



Exhibition «Soul Houses (5500 BC - 300 AD). The Architecture Models of Antiquity»  
16/01/1997 - 15/06/1997

## Origin and Model

Is the house a perfect form? Are there substantial differences between the most primitive houses and the present-day house? Or are these mere accidental differences in materials, building techniques and comfort? Viewing the first maquettes of houses designed by man brings us back to that classical reflection on the form of a house, but, above all, it awakens the inexhaustible passion for origins.

The origin of the house, just like the origin of the work of art, fascinates us because it is the origin of ourselves. Our surprise at the maquettes of antiquity is very similar to the surprise felt by Maurice Blanchot in the Lascaux caves: they are the most ancient thing yet, at the same time, they seem to belong to today. The world in which they were designed has little to do with ours and, yet, we find in them something familiar which, mistakenly or not, makes us think that we can understand them, that we share minimum common codes of language in order to follow the inexhaustible chain of interpretation—everything is the interpretation of interpretations, as Nietzsche told us—which is our cultural experience.

And in the chain of interpretation nothing has the magic of origins. The maquette, the model. The model of what? The maquette has a certain formal quintessence, which mediates between the world of ideas and the world of reality. The maquette is the artist's toy. By playing with it, the creator feels the pleasure of the gods: he orders his world according to his criterion and whim, as if there were no obstacles in the way. The maquette is the element through which ideas take shape, already subjected to the trials of modelling, of materialisation, but before tackling the wear and tear which comes through usage and the conflicts which man is caught up in every time he does specific things.

However, at the same time, the maquettes of antiquity are also intermediaries in the opposite sense: elements from the earth—made of earth—which accompanied the spirit of the deceased to their destiny. A destiny which had not always been subject to the fantasies which man has subsequently continued to build. For this reason, the house of the spirit was as important as the house of man: the truly eternal room.

And, above all, the idea of a model. Creating models, looking for models, defining models, has been one of man's creative passions. However, the models of the house have a curious peculiarity: they are unique models. At least, until mass reproducibility (modern nightmares, not dreams) sought to create, on a large scale, identical houses for everyone, at times when the transitory mental derangement of believing we were all equal was being experienced.

The model of a house is the model of a unique object just as each man is unique. The model of the house comprises the infinite variations of a form which has something of the perfect form, namely, matchless in the essential yet unrepeatably in the accidental. The original models of the house evoke the founding moment of something called the human species: that moment reserved for art and creation, the distinctive features of a being capable of giving meaning to the meaningless.

By bringing together for the first time an exhibition of maquettes from antiquity, the CCCB invites you to reflect on the origins of the house, in other words, the origins of the city, culture and meaning.