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View of “Kendall Buster: Dis-assembling Utopias,” 2016.

CAPE TOWN

Kendall Buster

COMMUNE.1

64 Wale Street

June 22–July 16, 2016

In her 2008 book-length essay *Architecture of the Off-Modern*, Svetlana Boym remarks on the “paradoxical ruinophilia” that underlies artistic

projects using the “remainders of history.” This is a useful point of entry into American sculptor Kendall Buster’s “Dis-assembling Utopias,” her first solo exhibition at the gallery. Examining architectural idealism, her show is dominated by a large model of cardboard and paper, *Model City (Constraint)*, 2014–, which inventories—and parodies—architectural characteristics, particularly those associated with International Style modernism. Installed in the main gallery, the all-white sculpture includes structures mimicking airport observation towers, radially shaped public spaces, and walled-in enclosures without exits. Square and octagonal columns with rectangular windows hold this sprawling, pristine, and unpopulated cityscape aloft.

This piece evolved from an earlier work of discrete but interconnected architectural forms, titled *Miniature Monumental*, 2013, shown at the Lamar Dodd School of Art in Athens, Georgia. Viewed from the mezzanine gallery, where a complementary series of fifteen digital collages, “Fragments and Mutations,” 2015–16, is installed, *Model City*’s formal proportions come into sharper focus, including a number of hexagonal shapes that collectively resemble honeycomb. The architectural model’s asymmetric form also brings to mind Frank Stella’s mixed-media reliefs. Meanwhile, the collages, which are shown in three groups, compile photographs of urban structures such as tower blocks, cathedrals, and a landscaped park, all culled from issues of *National Geographic* published between 1970 and 1980. The tentacular forms of the individual collages, which include the odd human presence, extend into their clustered display.

—Sean O’Toole

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