



Press Release

Philippe De Gobert

LH 1383, 2019, digital print, 2/3, 79 x 119 cm
Courtesy Galerie Aline Vidal
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PHILIPPE DE GOBERT

FROM THE MARVELLOUS
IN ARCHITECTURE
TO THE PHOTOGRAPHIC
TALE

MuMa

André Malraux Museum of Modern Art, Le Havre

29 May-7 November 2021

**This exhibition is part of the events programme
«A Summer In Le Havre»**

PHILIPPE DE GOBERT

FROM THE MARVELLOUS IN ARCHITECTURE TO THE PHOTOGRAPHIC TALE

Since central Le Havre became a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2005, MuMa has invited around 30 photographic and video artists, some French and some foreign, to spark reflections and help change the way we view the reconstructed city of Le Havre.

In the same vein, this year, the museum has invited Philippe De Gobert (1946, Brussels) - an artist who is fascinated with modern architecture - to put together a major monographic exhibition that immerses us in his distinctive poetic world. The exhibition itinerary combines De Gobert's own photographs and scale models with archive documents that shed light on his references and inspirations. De Gobert sketches another face of Le Havre - a kind of disturbing double of the iconic city that has come to epitomize the Reconstruction - and invents an alternative narrative of its rebirth.

Philippe De Gobert discovered Le Havre in the spring of 2018. He started off by spending a long time walking around the city and simultaneously amassing documentary evidence about the work of reconstruction carried out by the team of architects led by Auguste Perret. Back in his studio in Brussels, according to his usual *modus operandi*, he set about making scale models of buildings based on those to be seen in Le Havre. De Gobert says he makes scale models of buildings «to understand how they work». Yet in the Le Havre series, the model is not an end in itself, but a stage in the process of creating the artwork, which is the photograph. The artist photographs his models, sometimes from inside, then, in a reversal of the process of miniaturization of the world, he prints the photographs in large formats to recreate the models on a scale appropriate to the landscape, incorporating fragments borrowed from reality - some genuine, some fake.

This corpus, composed essentially of views of interiors or seafront landscapes, conjures up an imaginary version of Le Havre, captured in the silence and purity of its birth, and empty - although here and there unobtrusive signs of a human presence can be made out.

«My photographs are not an attempt to imitate reality, but a poetic evocation of Le Havre, or at least my lasting impression of it, mingled with my imaginary world.»



Jean-Marie Châtelier

Philippe De Gobert in his studio in Brussels, 2021
© Jean-Marie Châtelier

Exhibition Commissioner
Annette Haudiquet, Senior Heritage Curator
and Director of MuMa



De Gobert's project gradually expanded. As a coda to the first series of photographs of a reconstructed city, he added an introductory narrative. Imagining the main phases of the reconstruction of Le Havre without feeling bound by the constraints of truth, introducing anachronistic details whenever he felt like it, he reinvented a possible history in the form of a «photographic tale». No longer in black and white, these new photographs, bathed as they are in twilight, are tinged with colour. As if resurfacing from an already distant past, these images dig deep into our memories and conjure up others - memories of a city razed to the ground, from which construction workers' huts, makeshift streetlights, then lifting apparatus and the first buildings emerged, little by little. We cannot do without this reminder of history, De Gobert seems to say. These images are necessary because they imply the vast challenge to be met, thereby emphasizing the epic aspect of the task of reconstruction. The exhibition's presentation of this new Le Havre series highlights its narrative aspect while retaining chronological verisimilitude.

But De Gobert developed his concept still further. In a long introduction that seems like a digression, he reveals himself in what he calls «an implicit self-portrait through his enthusiasms». In a progression that combines scale models, plates of documents and photographs, De Gobert reveals his «highly personal slant on architecture, from the viewpoint of the marvellous and Utopia» offering «a choice of milestones in the history of [modern] architecture», sketching sections of his imaginary museum, where iconic modern buildings rub shoulders with wild (but brilliant) Heath Robinson fantasies unabandonedly and with a touch of humour. Here, De Gobert affirms his «playful, poetic approach to architecture, with its faux-pas and blunders, earnestly concocted by an artist, without the rigour of an academic or an art historian».

«The marvellous in architecture» becomes this long introduction, which, in embracing the totally subjective milestones in a history of architecture as told by Philippe De Gobert, identifies Perret's Le Havre belonging to this imaginary museum. But for the first time, the breadth and profusion of the subject has led the artist to develop what he has to say in the form of a narrative, the «photographic tale» as a possible history of the rebirth of Le Havre. By opening up his imaginary world and placing Le Havre in this personal, poetic pantheon, De Gobert reenchants the way we see Le Havre.

