



Model and Montage



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“Basically, what I am doing is making the spectator share the arbitrary nature of my choices, and the quest for general rules which might justify a particular choice. I am constantly asking questions. I watch myself filming, and you hear me thinking aloud. In other words it isn’t a film, it’s an attempt at film and presented as such.”

Jean Luc Godard

The present text is an attempt at probing to what extend, the montage theory of cinema can inform a practice of model making. With lasercutting technology as a point of departure, the text will delve into a reading of cinematic frames and lasercut slices. From montage theory the text will derive the concept of a given set of “cut-outs” as an intensive multiplicity, a mode of relating to a given material, which keeps open a variety of ways of assembly. These properties of the digital crafted model, can also be cultured in an analogue sense, for instance in working with the model in 1:1. In this sense, the text is not about digital tools, but rather about concepts derived from montage theory which can help us avoid repeating existing possibilities, when manipulating a given material.

In the work “What is philosophy” Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari characterizes architecture as the art of framing. It is precisely through this art that film and architecture are linked, “the frame with the monument that it is a reduction of...”.¹ In the book, Deleuze and Guattari further that the wise architect assembles “frame upon frame”. With the Godard quote above in mind, we might even think of a certain pedagogy of framing and joining. In thinking about the assembly of frames in a given montage, there is an opening towards the emergence of the new.

It is through the concept of the frame that we can understand architecture’s long account with the moving image. However “promising”, this meeting is often intangible and difficult to translate directly into an architectural discourse. With the advent of digital techniques, the distance between the drawing board and editing table seems minimal, while the potential of the afore mentioned “pedagogy” remains untapped. A special field in this context is the modelmaking as reflected in the practice of digital cutting machines that operate with a series of data of which is processed digitally as “a cutting sheet”. This drawing is potentially a series of “frames” which are mounted in the sheet and its inherent conception of a mode of assembly. The jump from this “cutting sheet” to the EDL (Edit List) of the editing table is an opening for a leap into a new thinking of the model.

It is obvious that “framing” and “montage” are concepts relevant to this practice. Less obvious is perhaps that it is the very concept of assembling and joining that plays an important role in recognition of its potential. Is the cutting sheet seen as a set of instructions whose ultimate goal is its own mechanical reproduction or does

there exist a range of modes and openings within the sheet that can be identified and manipulated? Without prior knowledge, one could identify four different ways of thinking about this assembly: laminating, folding, locking and hinging. The question remains, however, if the lamination as a mode of assembly is an already established matrix that is projected onto the cutting sheet or whether the lamination is a strategy that works within the drawing and allows itself to create variables and relationships at this level. It is these three concepts: framing, mode of assembly and montage, which are at stake here. The relationships between them can easily be simplified with the following example. In film each single frame represents both a fragment and the only tangible manifestation of the montage of the “whole”. There is thus a virtual gap between the minimal extent of each “frame” and its influence on the montage and the montage’s influence on the individual “frame” which opens for a particular operational character of modes of assembly. It is precisely these modes, which are also found in the duality of the cutting sheet; between each “slice” and the final “form”. The question remains in this sense, how to recognize the operational potential of these modes? When I talked before about a special “pedagogy” it is precisely in connection with the awareness of these modes, which allows us to manipulate an inaccessible whole through a variable fragment. The relationship between frame and montage is essential to illuminate in a philosophical context. The French philosopher Henri Bergson describes in his famous example of sugar water how the relationship between frame as a “cutting out” and montage as a duration in time are conceivable:

“The glass of water, the sugar, and the process of the sugar’s melting in the water are abstractions and the whole within which they have been cut out by my senses and understanding progress, it may be, in the manner of consciousness.”²

This example shows us two fundamental characteristics of the frame. Firstly, that it is always a part of a larger frame, and secondly that there is always an outside which by virtue of its extension can never be included in any frame. It is important however to remember that while even the most isolated frame is always associated with the extent of duration even through the smallest thread, the duration in itself has a tendency to form sets of frames. Thus there is no question of duality between frame and montage, but rather a flooding between them where specific modes of assembly can be operational:

“The cinematic image is always dividual. This is because in the final analysis, the screen, as the frame of frames, gives a common standard of measurement to things which do not have one – long shots of countryside and close-ups of the face, an astronomical system and a single drop of water – parts which do not have the same denominator of distance, relief or light. In all these senses the frame ensures a deterritorialisation of the image.”³

In this analysis of the frame, as “cut out” of an extensive duration, each frame is an

² Bergson, H.: Creative Evolution, 1998, p. 10

³ Deleuze, G.: Cinema 1, 2005, p. 16

¹ Deleuze, G., Guattari, F.: Hvad er filosofi?, p. 234

Laser cut models are mostly made out of planar sections or slices cut out of MDF, cardboard or metal. They can be assembled through different techniques; folding, hinging, laminating and locking.

