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CONVERSATIONS Mousse 28

Reality Production: Thomas Schütte

by Hans Ulrich Obrist

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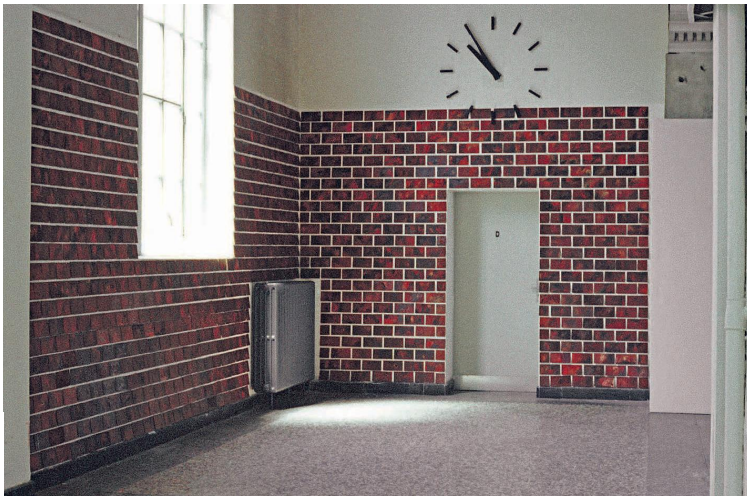

Thomas Schütte, *Große Mauer*, 1977.
Photo: Thomas Schütte

A musician with no ear for music, a movie director who hates dealing with the hundreds of people involved in a film production. No, Thomas Schütte could only have been—could only have wanted to be—an artist. There was no epiphany involved, but rather step-by-step journey, starting off with the awareness of his place in the world, and turning a corner with *Mauer* in 1975. A journey that the artist retraces, in the first part of an interview with Hans Ulrich Obrist, which reveals many things about his evolution and about the myriad cultural figures of our era who have crossed his path.

HANS ULRICH OBRIST: There are lots of ways to start an Interview. I would like to talk to you first about the beginnings of your work. I was wondering how you found your way to making art. Was there an epiphany, a moment of sudden inspiration?

THOMAS SCHÜTTE: No, it was a long search. I had actually wanted to make music, but then I realised that I wasn't musical at all. It takes a while to notice this sort of things as a teenager. Then I wanted to make films until I realised that it's a business. That didn't interest me. They only took people with professional qualifications. The film schools in Berlin and Munich sent me a letter saying: "You do know that film is a business in which you have to talk to 500 people about every last detail". Video didn't exist in those days or, at least, only in the art world. So it was quite a relief really. First of all filmmaking involves huge financing problems—even if you do everything yourself, it always costs a lot of money. And secondly, it's a social sport. You can't simply turn up and do your thing. Today things are different; you can create studio quality with just 1,000 euros worth of equipment. Anyway, all those ideas fell by the wayside and so I arrived at art.

HUO: I recently went to your exhibition in the Bundeskunsthalle in Bonn with Gerhard richter, who taught you at the Düsseldorfer Kunstakademie. He told me that he thought the breakthrough in your work came with the *Mauer* [Wall], 1977.

TS: Yes, the *Mauer*—where I bricked in the wall—was a breakthrough for me. In 1975 I spent the year doing civilian community service. I spent a year hanging around in an old people's home and there were lots of brickworks nearby. I photographed the bricks and then cut them up into little panels and painted them in richter style. The normal colour chart was too much hard work. The breakthrough was actually a shift in rhythm—an offset brick pattern—and this gave it a story. This made it something that Richter wouldn't or couldn't have done. There was suddenly a story in play, all very fragile, because each little colour panel was resting on just two nails.

HUO: Your work was also related to film early on.

TS: Yes, sets and stagings still interest me today. The piece Richter bought was from the big *Lager* [storage] ensemble. At the time I was cutting up everything around me into convenient-sized boards and painting them in different colours. I made fifty sets of three and hung one of them on the wall in the stairway of his house. It was actually supposed to be in exchange for one of his early abstract paintings, but he didn't want to give me the painting. As far as I know they're still hanging there.