Philippe De Gobert

LH 550, 2019, digital print 1/3, 104 x 138 cm
 Courtesy Galerie Aline Vidal © Philippe De Gobert
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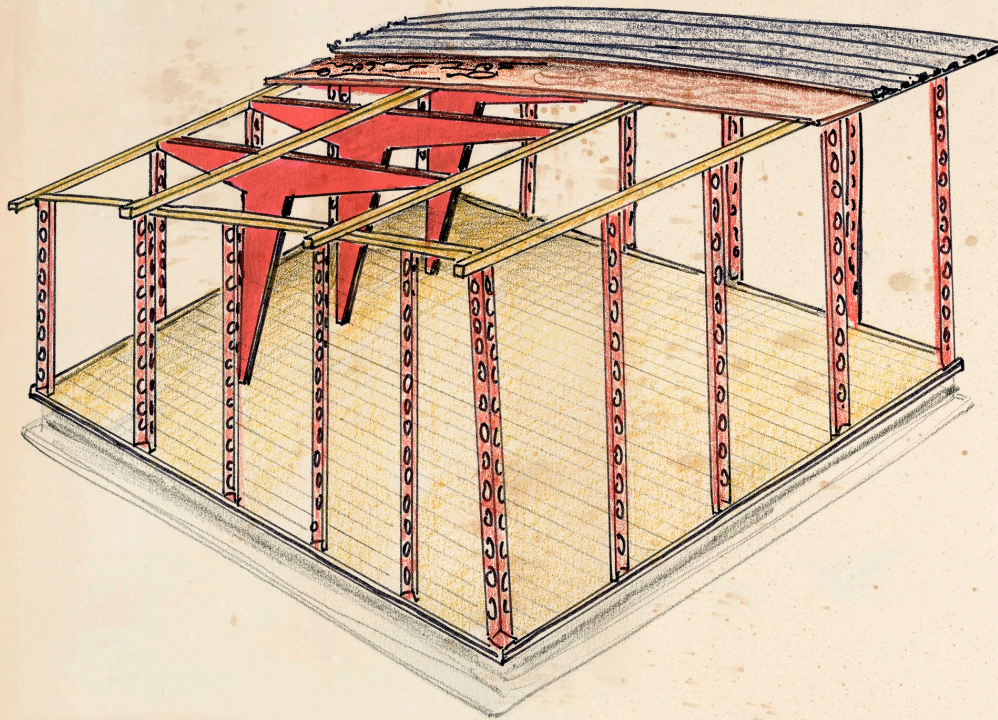
Philippe De Gobert

LH 2034, 2020, digital print 1/3, 148 x 104 cm

Courtesy Galerie Aline Vidal

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◇ Ateliers Jean Prouvé ◇



Architecte - Ingénieur Jean Prouvé 1901-1984

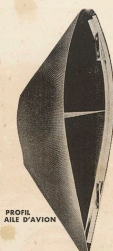
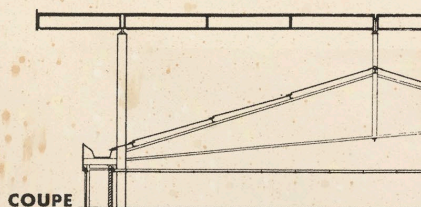
Nancy - France

École provisoire de Villejuif - Paris, 1957

En 1947, Jean Prouvé crée la Fabrique Maxéville à Nancy, qui produira des maisons, des écoles préfabriquées et des meubles en tôle pliée jusqu'en 1953. Au Havre, il conçoit le « Paralume » au-dessus du toit du musée pour y diffuser la lumière.



Pierre Joly sur le toit du musée en 1961
© Véra Cardot, Centre Pompidou bibliothèque Kandinsky



"Le Paralume"

Musée d'art moderne André Malraux du Havre, 1961

Philippe De Gobert

Ateliers Jean Prouvé, 2019, information plate, print on vinyl,
121 x 91 cm Courtesy Galerie Aline Vidal
© Philippe De Gobert /ADAGP, Paris, 2021



Jean-Marie Châtelier

Philippe De Gobert in his studio in Brussels, 2021
© Jean-Marie Châtelier

Philippe De Gobert

1946, Brussels

Lives and works in Brussels

<https://philippedegobert.be/>

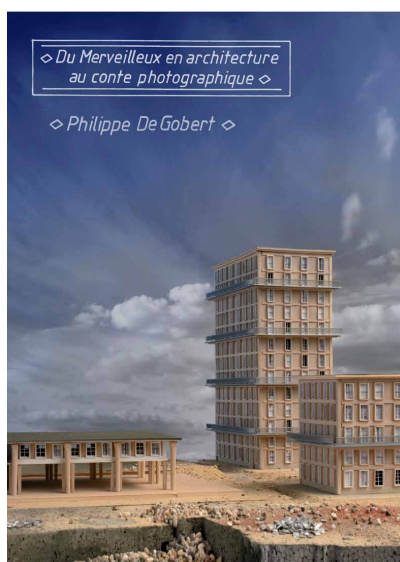
«I was genetically programmed to be a painter. Very early on, I chose photography - the profession least removed from my preoccupations - as a means of survival. Kurt Schwitters' oeuvre prompted me to give up painting gouaches and start making assemblages of various materials and objects. While I was discovering the third dimension, I was a sculptor for a time, then I starting making scale models of my preferred world, «artists' rooms». Those scale models became the «models», in the pictorial sense, for my photographs and since then, I have made them specifically for that purpose. «

Philippe De Gobert is represented by the Galerie Aline Vidal in Paris.

Exhibition catalogue

The exhibition is accompanied by a 168-page bilingual catalogue in French and English, with illustrations of all the works in the exhibition and texts by art historians and critics (Joseph Abram, Septembre Tiberghien and Damien Sausset). Bilingual publication of the catalogue has been made possible by funding from the Fondation Antoine de Galbert.

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VISITOR INFORMATION

PRESS ENQUIRIES

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Philippe De Gobert

From the marvellous in architecture to the photographic tale

Exhibition dates: 29 May to 7 November 2021

Opening days and times

Tuesdays to Fridays, 11.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m.

Saturdays and Sundays, 11.00 a.m. to 7.00 p.m.

Closed on Mondays - The MuMa will be exceptionally open on 14 July,
thanks to the sponsorship of Matmut pour les arts.

Tickets €7/€4

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COMPULSORY**
in the museum
for all visitors
over the age of 11



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hand sanitizer
when you enter
and leave the
building



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via muma-lehavre.fr

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takes place at the
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