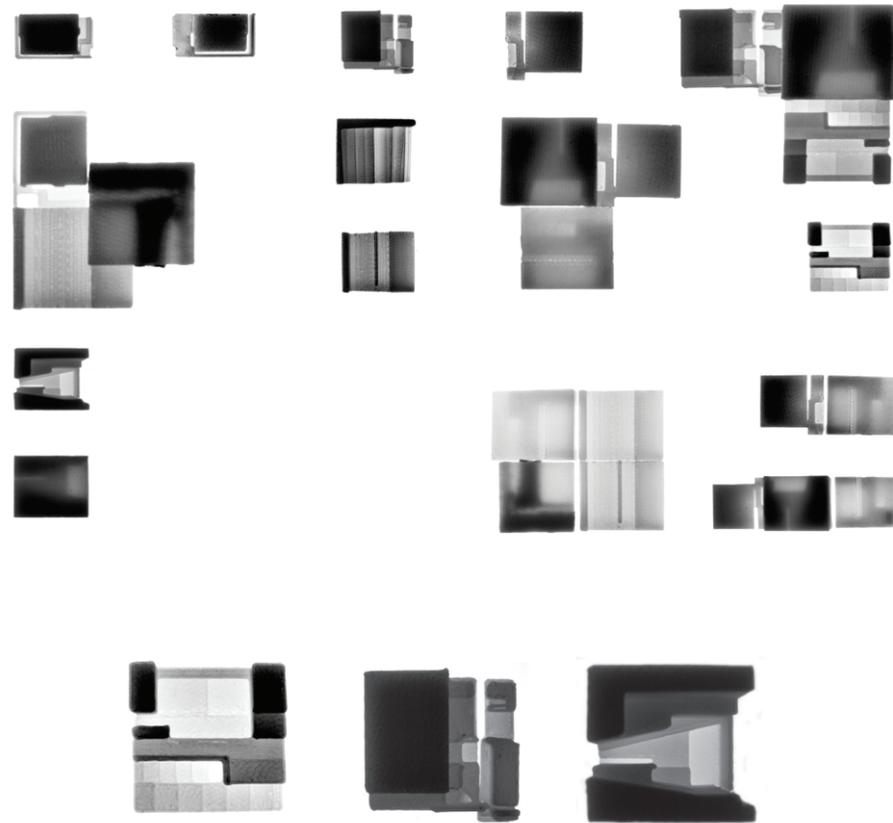
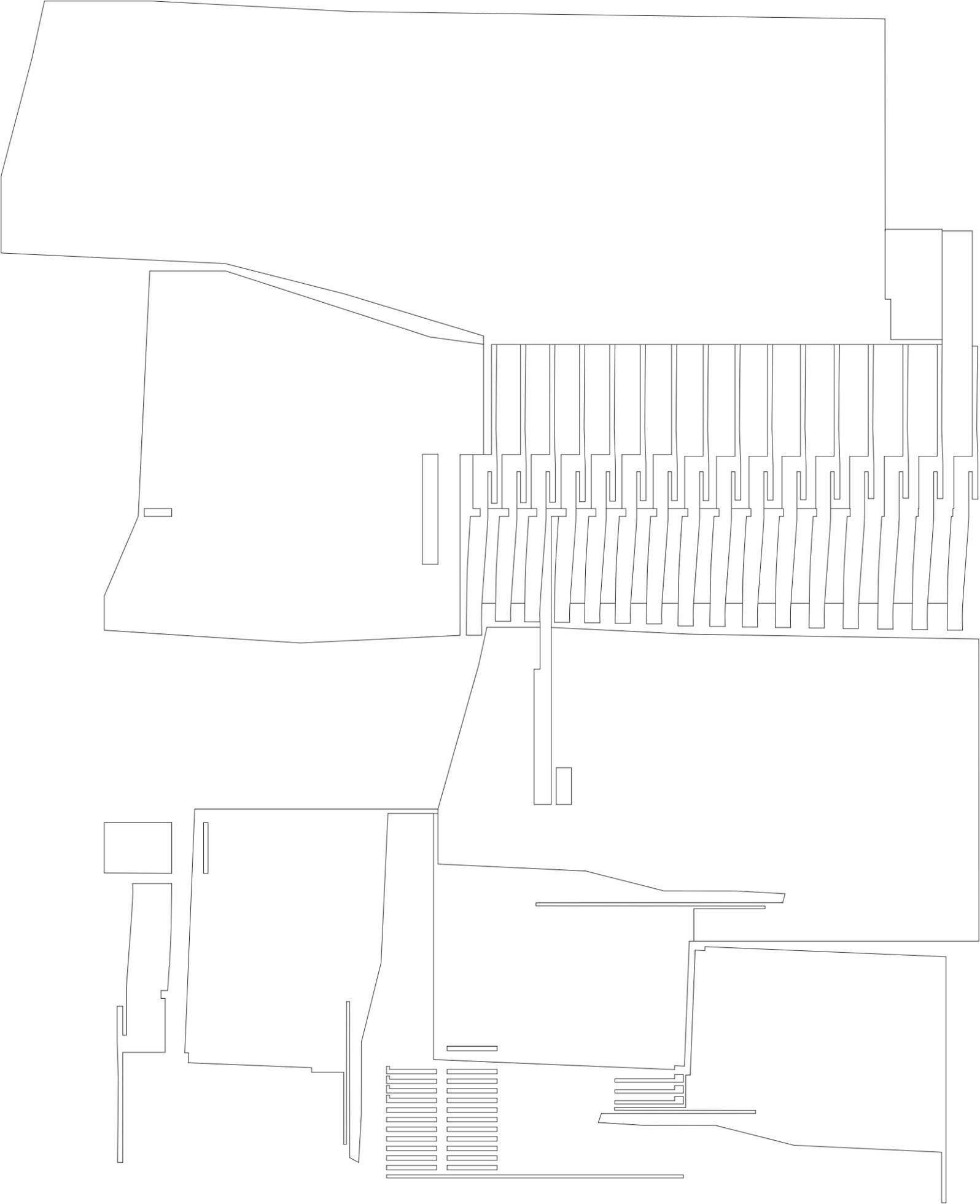
Above: Folding and hinging of a cardboard model by Birgir Örn Jónsson.