HUO: They are. And it is one of very few works by other artists that Richter ever bought.

TS: The 1970s were really a great time, because there were eight or so professors who were relatively young and practising artists: Klaus Rinke, Gerhard Richter, Günther Uecker, Bernd and Hilla Becher and so on. Each of them had twenty to thirty students. So there was a cluster of a few hundred people who were all bouncing ideas off one another. The situation was different from today where twelve people get given a place, and the fifty or sixty professors are never around. You meet the fifty professors only twice a year. They only come to collect their money and then they leave again immediately.

HUO: It was a really dynamic field of energy in those days?

TS: Yes, there were 200 people just at foundation level. The art schools were twice as big in those days. They are half the size now and you get the impression that the academies are only there for the teaching staff.

HUO: So it was as part of this dynamic that you created your first works?

TS: Yes. The interesting thing is that this exchange was not prescribed from above, but people put out invitations every week—we were colleagues, not students.

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Thomas Schütte, *Lager*, 1978.
Photo: Joaquín Cortés/Román Lores

THE EXHIBITION IN THE LA VITRINE GALLERY IN PARIS

HUO: In your biography I read that as early as 1979 you had an exhibition in Paris, in the La Vitrine gallery.

TS: Paris was all about non-art. All the young people were making comics or films. But no one was making art because the old dinosaurs were all still around. People forget how dominant the Surrealists were. And the widows were in control of everything until quite recently.

HUO: The Surrealists and Informel artists, like Pierre Soulages.

TS: Yes, I saw Soulages in Berlin only recently, he's 92 now. He's still alive. So anyway, back then in Paris there was the bookshop gallery, La Vitrine, which was run by Daniel Buren's half-brother—Michel Claura—who was a critic. He and his wife ran a wonderful bookshop. It was a refuge for Conceptual and Minimal artists with a very International selection of books. It was opposite the Centre Pompidou, which was being still built then. I used to go there all the time and eventually I was able to talk them into letting me do something there. But I didn't hang any art on the walls. Instead I built a relay that I connected with the electricity circuit in the shop and it made all the lights go out briefly every 30 seconds. Most people didn't even notice, it went click, click, click. That was my work.

HUO: A very unknown early work then?

TS: No, it was published somewhere. The three or four Parisian artists were very involved in their own thing. I think I only saw Daniel Buren once, Niele Toroni only from a distance—but he's still always extremely nice to me today. The same goes for Sarkis and people like that. Even in those days Paris has been be overtaken by New York and Germany a long time ago.

HUO: So your exhibition activities started in Paris—that's interesting.

TS: I just kept annoying them until they let me do something. I was in Paris on a grant.

THE *WESTKUNST* EXHIBITION

HUO: The next chapter is the *Westkunst* exhibition in 1981. We talked about this in 2007 at the "interview Mini-Marathon" at documenta 12 in Kassel. At the time you said that originally your work was going to be shown as life-size exhibition architecture, but ended up staying at the model stage after all. There's a great chapter about this in the interview with Ulrich Loock as well. But what I would like to know about the models is how the idea came about. If you talk to scientists, someone like Benoît Mandelbrot will tell you that on a rainy thursday he saw the fractals on a half rubbed out blackboard. Scientific discoveries can often be pinned down to a particular day or event. And how did you start using models in your work? Because it became very important later on. Do you remember the moment?

TS: Yes, and I still remember the *Westkunst* exhibition very clearly. No one was interested in us; all eyes were on Julian Schnabel and the Italian painters. They were what all the fuss was about. And then I travelled back on the S-Bahn with a friend. We hadn't even given so much as a free beer by the gallerists or the exhibition directors. I had to share a booth with Jeff Wall. He had been fiddling with the power supply for weeks to get it to work for the american fittings on his light boxes. Of course he didn't want me to have light as well. So I was in the dark.

HUO: So the first exhibition of your models took place in the dark?

TS: Yes, there was one spotlight, which I had to pay for myself. It was Kaspar König's instructions that gave me the idea for these models. He's always shooting off so many ideas and he doesn't notice that he's actually issuing instructions.

HUO: He had the idea for the models?

