

Oystein Aasan proposes an ironic take on the utopian ideals of the Modern Movement, and the contradictions inherent in examples of social and urban planning. In a series of posters he made in 2002, he presented the fruits of a number of research trips that he made to architectural sites in Stockholm, Paris and Berlin, to investigate the ways in which socio-political ideals had been expressed in the built environment. He describes a visit to the post-war housing project of Onkel Toms Hütte, in Berlin, as 'a tremendous experience', but hastens to apologise, laconically, for the 'docu-style-shitty photos' that he came away with, in lieu of the 'really great ones' he felt he should have been able to produce. And a trip to see the evidence for 'good, affordable housing for everyone', on a housing estate on the outskirts of Stockholm, merely resulted in a bunch of snapshots of some rather uninspiring-looking buildings.

From here, Aasan has gone on to create a series of 'Houses made from Memory' (2003), in the form of computer sketches and C-Prints of 'real', three-dimensional cardboard models, which he refers to as 'sculptures', or reconstructions of building types from all over Europe. What was striking about this was the open-endedness of the process, which eventually came to gel in a recent studio piece, 'Old Babylon' - a 'preliminary model for a model' - whose title refers to the fragmentary quality of language, the utopian designs of the Situationist, Constant Nieuwenhuis, and the unrealisable nature of the utopian dream.

For BoundLess, Aasan has chosen to present a 'Museum Without Walls', which could serve as a point of departure for the exhibition, as a whole, but which also functions as a visual pun and linguistic frame of reference. This gives three-dimensional, physical form to the idea, proposed by André Malraux, of a virtual museum of images which would supplant the need for the traditional museum and the unique object, with its mystical aura. The work comprises a lightweight cardboard wall with wooden supports, whose title, in stencilled letters, is visible from either side and proffers a series of contradictory signifiers, relating both to the notion of 'borders' and to the sites of cultural production.

Specifically for the Stenersen Museum, Aasan has resituated a typical abstract composition from the 1930s by the modernist Norwegian painter, Bjarne Engebrecht, within the context of some contemporary art. Here has hung it alongside both an inkjet reproduction of the painting, in the same size, and a matching inkjet print of a similar composition, made up of collaged images of 1930s buildings in Norway by the Bauhaus-trained architect, Thilo Schoder.

*Henry M. Hugues
For Boundless Catalogue*