

## The Representation | Presentation of Architecture in an Exhibition: The Portuguese Example

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### Abstract

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This article intends to approach the expositive phenomenon in the field of Architecture in Portugal, from a chronologically extended perspective, from its most consistent beginnings to contemporaneity. This approach allows a continuous image of the phenomenon, making possible the identification of patterns and the evolution of the options, the locations, the frequency and the themes recorded in their realization, and thus understand the evolution of the types of representations used, situate and understand the characteristics of the use of the various elements of representation | presentation, and in particular of the models in the Architecture exhibitions held in Portugal.

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**Keywords:** Architecture, Architecture Exhibitions, Architecture Image, Architecture History; Portuguese Architecture.

### 1. Introduction

This paper titled *The Representation | Presentation of Architecture in an Exhibition: The Portuguese Example*, is born in our interest for themes that can bring to the discussion forms and formats of communication and presentation of the architectural project. Within this universe, the model gained prominence.

Used in the direct communication to the construction in the oldest times in which the drawing was not a very usual discipline, or as an instrument of privileged representation in the process of development and presentation of the architectural project, the use of its use follows the evolution of Architecture throughout the centuries. On the other hand, the proliferation in the last decades of exhibitions related to Architecture - where the model appears as a systematic resource - and the mediatization of some of these events, led us to the theme presented here. Understanding the evolution of the exhibition phenomenon in the field of Architecture has proved fundamental to understand the particularities of the use of the model in an exhibition environment. A broad view in the chronological sense of the exhibition phenomenon allow us the identification of patterns and the evolution of the options, the locations, the frequency and the themes registered in the realization of the Architecture exhibitions. Maintaining the focus on the types of representation elements used for the presentation of the works was the way we could situate and understand the particularities of the use of the model in Architecture exhibitions, final objective of the article.

The absence in Portugal of any work of a wide scope, in chronological sense, on the subject of Architecture exhibitions, if on the one hand it confirmed the pertinence of the investigation, on the other hand it led to a methodology that went through the survey and treatment of the registered occurrences. In order to carry out this inventory of occurrences, the main option was to contact the exhibition catalogs of Architecture as a primary source of information, relegating to a complementary role news in newspapers and magazines or comments and references in other types of publications. The text goes through the exhibition context of Architecture in Portugal, systematizing evolutions and pathways, trying to perceive, identify and characterize the most current phenomena, in particular in the aspect of the use of the potential of the model as object of exposure. The few references to international occurrences appear only as a form of framing. The limits chosen to divide the chapters presented, although addressing specific periods of time, were marked by reference to particular events that mark the evolution of the expository phenomenon.

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In this sense, the structure of the article develops according to a chronological sequence of the types of occurrences and the identification of the factors that are evident and characterize each considered period, periods delimited and comprised between four moments that we considered important for the characterization of the phenomenon of expositions of Architecture in Portugal: the *First Triennial Exhibition of the Academy of Fine Arts in Lisbon* (1840)<sup>2</sup>, the first of which is registered, the exhibition *15 Years of Public Works in Portugal 1932 - 1947* (1948)<sup>3</sup>, for the relevance it assumes in the consolidation of the expository phenomenon, but essentially because of the symbolic importance of the political propaganda activities of the regime, which was carried out (presenting the results of the public works program and in which Architecture assumed a prominent role), the exhibition *After of Modernism* (1983)<sup>4</sup>, for its importance in opening the debate on the issue postmodernism in Architecture and Art and the realization of the *Third Lisbon Architecture Triennale* (2013)<sup>5</sup>, a time chosen for the final limit of the last period considered in this work.

## 2. From the *First Triennial Exhibition of the Academy of Fine Arts in Lisbon* to the exhibition *15 Years of Public Works in Portugal*

The exhibition phenomenon in the field of Architecture has its beginning linked to teaching, by participating in the exhibitions that brought together various artistic disciplines (Painting, Sculpture, Drawing, Architecture, etc.) of the Academies of Fine Arts in Lisbon and Porto, and from 1913 in the National Society of Fine Arts. We can say that it is in these years that the set of principles that guide future achievements are defined or tried out: collective and individual exhibitions, thematic or monographic; exhibitions in conviviality with other disciplines, and / or taking advantage of their occurrence to carry out a series of events parallel to the exhibition itself; catalogs that are only lists of works presented, and others that include theoretical texts and comments on the theme of the exhibition, as well as the gradual definition of the presentation pieces of an Architecture work, from the sketch, to the set of drawn pieces made up of plants, cuts, elevations, perspectives, models and photographs.