TS: No, because they weren't initially meant to be models. he said: "Thomas, here is an exhibition hall, build something big." Of course he didn't think I would build my own architectural structures in the space. I designed three different things—*Schiff, Kiste and Bühne* [ship, crate, stage]. First in cardboard on a 1:100 scale and then as a proper model on a 1:5 scale. But then the whole concept collapsed because the money ran out. They reconstructed Claes Oldenburg's Store and Beuys' first exhibition at Schmela. And that was the death of my idea to make architecture there as both decoration and with a function of its own—that you could climb up and down onto or move around on like a stage. So then there were twenty booths each ten by ten metres. Planned by Oswald Mathias Ungers, but you were lucky if anything actually fitted through the doors. It made the exhibition feel like an art fair. Every artist was given a gallery—I didn't get Konrad Fischer though, I got Rüdiger Schöttle. And all of a sudden for curatorial reasons I didn't have to battle it out with Jeff Wall the whole time, it worked out very elegantly. And yet it was all a bit of a shock, first of all planning something that was 15 metres high, and then ending up building a model and showing it in the dark. I spent a year working on the project and then it ends up being completely destroyed. I hadn't been able to pay for a single hot meal with it, but it was important that I did it. Even when I was still at art school I would pester my friends into giving me a wall so that I could hang up rings or boards or write things on them. I have tried to make art in the context of life. You grow with the challenges you take on, and there are always more challenges. But I am most interested in building things. I'm really not all that interested in big exhibitions or winning prizes or all this auction madness. Even if I have to pay for it myself, I don't want to keep producing commodities any more; I want to build permanent things instead – things that remain.

CONSTRUCTED BUILDINGS (I): *EIS* [ICE CREAM] AND *FERIENHAUS FÜR TERRORISTEN* [HOLIDAY HOUSE FOR TERRORISTS]

HUO: It took quite some time before you were actually able to build anything. In 1987 at documenta 8 the *Eis* pavilion was built life-size.

TS: The great thing is that we are working on remaking the pavilion right now. The daughter of Mario Merz, Beatrice Merz, wants to have it built as a café in the Fondazione in Turin. And because everything I do comes from bricolage, we are now building a smaller duplicate version of the *Ice Cream Pavilion*and only now do I realise how filigree it actually is.

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Thomas Schütte, Rote Girlande, 1979.
Photo: Thomas Schütte

HUO: So the pavilion that was torn down at the end of documenta would reappear.

TS: It looks like it. I haven't actually heard how they want to do it exactly, but the plan is there.

HUO: You have designed so much architecture that has yet to be realized. The *Ice Cream Pavilion* was just one of the designs that you wanted to build back then, no?

TS: Not every model has to be built. There are thinking models, bricolage models, demonstration models and sculptural substitutes. Every now and then someone will contact me who wants to have one of these models built. Architects always live out of a drawer. Architects like Richard Meier have been building the same house for years. You notice it with paintings because they often look their age relatively quickly. It's great to let drawings sit, on the other hand, they always just get better. And with architecture, it's normal for a plan to take years before becoming a building. But all I do is make drawings, models and maybe a phone call once a month. Then I don't want anything more to do with it. I don't want the stress of having to worry about every last screw. Basically everything I do comes from bricolage. Mostly everything stays in this provisional zone—two metres long and 50 kg in weight. That said, at the end of the week I'm flying to the austrian Alps. Someone there is dead set on having the *Ferienhaus für Terroristen* built there, actually for living in.

HUO: In the form it was shown in Bonn?

TS: Not in wood, but in concrete with a steel roof and and a glass façade that covers the whole house, 22 metres long.

HUO: Can you say something about the *Ferienhaus für Terroristen*? With the model the idea is that a house like this could exist on a permanent basis. Why a holiday house for terrorists?

TS: The idea behind it was quite simple. In 2001 or 2002—sometime not long after the attack on the World Trade Center—I was in New York. I don't remember why I was there any more, probably an exhibition at Marian Goodman. I went to look at the site and it was really quite impressive.

