

SPRÜTH MAGERS

Thomas Demand

ARCHIVMATERIAL / NEW STOP MOTION

Sprüth Magers, Berlin

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In the past several years, Thomas Demand has periodically turned his camera away from the models he constructs himself, as content for his well-known photographs, to focus on models he has encountered in the archives and studios of renowned architects. First instigated by the artist's visits to the John Lautner archives at the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles, Demand's *Model Studies* continued with the paper constructions he photographed at the Tokyo studio of Kazuyo Sejima and Ryue Nishizawa (SANAA). Sprüth Magers is pleased to present *ARCHIVMATERIAL*, the third iteration of Demand's contemplative series, which concentrates on models by the Viennese artist-architect Hans Hollein. Also on view *NEW STOP MOTION*, two of the artist's mesmerizing stop motion animations completed in 2016 and 2018.

A radical thinker and an instigator in the history of postmodern architecture, Hans Hollein (1934–2014) sought to expand the concept of architecture to encompass all forms of environments, from space suits to advertisement spreads to telecommunications systems. As he declared in *Bau* magazine in 1968: "Architects must cease to think only in terms of *buildings*... Everyone is an architect. Everything is architecture." The title of Demand's exhibition, *ARCHIVMATERIAL*, is a playful nod to the theoretical seriousness of conceptual manifestos of the 1960s and 1970s, of which Hollein penned his fair share. Presented with the opportunity to explore Hollein's extensive archives, packed into numerous apartments across Vienna, Demand delved into the architect's materials. Of Demand's approach to Hollein's models, in contrast to those of Lautner and SANAA, architect Liz Diller has noted: "you had to figure out what they were, you decoded them, you figured out which ones represented Hollein. It was much more . . . archaeological" (*AnOther Magazine*, Autumn/Winter 2018).

The eight photographs on view in *ARCHIVMATERIAL* capture the ragged edges and aged surfaces of Hollein's maquettes—in particular those related to his design proposals for exhibition architecture. Through Demand's considered use of perspective, cropping, and lighting, even the architect's most utilitarian elements gain an enigmatic quality. In *Cavern I* (2018), a white light streams through a series of circular openings in an array of diagonally placed cardboard slats, creating a painterly halo effect. The frontal view of *Rainbow* (2018), featuring a design reminiscent of Hollein's signature Retti candle shop in Vienna, completed in 1965, compresses the model to focus on its curved spaces and incandescent mid-century palette.

These and other photographs appear atop wallpaper that Demand has produced specifically for this installation, entitled *Cones* (2018): to create it, he photographed a large grouping of slender cardboard tubes, packed loosely together, whose oscillating depths and ambiguous scale offer a counterpoint to the *Model Studies*. In a self-reflexive twist, Demand's photographs of Hollein's exhibition architecture models are thus surrounded and embedded within an artwork by Demand, which itself becomes a type of "exhibition architecture" as it presents the photographs.

For Demand, architects' models document and distill the creative process, while also embodying ideas left unexecuted and spaces never realized. His interest is not in the literal structures themselves, but rather in the reality that they represent. Demand's *Model Studies* can thus be thought of as stage sets within which the dramas and legacies of architecture and history play out, filtered through his contemporary lens. In this sense,

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despite obvious differences, they align with many of the dynamics at work in Demand's fabricated photographs, for which he restages culturally poignant images, culled from mass media, using carefully honed paper constructions. Both approaches urge viewers to question what they see, consider alternate versions of reality, and reexamine their relationship to their surroundings, from the built environment to political arenas to social media.

NEW STOP MOTION, the two stop-motion animations on view in the upstairs gallery stem from Demand's own efforts in model making. As in his photographs, the artist begins with a particular source image (in this case, a video) that carries with it a cultural or personal resonance. After recreating the scene using richly colored papers, Demand photographs this model repeatedly, each time shifting it slightly and meticulously in order to bring the movement to life. In *Ampel / Stoplight* (2016), we witness a pedestrian traffic light shift predictably from one directive to the next, overlaid with a thrumming soundtrack Demand produced with composer Tyondai Braxton. *Balloons* (2018) follows a bouquet of balloons blowing lazily across a brick-tiled floor. In both films, decidedly mundane subjects become both hypnotic and uncanny, thanks to Demand's tour-de-force animation work and the films' eerie, gold-tinged lighting.

These recent bodies of work are all included in *Thomas Demand: The Complete Papers*, a major new publication from MACK London that functions as a catalogue raisonné of Demand's photographs, with seminal texts on the artist's work and a new interview between Demand and curator Russell Ferguson. *The Complete Papers* is released in November 2018.

Thomas Demand (born 1964, Munich) lives in Los Angeles and Berlin. Select solo exhibitions include those at Fondazione Prada, Venice (2017, 2007), Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth and Nouveau Musée National de Monaco (both 2016), Stiftung Insel Hombroich, Neuss, and Los Angeles County Museum of Art (both 2015), Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, and National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne (both 2012), Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam (2010), Neue Nationalgalerie, Berlin, and MUMOK, Vienna (both 2009), Hamburger Kunsthalle (2008), Serpentine Gallery, London, and Lenbachhaus, Munich (both 2006), MoMA, New York (2005), Kunsthau Bregenz, Austria (2004), Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk, Denmark (2003), and Castello di Rivoli, Turin, Italy (2002). He represented Germany at the 26th São Paulo Biennale in Brazil in 2004.

The Berlin gallery is concurrently presenting an exhibition by John Bock.

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Public reception: Friday, November 23, 6 – 9pm

Opening hours: Tuesday – Saturday, 10am – 6pm