School: Bath School of Art

Researcher: John Wood

Project Title: A film about a city

UOA: D32 Art and Design - History, Practice and Theory

300-Word Statement

First presented in 2015, the work consists of a number of architecture models placed on tables, each recreating a partial narrative of an imaginary city, part autobiographical, part fictional, that reflected idiosyncrasies of city life and public space.

The boundaries between art and architecture often crisscross and it is not unusual that artists' reflections on the city parallel architectural research. Wood and Harrison created a critical project on the city that in many ways echoes our anxieties as citizens; morbid symptoms, which early on where identified by Jacques Tati's satires of a mass-mechanized megalopolis mesmerized by the prospect of a society redeemed by techno-science and where its citizens have become numb and irresponsive.

By way of irony, Wood and Harrison's a film about the city takes us again into Tati's journey of critical resistance in which universal civilization has always to be counterbalanced by local culture at every level, political as well as architectural, not in terms of some blanket rejection of advanced technology but rather as a recognition of the constant need to mediate and qualify technique through the distancing of culture.

Building type-forms, which the artists developed as non-descriptive paradigms of a received architectural landscape, are populated by small plastic humans and memories that stretch from romanticized situations of the quotidian, to a world suspended between Monsieur Hulot and Laurel and Hardy: Two men about to fall from a ledge; which one will do it? A developer's dream: a building that only has the penthouse. A multi-storey car park where vehicles are parked according to colour. A crowd assembles to enter the single door of some overcrowded discotheque. People orderly queuing up around the perimeter of a theatre to buy tickets.

Harrison and Wood's work is collaborative and all roles within it are equally shared.