Fig. 1 - Rozendo Carvalheira. "Sanatorio Sant'Anna". *National Society of Fine Arts; second exhibition. 1902*

Plants, sections, elevations and perspectives are the recurring instruments of representation. The photograph begins by appearing through reproductions of these registers (the first occurrence being recorded in the *Fifth Triennial Exhibition of the Academy of Fine Arts* in Lisbon in 1882, with the presentation of photographs of the *Triumph Arch Project of Rua Augusta and the Monument to Camões*) and it was only in the 1940s, when construction works were started and not only projects, their use became regular and took center stage, particularly in the exhibitions *Modern German Architecture* (1941)<sup>6</sup> and *15 Years of Public Works in Portugal* (1948).

<sup>2</sup> In the original (Free translation): *Primeira Exposição Trienal da Academia de Belas-Artes de Lisboa.*

<sup>3</sup> In the original (Free translation): *15 Anos de Obras Pública em Portugal 1932 - 1947.*

<sup>4</sup> In the original (Free translation): *Depois do Modernismo.*

<sup>5</sup> In the original (Free translation): *Terceira Trienal de Arquitetura de Lisboa.*

<sup>6</sup> In the original (Free translation): *Moderna Architectura Alemã*



Fig. 2 - Communications Section. Exhibition *15 Years of Public Works in Portugal. 1932 – 1947*. 1948

Similarly of the photograph, the model appears at the beginning associated with proposals for the construction of monuments, with the first reference in the *Model for a Monument Commemorative of the Peninsular War*, in 1909<sup>7</sup>, at the *Seventh Annual Exhibition of the National Society of Fine Arts in Lisbon*<sup>8</sup>. The development and consolidation of its use took place with the individual exhibitions of architects, namely in the *Architectural Exhibition of Luiz Cristino da Silva* in 1924, but particularly in the exhibition *Carlos Ramos* in 1932, as well as in a very particular way in the exhibition *Modern German Architecture* (1941), where it even acquires the almost exclusivity of the protagonism. It is also in this exhibition *Modern German Architecture* that, through the use of photography, we get references to the experiences of real-scale modeling that Speer held in Berlin.

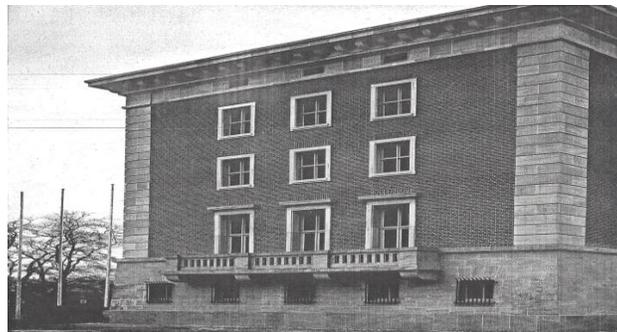


Fig. 3 - Photograph of the life-size partial model of the new barracks of the "Great Germany" regiment in Berlin (Architect Hans Herman Klaje, assisted by Erich Finke). Exhibition *Modern German Architecture*, 1941

### 3. From the exhibition *15 Years of Public Works in Portugal* to the exhibition *After the Modernism*<sup>9</sup>

The second period considered in this article is marked by the appearance of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in 1956. The Foundation passes from the first moment to dominate the cultural environment in Lisbon, and we can say that in Portugal, in what concerns of Fine Arts and Architecture. In the field of exhibitions it proposes, within its schedule, the regular realization of events related to the Architecture, guided particularly by monographic and retrospective expositions of important names of the national and world Architecture, such as *Raul Lino*, *Walter Gropius*, *Alvar Aalto* or *Leslie Martin*. It is at the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in 1980 that the *Alberto Sartoris* exhibition introduces the possibility of autonomization of the exposed object from the project represented. Using the drawing, but in particular the axonometric perspective as a form of representation | presentation of the projects, the exhibition, if on the one hand constitutes an affirmation of the importance of drawing as an instrument of representation, design and development of work, proposes, in the particular case of axonometries presented, its reading as a graphic element of almost abstract character, validated by its value plastic.