HUO: I should add that you anticipated the attack on the World Trade Center with your work *Big Buildings* in New York 1989…

TS: That was another story. I just thought that the towers would collapse at some stage, right onto chinatown. I don't want to say I was right in retrospect, but it is spooky. No, going back to the Ferienhaus für Terroristen. I also went to look at the competition for the new World Trade Center. In the south wing of the American Express head office there were eight models on display by Daniel Libeskind, Richard Meier and so on. They had to design a 500-metre high skyscraper in six weeks. The World Trade Center complex consisted of seven not just two towers, of which only two protruded into the sky. The architects all turned to art forms which people were making in the early 1980s.

HUO: Similar to yours, then?

TS: Yes, and then they pepped things up with pathos—a date as height, all kinds of cultural centres at the top, hanging gardens and the rest of it. It was so shockingly fatuous that as soon as I got back here I drove straight to the nearest workshop in a farmyard in Wuppertal. There was an old dilapidated spiral staircase there in mahogany. On the day I arrived we cut five slits into it, put two blocks underneath, two trapezium-shaped panels which were not cut to shape in any way, screwed them all together and then finally built in some sheets of perspex. If the terrorists had a home they wouldn't do stupid stuff. Which is probably naïve. And so it went on like that. It's a bit embarrassing, but we kept making the model bigger and bigger. With a wet room, kitchen and fireplace. We worked on it for ages. Perhaps it will happen now. On thursday evening we are flying to look at the piece of land, and then I will know if the project makes sense there or not. I mean it will cost three times as much as a farmhouse.

HUO: If it does end up being built in the Alps, it will have something of a refuge as well as a bunker.

TS: Yes. And perhaps something of a James Bond villa, too. There are not nearly enough exhibitions about film sets, it should happen more.

INFLUENCES FROM CINEMA AND MUSIC

HUO: I am friends with Ken Adam, who used to design the sets for the James Bond films. He is actually a trained architect and he's almost ninety in the meantime. He designed the "War room" for Stanley Kubrick's *Doctor Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*. Ronald Reagan believed that this command centre really existed underneath the White House. When he became president, he was perplexed that he couldn't find the room. He thought it was an actual piece of architecture.

TS: Set designers are all architects and their work should be shown more often.

HUO: The Polish poet Czeslaw Milosz, who is nearly 100 years old, once said to me that in the 20th Century, every painter, sculptor, writer, scientist was influenced by film.

TS: The real influences came from excessive visits to the cinema—not from TV, though. TV is so universal and non-sensual that it's not inspiring.

HUO: I never had a TV.

TS: My parents bought one when I moved out at 18. I never watched TV as a teenager. The second thing that you should remember about our generation is music. It might have been called pop music but every tone was loaded and meant something.

HUO: It's interesting that you should mention music. Dan Graham said that you only understand an artist when you know what music they listen to. And you once told me that Neil Young's *Live in the USA* was important for you.

TS: I saw Neil Young in Cologne, two or three years ago when he already over sixty. It was terribly loud and the audience was also terrible. You don't normally see musicians in the light of day. But this time they were playing open air in the daytime. It was such a miserable sight, I had to go 200 metres away to avoid having to look at it. It is very simple. We were too old for the hippy thing because we'd already been listening to the Stones and the Beatles in school, and we were too young for the punks, but all the strange stuff in between was interesting. My favourite record was by Captain Beefheart who gave up making music quite quickly and later starting painting. And I like cryptic stuff. I was never particularly interested in the mainstream.

HUO: Cinema and music were two poles of influence for you.

TS: Yes. And even some hits when it came to music. Creedence Clearwater Revival, for example. They had such bad contracts that they had to stop for 20 years. I was never interested in the Beatles or the Stones. But all the Blues musicians—what they could do with limited means, I still love listening to them today.

HUO: Have you ever thought about making a film? Do you have film projects that have never been realized?

TS: No, I wouldn't make a good director. You have to be a particular type. And in art exhibitions I always turn away as soon as anything starts flickering.

HUO: The closest you came to film was the work *United Enemies—A Play in Ten Scenes*, which I saw a few weeks ago. It was almost a production, with lights and a stage.