Laminated MDF model by Simon Kjems Møller.

Laminated and bent MDF model by Lasse Folke Pedersen

Overleaf: 1:1 Model by Emma Sønner, Julie Sonne Olsen, Emil Gaston Larsen, Siri Rasmussen.

Photo by Lizette Araza Jensen.



Frames and slices. On the opposing page is shown an example of a cutting sheet. This drawing is the actual blueprint for a series of shapes cut out in MDF plate. The individual slices are joined or laminated and makes up the body and volume of the finished model. The drawing can be viewed as information that must be processed and executed or it can be seen as an intensive multiplicity of parts that interact with and modulate each other. In this sense there is a relationship between each slice of the cutting sheet and the single individual frames of a montage sequence. Both frame and slice is at the same time a fragment of a whole and the only tangible element of the virtuality of that same whole.

Above: Basic studies of opacity done in 3-D print by Xenia von Buchwald.

Below: Analytical study of framing and montage by Morten Meldgaard.

Left: Cutting sheet for a small MDF model done on a lasercutter by Tina Urup.



excerpt of a greater context and there exist furthermore an extent that radically exceeds this context. In movie language you call this phenomenon of the frame “The Out of Field”. We understand, read and interact with this or that “frame” because we already recognize or are familiar with the context of which it is an excerpt. The term “Close-up” makes this clear for us, since it is a carving out of a facial trait or a minuscule detail of an interior. However, a characteristic of many modern filmmakers, and perhaps particularly Jean Luc Godard and his aforementioned “pedagogy”, is that the frame has lost its “Out of field”. It is no longer a section referring back to a known context, but simply an “optical incident”. This leads to a new thinking of the frame in its properties, but also a radically new way to handle this “montage of incidents”.