<sup>7</sup>In the original (Free translation): *Maquete Para um Monumento Commemorativo da Guerra Peninsular*

<sup>8</sup>In the original (Free translation): *Sétima Exposição Anual da Sociedade Nacional de Belas-Artes de Lisboa*

<sup>9</sup>In the original (Free translation): *exposição Depois do Modernismo*

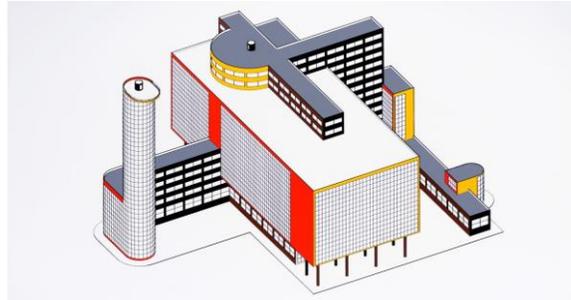


Fig. 4 - *Alberto Sartoris*. Axonometry. Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation. 1980

The *National Society of Fine Arts* loses its protagonism, but it manages to guarantee to its rooms some of the most significant moments, as was the case of the exhibitions *After the Modernism, Eleven Architects of Porto. Recent Images*<sup>10</sup>, the exhibition of *Finnish Architecture* or the monographic exhibition *Francisco Conceição Silva, Architect. 1922-1982*.

The exhibition *After the Modernism*, important for its scope and objectives - to open the debate on the question of postmodernism in Architecture and Art, a debate that highlighted the differences in positioning between the north (Porto) and the south (Lisbon) and extended in time giving rise to numerous publications -, was, in this sense, a moment of synthesis very close to the exhibition *15 Years of Public Works. 1932-1947*.



Fig. 5 - Exhibition *After the Modernism*. *National Society of Fine Arts*. 1983

The dissemination of the National Architecture abroad is changing with respect to the previous period. What had previously occurred exclusively in the context of international exhibitions, aimed at commerce and industrial production, now happens through more targeted initiatives, with collective and individual exhibitions, often itinerant, exclusively dedicated to the Portuguese Architecture. Outside the circuit of the two main rooms, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and National Society of Fine Arts, Manuel Vicente and Nuno Teotónio Pereira, deserve special mention. For different reasons and in different decades - the first in the eighties and the second in the fifties - for the relevance of their actions, read expositions, were clothed in the architectural discourse of the moment, but particularly by the fact that in their exhibitions innovations have been introduced with meaning in the panorama of the time.

In 1957, Nuno Teotónio Pereira deserves special mention of the construction of a full-scale model of a low-cost collective housing solution proposed for the slope of Ajuda, in the exhibition *Housing Cooperativism in the World*<sup>11</sup>. Set in the context of the debate on housing problems that the first half of the twentieth century provided, the exhibition brought the strategy of building the scale model on several occasions used in initiatives on the subject, namely in the exhibition *American Can't Have Housing* (1934) at MOMA, in which a full-scale model of an old apartment in New York with a proposal designed by Philip Johnson was proposed, or the proposal, made of composite plastics, of *House of the Future* that Alison and Peter Smithson designed and built in 1956 for the *Daily Ideal Home* exhibition in London.

<sup>10</sup>In the original (Free translation): *Onze Arquitectos do Porto. Imagens Recentes*.

<sup>11</sup>In the original (Free translation): *O Cooperativismo Habitacional na Mundo*.



Fig. 6 - Photograph of the inauguration of the exhibition *Housing Cooperativism in the World*, next to the full-scale model. *National Society of Fine Arts*, 1957.