TS: But it was just a puppet theatre. Last night I wanted to build a model where the *United Enemies* were five metres tall. I am much more interested in the puppet theatre. As soon as a video starts playing in a museum—unless it's by Bruce Nauman—I never watch it. They all want to make it into a pseudo-cinema. It's so restrictive. You can make real cinema by placing things so that people can move through the space properly—so that the exhibition visitors become actors themselves. I just think looking statically at a video screen is stupid and has no place in a museum. You go there to see something that doesn't exist elsewhere.

HUO: So what you are building are cinematographic scenes?

TS: Yes, stage sets. But shaking cameras and projections doesn't interest me in any way.

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Thomas Schütte, *Eis*, installation view, documenta 8, Kassel, 1987.
Photo: Thomas Ruff

PART II

REALIZED BUILDINGS (II): *ONE MAN HOUSES*

HUO: To come back to architecture again—another project which you realized in Bonn and which I had never seen before, was a viewing tower. We went up it with Gerhard and Sabine. The tower obviously served a function in the exhibition, to provide an overview. But it was also a work in itself. Can you tell me about it?

TS: The piece is called *One Man House* and it is also something I put together in the workshop. We found some aluminium ventilation shafts in a farmyard where there were all sorts of bits and bobs lying around. The shafts were made up of shoebox-sized cubes with a circular entrance and an angular exit. And we arranged these five boxes—there were exactly five of them—in every possible combination, then stuck a window on, and a door, and riveted a roof on top. There were five variations, but they all looked different depending on the cube. One day Marian Goodman was sitting here with the curator Allan Schwartzman—a tiny man from New York whom I'd never seen before and whom I've never seen since—and he said: "Why not in big?", I don't know where he'd seen it. I was just overjoyed that I didn't have to sell the model. "Why not in big?" Back and forth it went. And eventually he said he'd found a collector for it.

HUO: That was Bernardo Paz in Brazil.

TS: Yes. I said, I'll start work on it tomorrow, and that he should fax me about the size and the details. So the model was ready but three months went by and I still hadn't got a fax. So I rang Marian and she got the fax. Then I built five large models each one metre high and two metres wide. They were big enough to crawl inside. And they could be taken apart for sending. The idea was that in Brazil they should buy a kilometre-long steel girder, weld them together and they would have five houses up and standing within four weeks. But none of this happened at all. Later I met Bernardo Paz and I realised how naïve he was. He had only got into art through his wife and he doesn't have a clue. The New York gallerists ripped him off completely. Luckily I didn't go out to Belo Horizonte. I took it as a commission but had nothing in writing. The collector kept wanting to come with his engineer. He had travelled the world in the steel business and knew every city that had anything to do with steel. I had worked for over a year on these models which could be taken apart, I'd built the crates they stood on and all the furniture as well. It was all made out of hollow door leaves, because solid wood would crack in transport. The idea was to hire a carpenter for four weeks to build the furniture from the prototypes. The affordable bit was the dark wood, but nobody wants that in Brazil, they all want pale wood. Then there were the lamps and the ceramics on top. When everything was ready I did a show at Marian Goodman to introduce the project. No one was the least bit interested. They were all into trophies, glamour and glitter. I can still see the opening right now, how the people came round one afternoon from Christies or Sotheby's and just saw some cobbled together bits of wood, that wasn't even pale wood and had no glitter whatsoever. Any child would understand that you have to look inside first—but the americans didn't get it. Then Marian was treating the work like art and not like architecture, at impossibly high prices. She wanted to sell it as large-scale sculpture. And then the collector said, no, we don't want that and he cancelled the whole thing in an instant. Paul McCarthy was supposed to build a hotel and Mike Kelly, an airfield or something. Everyone was supposed to make something big. Only later did I hear that he was concentrated on Brazilian art. And he kept away from anything he didn't understand.

HUO: Which is why the project was never realized.

TS: Yes, and in such an embarrassing silence.

HUO: But the house was built in Bonn. So did he ever show up again?