Perhaps it is so that there can be no full answer to why montage works and how we are able to experience a scene from say a film by Godard. But following the issue of operability we could ask ourselves what practices are needed when dealing with the material? As such, two types of approaches can be identified; one centered on resemblance and limitation and another focusing on difference and creation. This generalization, however, raises a cardinal question: Are we going about realizing possibilities, or are we trying to actualize the virtuality of a material? Any given material is incredibly rich and can be combined in countless ways. In what way is it that one finds the final result, realized through a possibility or actualized through a concrete fault line in the material? This raises a question about the material's status as either an extensive or intensive multiplicity. The connection between montage and modelling lies precisely in the way one perceives a given material, either as extensive quantifiable multiplicity or intensive qualitative multiplicity. Claire Colebrook refers in her book on Deleuzian cinematics to these two types of multiplicities, respectively as a box of stones and a living memory. In the box of stones we can add or remove elements, but the stones remain as they are, unlike memory which changes qualitatively every time we add or remove a single element:

“If one takes one stone out of a box of stones the remaining stones stay the same, and stay as stones. And this is because each component of an actual multiplicity does not relate to any other component – everything is already given; a virtual or spiritual multiplicity, by contrast, changes in kind with every addition or division, and its processes of change are irreversible. My memory is intensive because each past event alters the present and each future event will alter how I relate to my past; matter is extensive because it does not synthesize or connect its differences.”⁴

It is in this sense we can say that there are qualitative difference between the two different approaches to material. The one experiences the material as a box of stones which can be quantified according to a previously established model, while the other experience the material as a memory that is changing qualitatively at every cut, every single manipulation:

⁴ Colebrook, C: Deleuze- A Guide for the Perplexed, 2006, p. 77)

“The crux lies here: Actualization occurs in time and with time, whereas realization, by limiting itself to the mere unfolding of what pre-exists, actually destroys novelty and annihilates time. In the first instance time is real; in the second it remains artificially derived and abstract in relation to events. In the one case time is a dynamic and perpetually activated flow, in the other the result of an externally built up succession of static images.”⁵

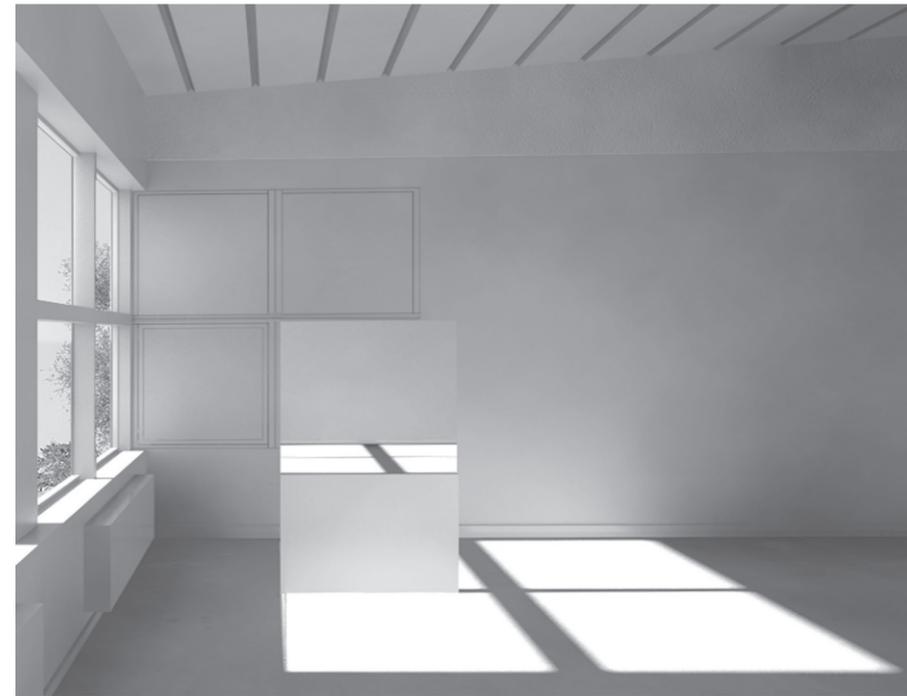
Here we are in some way back to square one, how to recognize the operability of assembly modes? As the actualization of virtualities or the realization of possibilities? How to avoid instrumentation and turning it into a mere possibility that has just to be realized in the directionless substance of the material? How does one think the “ocean of formlessness” of the material as an intensive multiplicity? First and foremost, by recalling Bergson's example in dividing translation and transformation. The realization of possibility is not bad per se, if it is just used in the right way, namely to ensure recognition on specific levels. Hence the glass of water and the melting of the sugar; the extent of duration has a tendency to form closed sets of realized opportunity. Choosing the right layers or strata in which recognition and thus identification is in need, is of major importance. The radically new is by definition not visible or acceptable and can not be disseminated, and therefore the production of the new necessarily requires degrees of recognisability. Secondly by thinking the model as anything but a media which must resemble a blueprint or subsequently control a behavioural complex. A model should be a model for other reasons and those reasons are precisely the actual modes of operation, which work in the material of the model. In this sense the model, not necessarily digitally crafted, but any model, might be informed by Deleuze's word on the status of the cinematographic image:

“It is not quite right to say that the cinematographic image is in the present. What is in the present is what the image “represents”, but not the image itself, which in cinema as in painting, is never to be confused with what it represents. The image itself is the system of the relationships between its elements, that is, a set of relationships of time from which the variable present only flows. What is specific to the image, as soon as it is creative, is to make perceptible, to make visible, relationships of time which cannot be seen in the represented object and do not allow themselves to be reduced to the present.”⁶

Once again an analogy to the editing table can clear up the concepts. The finished film is not a scaled-down version of a raw material, nor is a representative selection of scenes. Models should therefore initially be thought as detached from the material it emerges from and then free itself from the obligation to represent this. The aim of the model is in this sense to create a specific fault line in its own right, through a complex of drawings, cartography and concepts. In this connection it would be reasonable to think, that the access to mounting fragments in alternate montages of the editing table is privileged compared to the cutting sheet or the building of a model.

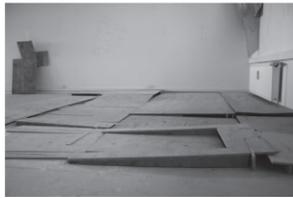
⁵ Kwinter, S: Architectures of Time, 2001, p. 10)

⁶ Deleuze, G.: Cinema 2, 2005, p. xii



Virtual and actual. These models in scale 1:1, share an interest in examining flow of data by way of analogue means. They discuss the relation between the different scales of body, model and space. The models produce an interweaving of drawing and building in both a physical and informational sense. Thus we perceive that the virtual is not restricted to a certain technology but rather to a specific way of handling material so that the actualized maintains a relation to the virtuality that it is derived from.

Facing page and above text: Model in 1:1 by Caroline Berner Nordfalk, Erla Olafsdottir, Julie Andersen, Rasmus Strange. Photos by Erla Olafsdottir.
Above: Rendering of model in 1:1 by Elisabet Huguin Georgsdottir
Below: Model in 1:1 made of Mirroglas and-MDF by Elin Thorisdottir.



However it is the very idea of possible realization that hinders such access. Even Godard had to tackle the question of recognition on a strategic level:

“During the course of the film – in its discourse, its discontinuous course, that is- I want to include everything, sport, politics, even groceries. Everything can be put into a film. Everything should be put into a film. When people ask why, I refer the questioner to his own newspaper. It’s all there. And it’s all mixed up.”⁷