Manuel Vicente, in 1979, in the exhibition entitled *The Exercise of the City (Architecture in Macau 1976/79)*<sup>12</sup>, approaches in an unconventional way a new mode of showing Architecture: the developing architecture, the process of thought and execution, showing drawings, sketches and models of projects in different phases of development, anticipating the interest and the prominence that the subject would have in the course of the decades of ninety-two thousand. In the same sense also the exhibition *Eleven Architects of Porto. Recent Images*- exhibition that translated the reaction of the northern architects to the exhibition *After the Modernism*, when gathering a set of works not constructed and presented by the drawing, and particularly by the working drawing - emphasizes the use of the drawing as an experimental tool in the development of the Architecture project

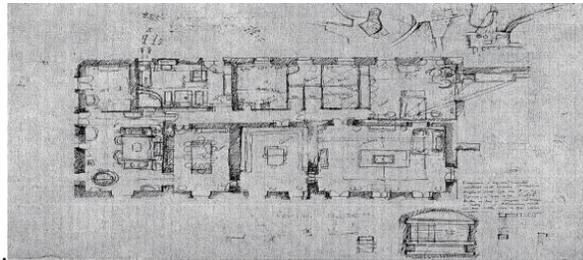


Fig. 7 - Design Sheet from Fernando Távora. Exhibition: *Eleven Architects of Porto. Recent Images*. *National Society of Fine Arts*. 1983

The presentation panel, or the organized assembly of the elements to be presented in rigid support, sees their use vulgarized from the fifties, allowing on the one hand some ease in the assembly and transportation of the elements, on the other hand involve the Design in the design and in the presentation models of the Architecture exhibitions. Care in the presentation of information extends to the creation of more elaborate environments in the presentation of the elements, a phenomenon visible in the exhibition of *Finnish Architecture* of 1960.



Fig. 8 –Exhibition *Finnish Architecture*. *National Society of Fine Arts*, 1960

<sup>12</sup>In the original (Free translation): *O Exercício da Cidade (Arquitetura em Macau 1976/79)*

It is now possible to underline some coincidences in the use of identical exposure models for identical exposure targets separated by many years. This is the case of the *Modern German Architecture* exhibitions in 1941, *15 Years of Public Works in Portugal*, 1948 and *The Great Architectural Projects in Paris, 1979-1989*<sup>13</sup>, in 1985, or the *First Hall of Independents, 1930*<sup>14</sup> and the exhibition *After the Modernism*, in 1983. In the first case, these are exhibitions that bring us affirmations and praises of large programs of works carried out or being carried out, being made possible through the presentation of large scale models full of detail, and drawings and photographs accompanying the same magnificence.

In the second case, the similarities between the *First Hall of Independents, 1930* and the exhibition *After the Modernism*, in 1983, are made by the intention of bringing to the discussion, or divulging, new forms of positioning in the artistic medium. Modernism in the case of the *First Hall of Independents* and postmodernism in the exhibition *After the Modernism*. The strategy was to widen the scope of events to other areas of artistic production, namely the Visual Arts, Ballet, Theaters, Operas and Recitals in the case of the *First Hall of Independents*, and Music, Theater and Fashion in the exhibition *After of Modernism*.

#### 4. From the exhibition *After the Modernism* to the *Third Lisbon Architecture Triennale 2013*.

The last decades, considered from the nineties to the present, more concretely at the end of 2013, show an exponential increase of the expository phenomenon, which is related to the mediatization of Architecture in the media, and allows the identification of differentiated thematic trends, with objectives and motivations also differentiated, and at the same time ensure the decentralization of occurrences. Decentralization - first marked by the *National Architecture Exhibitions*<sup>15</sup>, in particular by the first one, in 1986 - which does not prevent that Lisbon, the only city in the country that has three galleries exclusively dedicated to Architecture (CCB - South Garage, joined by Note Gallery and the gallery of the Order of Architects), continue to register the largest and most diversified number of events and in this aspect of the Architecture exhibitions to remain as the most important city of the country, importance that only in 2017 found a counterpoint in Porto with the opening of the new facilities of the House of Architecture.

The implementation of thematic cycles, a theme that the Order of Architects shows commitment, the dissemination of the results of competitions or construction programs (with emphasis on the exhibition *Souto Moura Contests 1979-2010, 2011*<sup>16</sup>); the increasing connection to education (with emphasis on the exhibitions *Africa, Vision of the Office of Colonial Urbanization (1947 - 1975)* or *ARX Archives*), the realization of new exhibitions of a monographic nature with the very active intervention of the authors and the systematic presence of national representations in events international - read Biennial and Triennial of Architecture -, will serve as a pretext for a significant evolution in the typologies of elements adopted for the presentation of Architecture projects in an exhibition environment.