TS: No. I gave it to a collector friend instead. He took three years to have one of the *One Man Houses* built life-size in France, where it's standing today as a private building. And we constructed another one here for Bonn. But in the end we ran out of money and time, which is why it remained a shell. The fence was a safety regulation. Now I am trying to find someone to put it in their garden for cost price, so it can be completed, the foundations, electricity, water etc…

HUO: So at the moment you are more interested in the sort of projects that go in an architectural direction, rather than exhibitions in museums and galleries.

TS: Years ago I said to Mick Flick: "My sculptures cost the same as real estate now, so why not just build apartments and houses?" Everyone is really interested up to the point when they realize that you have to take care of a building like this. If you don't like a work of art any more, you can put it in a van, drive it to Christies and get ten times what you paid for it. This sort of speculation doesn't work with buildings. But this is what I find

INFLUENCES ON ARCHITECTURE

HUO: This lamp is not even featured in the catalogues. I have never seen it. But to get back to architecture: in our interview in Kassel 2007, we talked at length about your connection with architecture. This close connection is what makes even your very early work with the models so interesting. At the time you also talked a lot about the influences of architecture on your models—about the influence of Erich Mendelsohn, or the revolutionary architect Étienne-Louis Boullée.

TS: Yes, and I am also very interested in the architecture of the pre-Bauhaus period with Peter Behrens and Bruno Taut—who built twenty to thirty-metre high pavilions for industrial and agricultural fairs, which were only standing for one summer. Or a multitalent like Schinkel, who did everything from painting to stage design. This was what inspired me—not the standard egocentric stuff.

HUO: With Taut, colour is also an important element. There is a phase in modernism—particularly with Le Corbusier—where everything was kept white. And then Taut brought in colour, just like you did. That might be another connection.

TS: Yes, and this year I also saw something that I had been putting off for 20 years: the Goetheanum in Dornach near Basel. Everyone has it on their agenda, but no one has ever been to see it. It's only half an hour's cycle ride from Basel art fair. The thing looks as fresh as if some crazy Japanese had built it. The anthroposophists are terrible artists who make totally cryptic sculptures, but this building on the mountain is sensational. No one talks about it. But is it so incredibly influential—probably as much as the German Expressionism of Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau or Fritz Lang was for film.

HUO: The Goethenaeum is closely related to Hermann Finsterlin and organic architecture.

TS: Yes, and I've just been reading Paul Scheerbart.

HUO: I love his writing. So much of it is about coloured architecture.

TS: Unfortunately they didn't get the colours in the Steiner building right. But the façades and the whole complex with the hill—at any rate, I like it a lot more than all the Le Corbusier nonsense, who wasn't even a proper architect. He always had this desire to make art, this insatiable need to produce sculpture—difficult to stomach. And the best bit of architecture I've seen this year, by the way, was at the architectural biennale in Venice. It was ten times better than the art biennale. A brilliant event. There were not many artists around, but all the architects were there. The second thing I've seen this year was the new building for the Swiss Federal Institute of technology in Lausanne, by the Japanese architects SANAA. It's a space ship. I had no idea the building was so huge.

LARGE SCULPTURES: *GROßE GEISTER* [BIG GHORSTS/SPIRITS] AND *MANN IM MATSCH* [MAN IN MUD]

HUO: Yes, the architecture is fantastic. I love that—landscape in the building. Another part of your oeuvre that touches on the field of architecture are the large sculptures. *Die Großen Geister* were the beginning. Is this a direction you are continuing with in your work at the moment, the large, almost monumental sculptures?

TS: There are two interesting moments in my life that relate to this. When I became a father 16 years ago, I said that I could no longer keep travelling round the world 150 days a year and that I'd try to look for work at home instead. Then I made the *Kleine Geister* [Small Ghosts/Spirits] and I was going to the foundry every day, which is twelve minutes from here. When you reach a certain age you can no longer justify hanging around in airports and hotels all the time. It just doesn't work because it destroys all your relationships. When you turn 40 you become a bit more grounded. Now at 50, I live here most of the time. At any rate, I decided, after this astounding success—which I can't believe in really, because it destroys you if you do believe in it, that I no longer wanted any more commodity trading, products and trophies. It doesn't interest me. If you have covered your costs after two or three months, then that will do for the whole year. I've had enough of travelling around and screwing things together in some place or another. I also don't want my stuff being driven about in furniture vans until it falls apart. I want to build things. I am only interested in permanent things.

