

With Thomas Schütte (b. 1954, lives and works in Düsseldorf), Kunstmuseum Luzern is showing one of the most unusual and important artists of his generation. Apart from his internationally famous sculptural work, Thomas Schütte has been engaging with construction in public space for over thirty years. The exhibition Thomas Schütte. Houses is based on this work, of great interest in both artistic and social terms.

Using simple forms Thomas Schütte manages to awaken associations which question the utterly familiar with extremely concise gestures. In his intricate, minutely elaborated models in zinc or wood, the artist critically reappraises prevailing fashions in architecture. He works on archetypes of public buildings such as the museum or the idea of the temple, or develops refined dwellings for individual people. By clarifying form and through reduction to the essential he attempts to reach a sense of the archetypal, while at the same time making his works look like contemporary interior design. But there is more behind it: by placing his models on plinths and thus elevating them to the status of monuments, or making them accessible to the public in the exhibition space on a scale of 1:1, he shifts perception. The model aspect helps to visualise the working of the world and at the same time to achieve distance from it. Now we feel like Gulliver on his travels through an apparently perfect world, now the isolation of the human being in the monumentality of our buildings is brought home to us with a melancholy undertone.

Thomas Schütte's architectures are always metaphors for a vision of the world: the museum as crematorium, modernism as a ludic form of terrorism, the temple for individual people as a place of retreat and a prison in one. His models are a bitter commentary on our time, both artistically and politically controversial. After the artist had initially built his models from zinc ventilation parts, the idea of inhabitability also prompted him to elaborate them further. He produced a whole series of plywood 'One Man Houses' on a larger scale. Thanks to the commitment of collectors, over the past few years it actually became possible for some of these models to be built full size. And thus the step from model to construction site was taken. The exhibition, curated by Fanni Fetzner, thus engages with the scale of design and transposition, and always inquires into the human being for whom such buildings are conceived.

The exhibition Thomas Schütte, Houses was shown in summer 2012 in Nouveau Musée National de Monaco. Kunstmuseum Luzern is not a second exhibition stop in the classical sense of the term: in cooperation with the artist the dramaturgy and technical transposition of the exhibition has been adapted and expanded to the architectural conditions of Kunstmuseum Luzern.

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