

THE WEST ARCHITECTS' NEWSPAPER

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COURTESY FLETCHER STUDIO

Fletcher Studio's "Terrabengala" models were made largely out of wooden stirring sticks from Starbucks.

the model maker and the architect are revealed.)

In making a chipboard model of a Blue Bottle kiosk, Jeffrey Yip at Jensen Architects started with the square footage of the proposed kiosk and explored every conceivable iteration in chipboard. The winning concept: a simple box with a diagonal roof, which is a solar panel. Look for the full-scale, built version soon outside San Francisco City Hall.

Though the curator is interested in the convergence of craft and design, a number of works border more on fine art. Gensler's hand-crafted white-on-white facade study for a convention center in China is like a work on paper. The full-scale, laser-cut paper prototype of Matsuy's C Wall, an exploration of honeycomb and Voronoi geometries, could easily stand on its own as sculpture. An undulating shape from Faulders Studio, created by the CNC large-scale laser cutting process, truly is a piece of art furniture, though it is one component in a much larger free-form seating environment at the Berkeley Art Museum/Pacific Film Archive.

Since many models represent works-in-progress, the show offers

a sneak-peek at what's under way. Haas Architecture's upcoming collaboration with Alonzo King's LINES Ballet of San Francisco reveals the model for a chain-like, flexible wall that will react to the bodies of dancers. The model is foam because it was easy-to-work with and light, but large rectangular pieces of cardboard were ultimately chosen to make the set.

Most of the avant-garde projects on show do indeed make use of the digital process. Yet one shouldn't discount the low-tech. Fletcher Studio set an intern loose on a conceptual model for a stackable unit of homeless housing, allowing only materials salvaged from Starbucks. The resulting model, with protruding facades, is ingeniously crafted from wooden stirring sticks, paper coffee-cup jackets and display plastic. Innovation can be born of the most cutting-edge gadgets but also stubborn resourcefulness.

The show certainly accomplishes what the curator had hoped: piquing the viewer's interest about what will happen next with these projects. Models are a powerful tool to help architects explain and sell their work. Revealing the final outcome would ultimately demonstrate how successful these beautiful models really are at capturing the moment between concept and reality.

JOANNE FURIO WRITES OFTEN FOR AIA.

SUPER MODELS

Crafting Architecture
Concept, Sketch, Model
Museum of Craft and Design, 201
Third Street, San Francisco
Through May 29

If you think of model making from simple materials is the old-school approach to architecture, take a to the new exhibition *Crafting Architecture: Concept, Sketch, Model* at the Museum of Craft and Design.

The show, which includes both handmade and digitally fabricated works, is less about the pull between the two methods (though some contrasts are revealed) and more about

the creative process. Since this is an institution dedicated to the intersection of craft and contemporary design, the exhibition explores how architecture is aided by craft and how models communicate and represent design strategies and intent.

"Making models helps architects connect to the tactility and materiality of a project. And the use of scale also helps in the development of design," said Mariah Nielson, the museum's curator, who also conceived of the exhibition. As part of her exploration, Nielson discovered that hand-craftsmanship is not about to go the way of the T-square. In fact, she thinks manual projects may be more embraced by architects because they are seen as an antidote to the increasingly digitized workplace.

To create the show, Nielson visited dozens of Bay Area companies, ending up with 24 works by architectural and landscape architecture firms,

two students, and one model maker. The models are roughly divided between the manually crafted—often using traditional materials like chipboard, basswood, and cardboard—and those that were digitally fabricated utilizing CNC (computer numerical control) and 3D modeling machines.

Architectural and site models are skillfully executed. Yet the most intriguing models, as the curator intended, reveal the thought process of the designer and, sometimes, how they arrived at a chosen design after a process of elimination.

Megan Werner of model making company xDP models, who is also trained as an architect, created uniform, palm-sized blocks of various materials after discovering that her architect clients were distracted by the design of architectural mock-ups in her office. She basically took the design out, so as not to distract clients. (In this case, the thinking of