HUO: Things that remain…

TS: Yes, they can build what they like around my work in Münster or Kassel. I really don't care. It's probably an age thing. I want to concentrate; I don't want any more fuss. There are probably only two Industries that are crisis resistant. One is sport, strangely enough, anything that's done with the body, and old-fashioned art and culture. All the other Industries are going down the tube. The church, the banks, the army—it's all coming apart in no time at all. But the old-fashioned things are amazingly stable.

HUO: Can you tell me some more about your new large sculpture *Mann Im Matsch*?

TS: It was a commission from the Landessparkasse bank in Oldenburg, where I was born. I never actually lived there, I just visited my grandma. When I got the mail with the address of the plot of land, I said to myself, I'm sure I know that place. So I drove out there and the building site was exactly 120 metres away from my grandma's house. I spent my summer holidays there for seven or eight years. It is a former track field for the trains, with a 200m long pedestrian bridge over it. As a child you could be standing in the steam of a steam train every five minutes. It was always swamp land, but there are techniques that mean you can build on it. And so they excavated the closed-off site and put a big bank there. The architect wanted me to make an artwork for it. So I just drew onto the plans and built the model. As coincidence would have it the chairman was really interested. I said to him: "Listen, I only have this one concept, *Mann Im Matsch*. I've always wanted to make it."

HUO: Yes, it was unrealized for a long time.

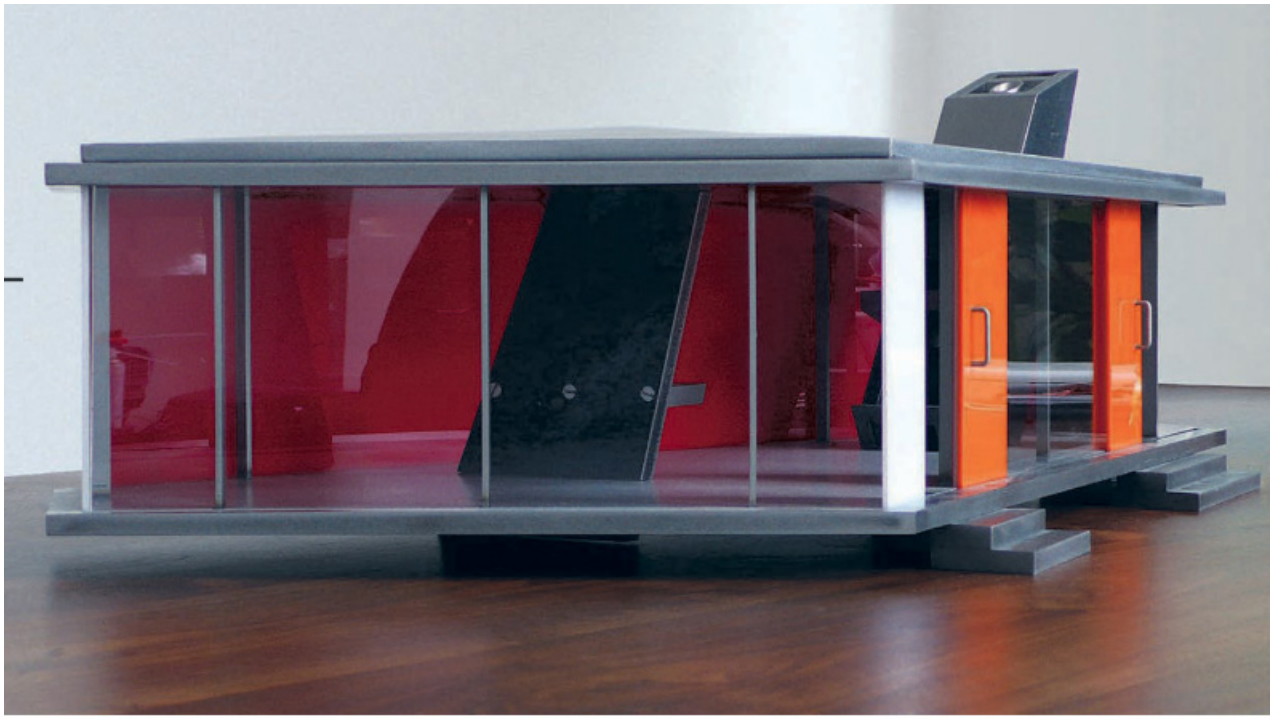
TS: I also made a book about it. I spent a total of 26 years working on the project. The Landessparkasse then spend a vast amount of money on financing the thing to be built 6 metres tall. I would ask the chairman at every meeting: "How are you going to sell this to your customers, *Mann Im Matsch*—in front of a bank?" not quite in front of the main entrance, but still. He just said: "No, it's fine, don't worry about it." Normally the owners of the building want to stick their noses into everything, until there's nothing left. But they gave me a completely free rein.

