a 9,000 square foot Prairie-style mansion located in the historic Gold Coast neighborhood of Chicago. The work of architect Richard E. Schmidt and designer Hugh M. G. Garden, the house was built in 1901–02 for Albert Fridolin Madlener and his wife Elsa Seipp Madlener, both of whom came from prominent pioneer Chicago families that emigrated from Germany in the 1850s. In its compact, cubic massing the house is related to the German neoclassical work of Karl Friedrich Schinkel and his followers in Berlin, but in many of its details it clearly reveals the influence of Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright.

EXHIBITION LOCATION, HOURS & ACCESSIBILITY

Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts
Madlener House
4 West Burton Place
Chicago, IL 60610
www.grahamfoundation.org

Gallery Hours: Wednesday to Saturday, 11AM to 5PM. Group tours available. Admission: Free

The Graham Foundation will offer public tours of *Model Studies* every Saturday at 2PM. Saturday tours do not require reservations and are free and open to the public. Tours begin in the foyer on the first floor and last approximately 30 minutes.

Accessibility: Galleries are located on the first, second, and third floors of the Madlener House. The second and third floors are only accessible by stairs. The first floor of is accessible via an outdoor lift. Please call 312.787.4071 to make arrangements.

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High-resolution digital images are available on the press section of our website; email Ellen Hartwell Alderman at ealderman@grahamfoundation.org for the press login or additional information. Press tours welcome by appointment.

312.787.4071 / ealderman@grahamfoundation.org
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Clockwise, from top left: Thomas Demand, *Beyer #34*, 2011, Pigment Print, 41.9" x 63.0", © Thomas Demand, VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn / DACS, New York. Courtesy Esther Schipper, Berlin / Matthew Marks Gallery, New York / Sprüth Magers Berlin London. Unknown photographer, Photograph of student models and exhibition projects from the 'Space and Volume' courses at the VKhUTEMAS (Higher State Artistic Technical Studios) and the Vkhutein, Moscow, 1920-1930, Gelatin silver prints, courtesy of the Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montreal; Fernand Léger, *Deux soldats dans un abri*, 1916, Graphite on paper, 16.5 x 12.8 cm, courtesy Centre Pompidou. Francis Bruguière, *Light Abstraction*, ca. 1930, Gelatin silver print, Courtesy of the George Eastman House.

