



RUINS  
OF  
MODERNITY

JULIA HELL AND ANDREAS SCHÖNLE, EDITORS

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## RUINS AS MODELS

*Displaying Destruction in Postwar Germany*

“Amerika kennt keine Ruinen”—America has no ruins—according to an essay written in 1935 by the art historian Horst Janson.<sup>1</sup> No other statement could better capture the power of ruins to occasion definition, reflection, and affective engagement. In the essay, “Amerika,” ruins function as an emblematic divider. They are said to divorce the old world, with its penchant for aesthetic appreciation of the past, from the new and ruinless world of modern, industrialized North America. This text powerfully illustrates the central place accorded to ruins in a centuries-old discourse—a discourse that ultimately is not about the material remains themselves but about self-assurance and alienation.

As is well known, ruinous material remains have been made to serve many master discourses. The fact that ruins are versatile matter, discursively speaking, is one of their most enduring features. Between Petrarch and Rose Macaulay, Augustus Hare and W. G. Sebald, writers have mobilized ruins in a variety of contradictory ways. Ruins are said to articulate lessons on ancient morality, ruminations on artistic creativity, and political allegories.<sup>2</sup> Since the Renaissance, ruins have also connected that which is incommensurate: art and nature, past and present, history and sensual experience.<sup>3</sup> In “Amerika,” however, ruins provide an analytical prism. The theme brings to the fore a plethora of scattered observations on such diverse topics as the use of particular building materials, patterns of land use, capitalism, historical consciousness, and, of course, culture. To make a case for America as a culture *sui generis* is one of the text’s key points.

The essay was not intended for publication. It is an essay in the

original sense of the word: an attempt, an experiment, an exercise in thought. Its authors documented a conversation, one of many during their friendship. Yet the tone of debate has been replaced by beautifully incisive, rigorous, and concise prose. As academic "wanderers between the worlds," the art historians Horst Janson (1913–1982) and William Heckscher (1904–1999) were familiar with both worlds, the old and the new.<sup>4</sup> Somehow this essay, with all its impressive erudition and its assertive style, echoes the authors' own liminality, their tenuous status as messengers between the continents—continents they were mapping with stunning ease. Forced into exile from Nazi Germany, they had just started a new life abroad, making English their primary linguistic vehicle. Yet for the purpose of this conversation on ruins they returned to the common language they had largely abandoned, at least academically: German.

Skillfully, Janson worked to cordon off ruins as a recognizable cultural form. The evocative absence of contemporary ruins in "Amerika" thus reminds us of, among other things, the difference between rubble, the unformed mass of debris, and the ruins that are a well-framed window into the past.<sup>5</sup> Rubble is material without significance; it is matter destined to be removed. By contrast, the term "ruins" evokes traditions, visual codes, and a wealth of significations.

Not surprisingly, discourses on ruins were and are contested terrain. Vergara's *American Ruins* provides an excellent example. The author, a Chile-born photographer and writer, seems to proclaim emphatically that America has ruins. Daringly, Vergara weds his exploration of post-industrial urban decay in America's inner cities to a European aesthetic of ruin. When he suggested turning downtown Detroit into a "skyscraper ruins park," his proposal sparked an outcry.<sup>6</sup> For much of its history, the dominant gaze on ruins directed itself primarily to traces of the distant past, a past whose inhabitants had vanished long ago. To bring this overdetermined, complex code to bear on a present moment continues to challenge social, visual, and discursive conventions. The fact that the term "ruins" has kept its power to divide points to the workings of the word. Its various semantic layers vacillate between process and stasis—that is, between ruination and the remains of decay and destruction; between material base and its metaphoric overlay of various moralities. It speaks of materials, people, behavior, institutions. It conjures up abject as well as ennobling states. Such meanings are permeable; their membranes are thin, and at times seem to collapse. Thus viewed, the term "ruins" transports the flotsam of its own history. Layers of usage over time have sedimented into its current configuration.

In this essay, I propose to excavate the semiotics of a particular, nonverbal discourse on ruins. I am investigating scale models representing urban ruins. The dust of oblivion has covered these intriguing objects. Created since the end of the Second World War, three-dimensional renderings of bombed-out cities

provide eerie glimpses of the destruction and devastation caused by the war. Yet the existence of such models—I know of twelve—in German city halls and local history museums has gone largely unnoticed. As visual discourse, they promise to provide immediate access to events and experiences that seem to defy representation, translating large-scale destruction into an object.

