

MIGUEL ABREU GALLERY

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Exhibition: *Memories of Utopia: Jean-Luc Godard's "Collages de France" Models*

Organized by Miguel Abreu and Aurélien Poitrimoult

Dates: January 14 – March 11, 2018

Reception: Sunday, January 14, 6 – 8PM

This exhibition is dedicated to the memory of Dan Talbot.

Miguel Abreu Gallery is pleased to announce the opening on Sunday, January 14th, of *Memories of Utopia: Jean-Luc Godard's "Collages de France" Models*. The exhibition will be held at both our 88 Eldridge and 36 Orchard Street locations.

As Nathan Lee wrote in his 2006 *New York Times* review, “the Georges Pompidou Center [Paris] began a retrospective devoted to a man synonymous with cinema itself: Jean-Luc Godard.” Now 87, the consummate filmmaker has been transforming motion pictures for over 60 years. From his 1955 documentary, *Opération Béton*, to his latest still unfinished work, *Le Livre d'Image*, Godard has tirelessly experimented with images, sounds, and language, and is regarded as one of the greatest visual intelligences at work and one of the most significant artists of our times.

“For the Godard cult,” Lee continued, “the Pompidou Center exhibition is epochal; the mother ship of mise-en-scène has landed.” The full film retrospective, however, was “only foreplay to the main seduction. *Travel(s) in Utopia, Jean-Luc Godard 1946 – 2006, In Search of a Lost Theorem*, is the unwieldy title of an unruly installation that sprawls throughout the large south gallery of the museum. Designed and executed by Godard, the show opened amid much controversy.” Indeed, rumor had it before the opening “that relations between the artist and the museum had soured, and that the project would not be realized. The nature of what, if anything, would take its place remained an enigma until the moment of its unveiling.”

The intended exhibition was “to have been called *Collage(s) de France*,” Lee pointed out, “and to have functioned as a kind of elaborate, three-dimensional montage of Godard’s methods and motifs. The visitor would proceed through a series of thematic rooms. ‘Myth’ would give way to ‘Humanity’ and ‘The Camera,’ pass through ‘The Unconscious’ and end with ‘Murder’ and ‘The Tomb.’ Giant reproductions of paintings (by Delacroix, Goya, Nicolas de Staël) would adorn the walls alongside printed quotations and blown-up movie stills. Films and videos would flicker on televisions, screens and even a video iPod. Sculptural and environmental objects would allude to Freud, the Middle East and cinematic technologies. *Collage(s) de France* was to have carried the subtitle ‘Archaeology of the Cinema,’ an apt phrase given that all that remains of this fabled creature are its bones. Detailed scale models of the original conception are scattered throughout *Travel(s) [in Utopia]*, an exhibition about an exhibition — and thus quintessential Godard.”

The eighteen maquettes produced by Godard between 2003 and 2005 for *Collages de France*, are exhibited here for the first time since their initial, defiant inclusion – stacked in a corner – in the Pompidou Center show. Meticulously designed dollhouse-like rooms buzzing with electric motors and small lights, “they are the depository,” Lee concluded, “the sketch, the graveyard of Godard’s original conception, the score of a symphony forever unperformed.”

In *Godard, le dos au musée – histoire d'une exposition*, Anne Marquez’s monumental study on the evolution of the exhibition, she argues that “the maquette remains the most important element to have survived Godard’s great museographical experiment. [...] It is to *Collages de France* a little as Tatlin’s *Tower* is to his *Monument to the 3rd International*, designed to be realized in iron and glass, but existing only in the form of a wooden maquette: miniaturizations of a political or artistic utopia of which they remain the emblem. The ultimate fate

of these 'works of the spirit,' however, was contrary to the properly artistic dimension that should be their defining characteristic."

At 36 Orchard Street, along with the presentation of documents, drawings and diagrams pertaining to the development of the models, publications on Godard and his work as well as DVDs of a selection of his films, *Souvenir d'Utopie*, a short video by Anne-Marie Miéville is on view and constitutes the leitmotiv of an evolving compilation of Godard film excerpts from all periods of his output.

In *Souvenir d'Utopie* the maquettes are filmed with tight, static shots, without commentary, punctuated with cuts to black. The montage is abrupt and rapid, and features only fixed images. The film records a realized miniaturized proposition and unfolds in a time and space that is now gone, at once a regretful look back at *Collages de France* (memory) and a reference to what became the exhibition (utopia). "The video as a whole," Marquez notes, "is an almost abstract visit to a *Collages de France* without scale, a fictional walk through an exhibition that one could almost believe had actually taken place."

For more information or for visuals, please contact the gallery:

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Subway: F to East Broadway; B, D to Grand Street; J, M, Z to Delancey / Essex Street