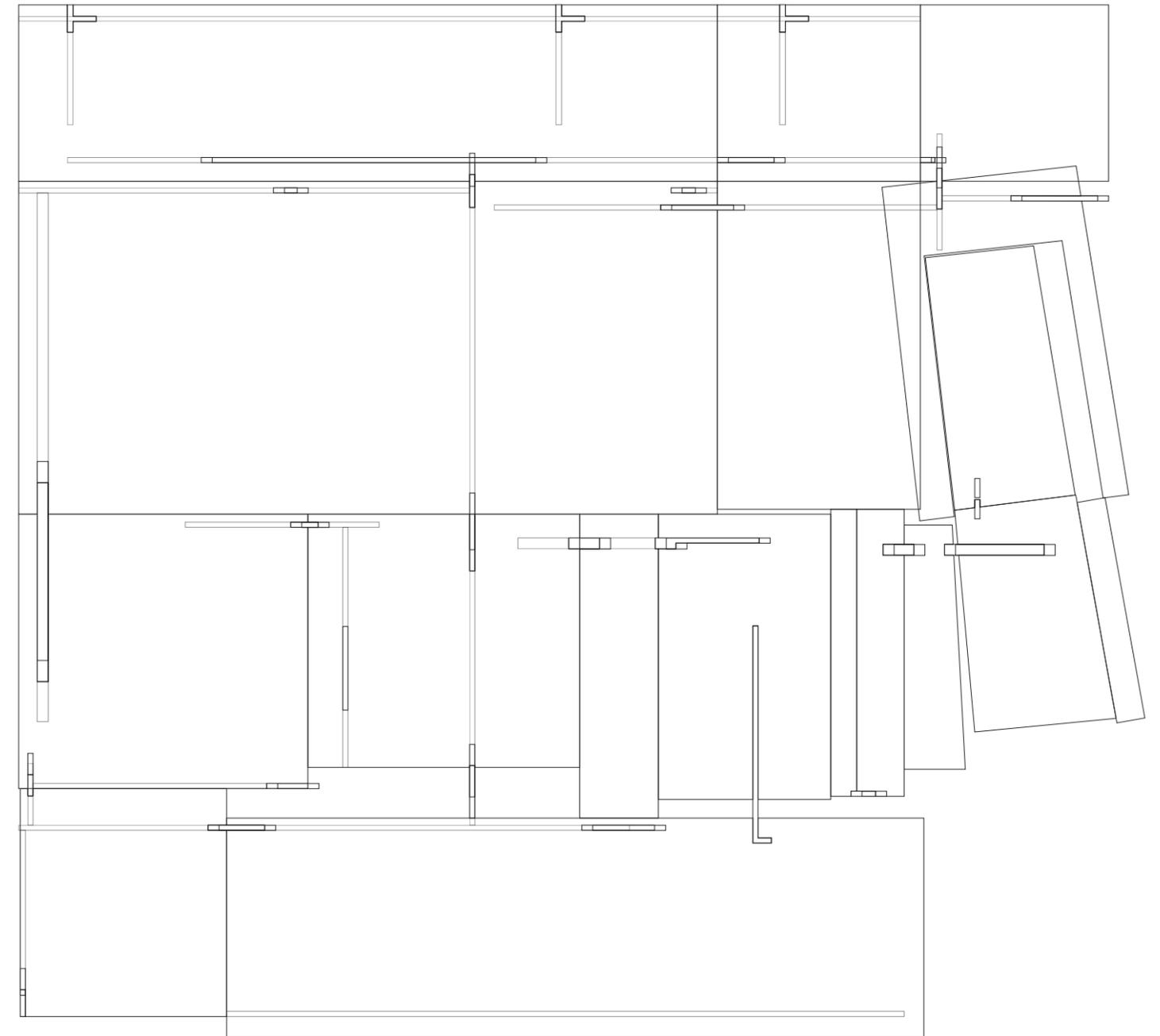
Thus it is not the point to discover a method, but moreover to discuss the different attributes of an approach. It is primarily a question about how to establish simple rules that can generate a collective of “frames” that populate the clearing of rationale that we have purchased ourselves. How to create the experimental units that can inhabit the cutting list, sketch or timeline? My editor always says that it is important to have “a great timeline.” In this approach, quantity is in the first instance more important than quality. One sets up a field of operation or designates the extent of a volume. A quantum of matter or a set of numbered figures, isolated from any representational aim and seen only as a “metric incident” in an “incidental montage”. An environment in which the difference of the material can start experimenting with the materiality of the model. Another approach might be to make simple readings of sections that put measure into this emergent world. An elevation say, represents a degree of opacity, density, flow of energy. It’s about setting a first experimental world, which is susceptible to influences, but also able to create complexity by density of internal relations.