The need for justification of the work of Architecture, which was joined by the possibility of reaching new audiences, made the importance of working methodologies and their tools emerge in the exhibition context. If during the eighties it is common to show hand sketches or any other piece of work to illustrate a project, in isolation or in opposition to a graphic or photographic piece, the theme of the methodology or work system, the presentation of the project development processes acquires relevance and interest, culminating in the *ARX Archive* exhibition, 2013, in which the studio presented the process of conception and thought of its proposals by the presentation of all the models of study carried out in its development.



Fig. 9 - Detail of Models presentation. *ARX Archive* exhibition. CCB, 2013.

<sup>13</sup>In the original (Free translation): *Os Grandes Projectos Arquitectónicos em Paris, 1979-1989*.

<sup>14</sup>In the original (Free translation): *I Salão dos Independentes*.

<sup>15</sup>In the original (Free translation): *Exposições Nacionais de Arquitectura*.

<sup>16</sup>In the original (Free translation): *Souto Moura Concursos 1979-2010*.

The use of audiovisual media had some expression in the process of evolution of the types of representation | (for instance, the exhibition *Tradition is Innovation - Exhibition of Contemporary Architecture of Portugal* in 2012, which exclusively used the video projection format of interviews with the selected authors), but it is by the use of the model that the largest differences are found. Early on, if we recall for example the 1932 *Modern Architects* exhibition at MOMA, the model was considered particularly in the exhibition context, both by the constant references to the responsibility of its execution and by the growing care in its execution. Its use in exclusivity in some instances, and the protagonism that in this way assumes, leads, similar to what we noticed for the axonometries of *Alberto Sartoris*, to its autonomization from the project represented and its reading as a piece with its own plastic value.

The first important moment in the process of autonomy of the model appears in the exhibition *Álvaro Siza: Works and Projects*<sup>17</sup>, in 1995, with the presentation of the set of models constructed in wood, appearing isolated as main elements, referring to an ancillary position drawings, sketches and photographs.



Fig. 10 – Exhibition *Álvaro Siza: Works and Projects*. CCB, Lisbon, 1995

The same protagonism occurs in the official Portuguese representation of the *19th Milan Architecture Triennale*, in which the models appear mounted on large supports, framed by large photographs of the site, drawings or synthesis panels of the project in question.



Fig. 11 – Exhibition *Porto Poetic*. 2013.

The presentation of models on a equality plan with pieces of design and furniture (in the exhibition *Portogallo 1990/2004*, in 2004 or in the exhibition *Porto Poetic* in 2013), his exhibition alone (*Michael Biberstein and Miguel Vieira Baptista with Appleton Domingos Arquitectos | Santa Isabel*, 2010), or the particular care in the design of its presentation medium, in *Five Áfricas / Five Schools*<sup>18</sup> in 2009 and *No Place Like. 4 Houses, 4 Films*, in 2010, and particularly in 2010 with the design of the exhibition modules that João Mendes Ribeiro proposes for the exhibition *Let's talk about Houses in Cascais*<sup>19</sup>, in the *Second Lisbon Triennial of Architecture*, constitute steps in the consolidation of the use of the model as a preferential and even exclusive element of presentation, assuming the total protagonism in the exhibition environment.

<sup>17</sup>In the original (Free translation): *Álvaro Siza – Obras e Projectos*.

<sup>18</sup>In the original (Free translation): *Cinco Áfricas / Cinco Escolas*.

<sup>19</sup>In the original (Free translation): *Falemos de Casas in Cascais*.



Fig. 12 - Exhibition modules *Let's talk about Houses in Cascais, 2010*

The free expression architecture drawing now appears more systematically, while drawings and models gain interest as artifacts of history, but the most significant of all the changes and experiments carried out in the medium of exhibition in this last period of time is being related to a new attitude of the architects when presenting themselves on display. The Architecture exhibitions take on another dimension, becoming opportunities for affirmation of individuality or presentation of the conceptual universe of the architect, in addition to the Architecture projects that may be represented. In this context, each author, architect, naturally creates his mark, his way of presenting his work in an exhibition environment, a way of assuming a position, a critical position in the architectural landscape, and it is possible to identify individual thought patterns and characteristics. More than presenting projects, the moment is to present thought processes, ideas, modes of action and conceptual principles. Architecture is shown beyond the built. Or before the built if we want to be more precise. This new position naturally accompanies the process of autonomization of the model to which we refer and it is through its use that the most significant experiences are realized.

