



Doug Hall. «Trevi Fountain, Rome». 2000

Meticulously executed cityscapes and leasurescapes dominate Doug Hall's current exhibition at Rena Bransten Gallery in San Francisco. These lushly colored C-prints offer a bird's-eye view of locations as varied as Hanoi, Hong Kong, Tokyo, and Rome. The prints' large scale and sharp focus bring the viewer's eye into the scene as though confronted by a grand contemporary diorama.

The crowd scenes and landscapes are presented as material to be studied and vicariously enjoyed. In many ways, Hall's work references 19th-century precedents—images of a fleeting world that when captured through the camera lens retains some of its original freshness and immediacy.

Hall's photographs also speak to the position of the tourist in contemporary society. Air travel means that we can be anywhere in the world within a short period of time, allowing for a kind of nomadism that would have been highly improbable a mere fifty years ago.

The scale of these photographs and their minimal black frames create the sensation of looking through a window. The window, in addition to providing visual access to the scene, creates another level of meaning. The images appear as though presented in miniature. We are looking at tiny people crowded within the public spaces of plazas, swimming pools and markets. We are the giant on the other side of the mirror looking and analyzing what we have captured in the frame.

Jonathan Swift evoked one such imaginary giant nearly three hundred years ago in *Gulliver's Travels*. In that often-cited story, scale was compelling because of how it determined power relations. Swift describes the Emperor of

Lilliput by saying that "He is taller by almost a Breadth of my nail, than any of his Court; which alone is enough to strike an Awe into the Beholders." The miniature is also of interest as it relates to the use of scale models or maquettes.

A classic example is the photograph of the architect Mies van der Rohe bending over and looking at a model of the Farnsworth House that he designed and executed in Plano, Illinois. In that photograph, Mies is the modern Gulliver in Lilliput peering curiously at Edith Farnsworth who is trapped inside her tiny glass house. For Hall, it appears that a tourist is a specific type of traveler, who is not a drifter, not a vagabond, not a nomad, not a wanderer. In other words, he is not a romantic figure. Rather, he is methodical, traveling along prescribed routes, for finite amounts of time, checking off a list of sites collected in a guidebook. He follows the path that others, strangers, have marked out for him. Ultimately the tourist, with or without his outwardly animated behavior, is complacent. There is something in his willingness to follow the rules that makes him a widely maligned figure within the broader society.

At the same time it becomes apparent in Hall's work that it is the nature of visual "framing" that distinguishes the tourist from the artist, the wanderer from the writer. The frame has become, for many of us, a prosthetic device which we cannot live without. Sometimes the frame comes from television or film, other times through our personal experiences, memories of childhood. Either way, the frame determines the picture, rather than the other way around. The frame seen through the viewfinder is everything.

Anna Novakov

walsall / oxford

making buildings

The New Art Gallery, Walsall,
West Midlands
7 février - 25 mars 2001

ALISON TURNBULL

MoMA, Oxford
28 janvier - 22 avril 2001

L'architecture est un big business. A la fin du 20^e siècle, multinationales et grandes entreprises de l'économie libérale ont exploité l'architecture afin d'exprimer leur montée en puissance par des structures métalliques agressives et des façades aveuglantes.

Making Buildings prend le contre-pied de ce style sophistiqué et provocant, en tentant de redéfinir le rôle de l'artisanat dans le design architectural contemporain. L'exposition réunit des projets d'artistes et d'architectes dont le travail est centré sur des techniques artisanales. Utilisant la boue et la paille, Tono Mirai crée un «nid» douillet, à la fois refuge primitif et critique des inhospitaliers édifices en verre et acier de l'architecture du capitalisme tardif. Mais, comme le fait observer Mark Irving, les fragiles constructions de Mirail utilisent les structures qu'elles remettent en question ; en effet, sans la solide protection de l'espace d'exposition, le nid de Mirail ne tarderait pas à se dissoudre.

La réalisation plus robuste de Sarah Wigglesworth résout cette contradiction en réconciliant méthodes et matériaux traditionnels et contexte urbain. Elle utilise de la toile capitonnée et des sacs de sable comme isolation

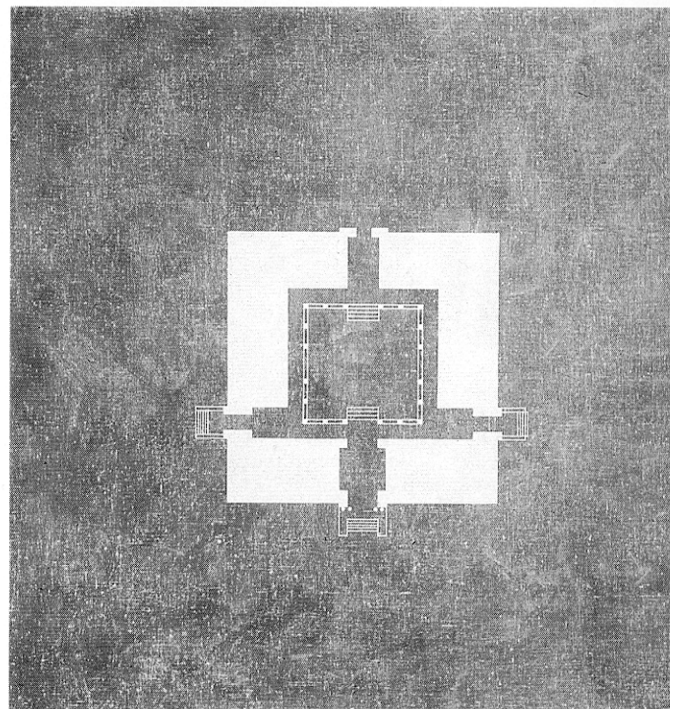
phonique et vibratoire pour sa maquette atelier située en bordure d'une ferrée. L'approche rationnelle et matricielle de ses projets, de même que l'utilisation de matériaux rudimentaires aboutissent à des réalisations remarquablement respectables et éminemment vivables.

Pour son exposition *Houses into* Alison Turnbull présente des tabourets géométriques : des plans et dessins d'architecture méticuleusement transposés sur toile à parois sources très éclectiques. Les tableaux laconiques, ne révélant que le type d'édifice considéré, aéroport, théâtre. Malgré cette absence de spécificité, les surfaces subtiles travaillées témoignent d'un processus de découverte personnelle, au-delà de la simple présentation générale. L'usage de la couleur est d'inspiration symbolique : *Ecole* est couvert d'une surface de pigment brun gratté qui évoque de vieux pupitres ; la ligne austère de *Banque* semble faire face à une façade impénétrable. En analysant les motifs de leur contexte, insistant sur leur signification personnelle, Turnbull crée une ville non seulement offerte à notre imagination poétique lancée à une architecture éternelle fixe et immuable.

Face à l'architecture imposante du capitalisme tardif, les expositions *Making Buildings* et *Houses into* bien qu'elles proposent des méthodologies différentes, incarnent une éthique de travail et initient sur l'architecture une réflexion sensible à l'échelle humaine.

Emma

Traduit par Frank Stras



Simon Condor. «Low Cost Conservatory». Londres, 1998. (Ph. S. Archer). *Lor*