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Fragments Exhibition at PQ 2023

Klára Zieglerová, Exhibition Curator

Fragments II. Prague Quadrennial of Performance Design and Space. Trade Fair Palace of the National Gallery.
8–18 June 2023. Prague.

Models, maquettes, mock-ups, thumbnails – three-dimensional representations of reality are fascinating in their own right. They provoke our imagination, stir up our fantasies, and invite us to contemplate different fictitious worlds. As children, we play with toy cars, dolls, houses, as well as giant teddy bears; as adults, we admire models of cities in museums and enormous statues in public spaces. Sometimes, changing scale helps us visualise relationships among objects in a way that too-overwhelming reality cannot. We know our Sun is huge compared to planet Earth, but if we see a model where the Sun is the size of a beach ball on one side of a football field and Earth is the size of a green pea and on the opposite side of the green, we can grasp the relationship clearly!

In scenography and performance design, the practical purpose of scale models is to facilitate communication among members of the creative team. Models are tools that enable us to convey ideas in a collaborative process and test design choices in scale that is manageable in terms of physical labor and expense. Conventionally, models and maquettes are seen as a part of a bigger whole of a performance. Once the show is over, these models are left behind, representing material traces of it – fragments – evoking its memory. In my own studio, models

from past productions were left in every available nook and cranny, often in dusty cardboard boxes until I realised that placing them inside see-through plexi creates a far more exciting display as people often comment on their craftsmanship and design.

Fragments II: The Magic of Scale exhibition at the National Gallery's Trade Fair Palace in Prague, offered visitors a world of miniatures, maquettes, and mock ups, which explored a new relationship with reality. Some models were created in a scale that magnifies objects beyond their realistic scale, some played with different scales within a single object, some used materials that allowed visitors to see through what in reality were opaque layers or used model making techniques and unusual, found materials which further twisted this relationship with reality.

Exhibiting works of 23 artists from 16 different countries, *Fragments II* celebrated the diversity of scenographical approach to three dimensional models. Working with a scale that exaggerates an object beyond its realistic proportions, Marta Pazos from Spain presented her work *Matria*. In her twist on a traditional confessional booth a visitor squeezed into a warm, neon yellow womb. This magical space for contemplation was enriched further by subtle heart beat audio.



Fig. 1: Curator Klára Zieglerová at PQ 2023 *Fragments II* exhibition next to *Snow White Bird Puppets* by Myung Hee Cho (USA). PQ 2023. Photo: Filip Ziegler.

Marcello Valiente from Argentina used a small, 1:100 scale for his model *Diafanidades* to construct interconnected modular boxes of an Italian style theatre. His choice of see-through plexi as the material allowed visitors to literally see through walls and revealed new and surprising relationships.

Lithuania's Auguste Kuneviciute's *Reconstructing Memories* took visitors on a journey through time back to the Soviet era, when every apartment was designed and furnished the same, but behind every door people with unique stories lived (see Fig. 2). Through headphones visitors could hear reenacted individual stories while, with almost a voyeuristic sense, examined every tiny detail of historically

accurate interiors. The precise miniature lighting further lent these homes an eerie, naturalistic atmosphere.

Chile's Daniela Portillo Cisterna, curator of *Displaced Imaginaries* offered scaled costumes, each representing a different region in Chile and made from layered, textured and natural, locally sourced materials (Fig. 3 and 4). Through a QR code we were able to see the full scale costumes worn by actors while listening to local sounds of each region.

Dominique Drillot's lighting models *Scale of Light* showcased his intricate and ingenious lighting in a minimalist and polished style. Based in Monaco, Drillot's designs have been seen on many of the world's leading stages. By joining



Fig. 2: Lithuania: *Reconstructing Memories* by Auguste Kuneviciute. PQ 2023. Photo: Klára Zieglerová.



Fig. 3: Chile: *Displaced Imaginaries* (detail). Curator Daniela Portillo Cisterna.
PQ 2023. Photo: Klára Zieglerová.



Fig. 4: Chile: *Displaced Imaginaries* (detail). Curator Daniela Portillo Cisterna. PQ 2023. Photo: Klára Zieglerová.



Fig. 5: Chile: *The Giant Cat* by Catalina Gato. PQ 2023. Photo: Filip Ziegler.

numerous models together he created a breathtaking kaleidoscope of color and light. As the lighting cues were programmed to change in front of visitors the installation demonstrated the power of lighting in transforming not only the look but the feel of a scene completely.

Multiple scales within a single model were used in Catalina Gato's *The Giant Cat*, in which a life size cat appeared enormous laying on a street of a miniature Chilean city (Fig. 5 and 6). Gato playfully illustrated the awe, outrage, fear, and fascination of the city's citizens in a reaction to a giant cat just quietly napping on its street. A news reporter and her crew were seen filming in front of the sleeping cat, a scene which played simultaneously on

the opposite side of the model, where through a window we saw this same reporter, now on a TV screen, watched by a horrified family. People were peeking from behind a corner, store windows with full displays and even dismayed pigeons on the roof provided visitors with a multitude of visual stories in this compelling model.

Energy Towers supplied Finland's Kalle Nurminen with creative outlet during COVID-induced quiet time in life performance (Fig. 7 and 8). Visitors meandered through four large vertical sculptures made from partially recycled particles. The combination of different materials and shapes into architectural structures where the scale of its building blocks is



Fig. 6: Chile: *The Giant Cat* by Catalina Gato. PQ 2023. Photo: Filip Ziegler.



Fig. 7: Finland: *Energy Towers* by Kalle Nurminen. PQ 2023. Photo: Filip Ziegler.



Fig. 8: Finland: *Energy Towers* by Kalle Nurminen. PQ 2023. Photo: Filip Ziegler.

random, resulted in fantastical architectural behemoths, evoking partly completely realistic and partly fantastical buildings.

Multiple displayed objects invited visitors to interact with them and to touch them. In the current world of digital media, virtual digital models, and non-tactile LCD screen-based experiences, it was refreshing to feature handmade three-dimensional objects of various scales. Scale

is able to create an emotional impact on the audience and radically influence the way visitors, audiences, or performers navigate the given space. *Fragments II: Magic of Scale* three-dimensional models showcased diversity of approach, working with scale, materials, and thought which, combined with exceptional craftsmanship, become themselves works of art.



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