If in the exhibitions of the *ARX Portugal*, it is the conceptual and operative process that, through the model, it is important to present, in *Aires Mateus*, which stand out *Aires Mateus: Architecture* and *Aires Mateus - VOIDS*, respectively in 2005 and 2010, the protagonism goes to the formal conceptual principles that in an abstract and synthetic way are presented by means of white models installed in a black environment



Fig. 13 - Exhibition *Aires Mateus – VOIDS*, 12<sup>a</sup> Bienal Internacional de Arquitectura de Venezuela, 2010

Likewise for the experiences of the *12th International Architecture Exhibition - La Biennale di Venezia*, held in 2010, in which, through the use of the model in a different way, one can perceive the desire and need for plastic expression that the architects present, in particular in the *Blueprint exhibits* of the Doh ho Suh and Suh Architects (in which a blue fabric structure, a three-dimensional representation at the 1: 1 scale of the New York architects' home facade, is installed to float in space like a cloud; in this way appears projected in the floor of the room) and *Detached* of the Pezo von Elrichhausen Architects (Chilean participation that presents small concrete models of buildings shown in front of photographic reproductions of its context).

Of conceptual intention is still the gesture of Zaha Hadid, naturally distant from the constructed work, when it suspends the models of its works in the *13th International Biennial of Architecture of Venice*.



Fig. 14 –Models from projects of Zaha Hadid. 13ª Bienal Internacional de Arquitectura de Venezuela, 2012.

In another context, being a parallel and developing process within the atelier, arising from the interrogation and thinking about what could happen if each project were closed in a *Duchamp Box*, Mansilla + Tuñón's *Playgrounds* translate the capacity for synthetic and critical reflection on his own work. This process of model autonomization, particularly linked to the presentation and expression of ideas, thoughts and themes of reflection that led the thinking in the elaboration of the projects, fits the exhibition *Sou Fugimoto. Futuropective Architecture*, in 2013, where the model becomes transformed, abandoning the representation of a specific proposal of Architecture, to be able to constitute as an object of conceptual reflection, an object that generates other realities.

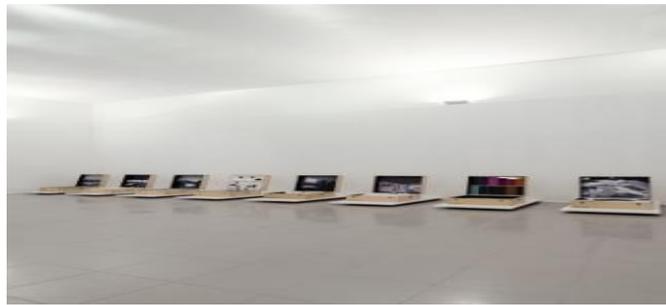


Fig. 15 - Exhibition Mansilla + Tuñón, *Playgrounds 10 Buildings Built*. College of Arts of the University of Coimbra. 2013



Fig. 16 –Model *Diversity, Complexity, Tokyo, Forest, Ecosystem, Chance ... Is it possible to architecturalize this matter between nature and artificiality?* Sou Fugimoto. *Futuropective Architecture* exhibition, CCB, 2013.

## 5. Final Note

One last reference for a particular exhibition, *Peter Zumthor. Buildings and Projects 1986 - 2007*<sup>20</sup>(LXFactory, Lisbon, 2008). More than anticipating, touched on all the themes that marked these last decades in the exhibition landscape. The personal and particular way of positioning itself in the exhibition universe, the use and appreciation of the model (large or not) that autonomizes the project and exposes itself in a free way, the experience with the audiovisual media and finally the valuation of the process of work, still revealing a way of thinking. For these reasons if we wanted to elect an event that somehow summarized what has been happening in the last decades in the exhibition landscape, in the context of Architecture, this would undoubtedly be the aforementioned exhibition of Peter Zumthor.

<sup>20</sup>In the original (Free translation): *Peter Zumthor. Edifícios e Projectos 1986 – 2007*.



Fig. 17 - Exhibition Peter Zumthor. *Buildings and Projects 1986 - 2007*. LxFactory, 2008.

Interest in the form of representation | presentation of architecture, and in particular the possibilities of the model, will always be an open field of research for the conceptual, critical and material possibilities it offers.

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