Adorno writes in a short text on the art of the essay, that it is the weaving of thinking actions into a dense carpet of thought experience that is the actual scene of spiritual and intellectual experience⁸. The thought operations are not included in a single rational continuum, but are often afterwards manipulated in to a “scientific” form that would propose as much. It is precisely in the density of this carpet, which slowly forms within the work and emerges through the process of work, that we find the fault lines and breaking points of a given material. Here we see the relationship between quantum and quality being reversed and brute matter traversed by events. It is so to speak a carpet of interwoven relations that achieve a critical density, wherein fault lines and breaking points begin to actualize themselves. If one can speak of structure at all, it is at this level it emerges, not as a realized possibility of a method, but as an emergence in the flux between material and mode of assembly. In this sense structure is the pattern of that which chooses it self. Godard states it like this in a short fragment written in connection with his 1967 movie “Deux ou trois choses que je sais d’elle”:

*I: “Objective description” Through objective descriptions of (a) objects (b) subjects.
II: “Subjective description” Through subjective descriptions of (a) subjects (b) objects.
III: “Search for structure” given as 1+2=3, the addition of first and second layer in a selection or “complex”.*

⁷ Godard, J.L.: Everything should be put into a film, in: Milne, T.: Godard on Godard, 1972, p. 238

⁸ Adorno, T.: Essayet som form, in: Passage 28-29, 1998, p. 107

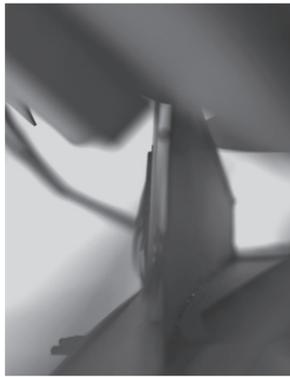


The individual “Cut-Outs” and the overall montage of the analogue model creates its own density and logic exxately through its mode of assembly. Again there is no technological refferent, but rather a specific way of handling complexity.

Above: Model in 1:1 made by Caspar Cappelen, Astrid Petersen, Emilie Thalund.

Photos by Lizette Araza Jensen

Facing page: Plan and section of model in 1:1 by Caspar Cappelen



IV: "Life", given as: *If Cinema= Life, then 1+2+3=4, the continuous combination of descriptions and complexes which the aim to establish a singular existence.*"⁹

What Godard is pursuing here is the limits of rationality as expressed in the additive principle of $1+2=3$. He does not do away with this principle, but rather tries to position it before and in relation to another mode of counting; first, second, third...:

"Philosophy, Deleuze argues, has usually taken this path, grounding all relations (AND, BECAUSE, OR) on being (IS). A second transcendental path, rarely explored by philosophy, would be to think the externality of relations. If there is no being that determines relations, if each relation is produced on the basis of each new encounter, then all we have are connections and relations without prior ground: a series of "ANDS" with no "IS"."¹⁰

In this sense we leave the idea of unity for the advent of description; a cascade of "and + and + and +...", ever rewriting and recombining its own schemata and logic. This leads us to another point, namely that the Godardian pedagogy is not based on informatics and digital operations, but foresees them and intersect with them with an aesthetic capacity. In concluding his books on Cinema, Deleuze will argue in relation to Godard's "2 or 3 things...", that aesthetics always precede technology:

*"The fact is that the new spiritual automatism and new psychological automata depend on an aesthetic before depending on technology. It is the time-image which calls for an original regime of images and signs before electronics spoils them, or in contrast relaunches it."*¹¹

With Godard and Deleuze we might even speak of an aesthetic pedagogy, which is not only limited to the digital or the model, but a pedagogy that could work in related fields, from montage to drawing, from the digital to the analogue. The digital is only providing the viscosity of different media which provide a plane of interdisciplinary composition and thought actions. It is a pedagogic that seeks to think the potential of material and produce concrete fault lines and breaking points in a variety of material and from a variety of procedures. In short it is a form of creative thought.

Acknowledgements:

The works and thoughts implied in this essay was developed by students and teach-

⁹ Godard, J.L.: My approach in four Movements, in: Milne, T.: Godard on Godard, 1972, p. 239

¹⁰ Colebrook, C.: Deleuze, A guide for the perplexed, 2006 pp. 77-79

¹¹ Deleuze, G.: Cinema 2, 2005, p. 256

ers during two different assignments at the Royal Danish Academy of Art School of Architecture, Dept. 6 "Space and Form".

The third-year workshop "Model and Fiction" was developed in cooperation with Peter Bertram, while the second year study of "a prothesis - model in 1:1", was developed by Cort Ross Dinesen and taught by Lizette Araza Jensen, Guro Sollid and myself.

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Above: lasercut model in MDF, cardboard, textile by Krister Dammen.

Overleaf: Exhibition space occupied by 6 different models in 1:1. 2. year students, dept. 6, Royal Danish Academy of Art, School of Architecture.



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