HUO: Amazing.

TS: Really amazing—a bank, which is actually building during the financial crisis. Hundreds of banks in America have vanished into thin air. The ones here have just kept going. They haven't only continued to build but they have also put I in the art, as it was planned—and all in bad times. The plaster original was shown in Bonn and Munich. The *Mann Im Matsch* started off as an expressionistic middle-aged man who kept getting younger and more static. At the last moment I put a diving rod in his hand. At was easy to produce because the workshop is so used to working with me that they were able to keep to the deadlines and the budget. Mainly because they also have someone there who can model a hand that size. I can't do it myself. I had to hand over 90 percent of the work, just because of the sheer size. I agreed in the contract that it would be a one-off.

HUO: And it's there now permanently, just like the building?

TS. Yes, I hope so.



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Thomas Schütte, *Ferienhaus für Terroristen I (Modell 1:20)*, 2007.
Photo: Luise Heuter

PROJECTS FOR THE FUTURE: DESIGING YOU OWN HOUSE AND *UNITED ENEMIES* FOR BERLIN

HUO: Wonderful. I have two last questions. One is, whether you have ever considered building your own house? Architects often to want to design a house for themselves.

TS: Yes, but few of them actually do it because of the difficulties involved. You always want to do a particularly good job of it, if it's for yourself, and that gets very expensive. Three or four years ago I bought a piece of land right here in the middle of the city, between two houses and I've already made a sketch. But I don't have the nerves for it right now.

HUO: Is it on show anywhere?

TS: No, it's a very modest project, a utilitarian building.

HUO: But you do have a project to make your own house.

TS: Every model has a particular scale—like this one here, where a person is the size where something like a shoebox would be a garage. All my models are essentially built on the same scale, 1:20. Because you always have a lighter in your pocket which is roughly the size of a person and you can put in the model to see if it all works.

HUO: What is the most recent work that you've made—yesterday for example?

TS: Yesterday I wanted to make the *United Enemies*, a definitive model for a permanent situation. I made the frames and I just wanted to make the four heads. And then I fell asleep and didn't get round to it. For 20 years I have successfully avoided putting up something permanent in Berlin. Everyone else has done It, mostly for the money. And mostly not that well. Even Walter de Maria and Hans Haacke are no exceptions—they have all immortalized themselves in Berlin.

HUO: And all the architects, from Peter Zumthor to Zaha Hadid.

TS: I have successfully avoided Berlin until now. But now I do want to bring the model to the foundry before Christmas for calculation. It will almost certainly be a year before I'm finished with it. You have to create a balance between the big things on one hand, which you need to accompany strategically and which are not physically taxing, and the small, lyrical, handmade things on the other. I am still waiting everyday for this and it doesn't work. I've never managed to do it and it's a bit of a shame. With a pen and a piece of paper for one euro you can keep yourself busy for an entire evening.

HUO: That's almost a perfect way to end. I do have one last question though: another thing you once said was: "it's about the story which is going around in my head at the moment."

TS: Yes, 90 percent of my interviews end with the words: I have to lie on the couch now.

HUO: (Laughs) I think that covers everything. Thank you very much, Thomas Schütte, thank you!