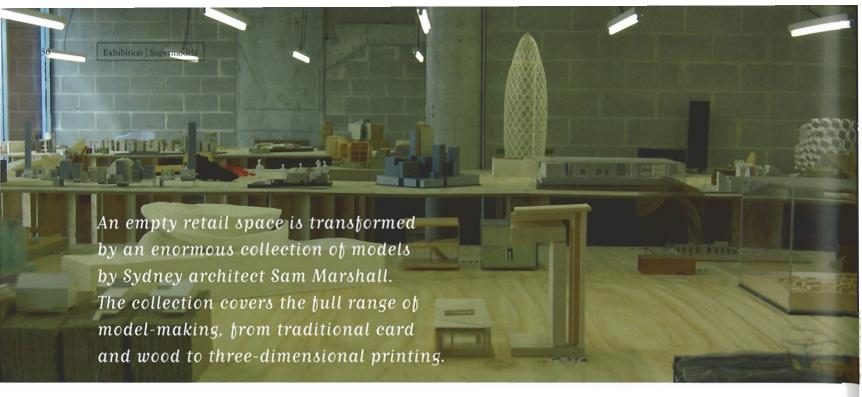




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modelmaking as thinking.

Words by Gerard Reinmuth Photography by Sam Marshall

Supermodels is the culmination of a long-term project, conceived by Marshall over a decade ago and formalised when he received a Byera Hadley scholarship. Marshall's interest in the idea of an exhibition was initially driven by his sense of curiosity and enthusiasm for the activity of model-making and for the numerous models he knew were decaying in colleagues' offices throughout Sydney. Marshall is one of the more generous-spirited members of the Sydney architectural community and his desire to exhibit models by former mentors, contemporaries, ex-employees and current students must be commended. In this generosity lies his motivation for the exhibition – not so much to articulate a comprehensive position or to stake out an agenda in regard to the use of architectural models, but simply to collect in one place a wide range of work that exposes the extent and variation within this activity.

While both the Sydney-centric nature of the exhibition and

Marshall's lack of a curatorial position have been questioned, neither concerns me. The Sydney focus is circumstantial and pragmatic, with Marshall mounting the exhibition with minimum funds, relying heavily on the generosity of friends and the resources of his own practice. While the lack of curatorial inrent could he considered more problematic, it allowed Marshall's generosity to shine through in a format that presented an enormous range of work of varying scales on an equal footing. Given the incredibly naïve position taken by some in the Sydney architectural community and press - watning against the evils of digital design and teptesentation tools - it was a delight to see Marshall provide space for examples of three-dimensional printing works along with work utilising more traditional modelling tools. By being presented with this wide range of work, visitors were left to make their own assessments regarding the potential of techniques new and old in different situations.

Thus, this was the sort of exhibition where personal revelations might appear as a result of spending time exploring its contents. In my case, one distinguishing aspect of the exhibition was that few of the models were manufactured by professional agencies — most were made by the architects in their offices in the course of the design process. Thus, the models were often tough, incomplete and made of modest materials — built as a critical component of the ideation process and coming into being in order to focus a conversation between a group of designers or to illuminate possibilities for the sole practitioner.

In On Longing, Susan Stewart explores the porential of miniatures to open windows into our subconscious in a way that other means of representation do not. A specific aspect of this work — of interest here in the context of this exhibition — is the use of the toy as a device for fantasy. She notes that the toy "opens an interior world, lending itself to fantasy and privacy in a way that the abstract space, the playground, of social play does not". She goes further to note that in miniaturising the real world in this way, the toy tests the relation between materiality and meaning.

It is this aspect of the exhibition – an exposition of the toys architects use to access an interior world, an architect's dreaming to unlock the design process – that is the most compelling. For opening this window to the community of Sydney architects and the public at large, Marshall should be congratulated.