In light of the recent fascination with the air raids on German cities,<sup>7</sup> the neglect of scale models of urban ruins is surprising. It is my contention that these artifacts offer themselves to viewers as a way of coming to terms with loss (*Verlustbewältigung*):<sup>8</sup> the terrible loss of lives, the human suffering, and the urban devastation wrought by the raids. These so-called rubble models<sup>9</sup> create a visual echo and thus a memory of the bombings. As objects—many of the models have little verbal explanation to accompany them—these maquettes allow for a variety of gazes and forms of engagement. The pleasure of viewing is central to the experience. The models thus function as a complex repository of reflections and emotions, sites where one can invoke memories of a lost past, the experience of destruction, and a future that never came to be.<sup>10</sup> Viewed thus, rubble represented in scale can, by virtue of cultural resonances and the conditions of presentation as well as representation, metamorphose into ruins.

Here I am interested in the models themselves, their properties as a group of objects, their relationship with other forms of representation, and the codes that govern their public presentation. An analysis of how ruined urban spaces have been modeled and displayed will work against the ever alluring repression thesis. Sebald has argued that the bombing of German cities amounted to a taboo subject in postwar German literature: in light of German atrocities, including the Holocaust, the traumatic sufferings of civilians during the air raids could not be expressed publicly.<sup>11</sup> This focus on supposed radical turning points recommends itself as a recovery of what has been lost for too long.<sup>12</sup> Instead, I seek to refocus the debate on the complexities of the intertwined realms of memory, history, and representation as they have unfolded between 1945 and the present.

### From Rubble to Ruins

The fixity of the models stands in marked contrast to the meaning of the Latin word *ruina*: a collapse, or rather a collapsing—that is, a process. Using a three-dimensional model to depict actual destruction with shifting piles of rubble, unstable facades in danger of collapse, and the omnipresence of dust and ash, not to mention stench and vermin, is a material paradox. Years of labor go into making a permanent image of something that was itself impermanent. This paradox is nothing if not arresting.

Models of urban destruction freeze a moment in time into an object ready

for visual consumption and investigation. It is hard for the viewer familiar with German history not to fall into meditation, at least for a few moments. With their precise details, the models can lay claim to documentary status. They do not seem to require further elucidation. After all, models are "the least abstract of all representational types." Unlike maps, they can be appreciated "from many different angles." They are even said to be "accessible at first glance to the untrained eye."<sup>13</sup> Thus, three-dimensional renderings in miniature have rarely been subjected to rigorous critical reflection. Yet such models ought to be approached as complex simulations of an abstract, multiperspectival reality.

Models executed to scale make urban space experiential in a particular fashion. Unlike actual cities, models are devoid of human life. Models show the city as *urbs*, or built environment, rather than as *civitas*, or urban community, to quote an ancient distinction that Kagan has taken up.<sup>14</sup> Space as expressed in urban models typically drowns out the multitude of social relations encoded in actual cityscapes: the ownership of buildings or lots, for instance, or the areas defined by specific human activities such as markets or by the professional topography of the urban environment. The particular abstraction at play in city models thus veils the social makeup of urban spaces, turning them into a realm of pure representation. The social meanings of models are therefore articulated through a geometrical conception of space. Devoid of human interaction and social signification, the city model presents itself as an instrument.

Three-dimensional urban portraits are "conceptualized space, the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers," to quote Henri Lefebvre.<sup>15</sup> Put differently, scale models invite us to imagine the lived urban environment—an imagining that extends beyond the present into an unseen and unbuilt future. Through the lens of models, future forms of habitation become imaginable. Full-scale models thus interpellate the viewer in a particular way, namely as maker, architect, or ruler.

It is only fitting, then, that city models accord the viewer a position of privilege. Importantly, he—I am intentionally using the male pronoun—is able to position himself as he pleases in relation to the represented space. He may stand high above the model, surveying it as a whole; he may gaze at or zoom in on particular areas or details; he may lower his eyes to the model's horizon in order to view the urban skyline from various directions; he may move about or stand still. As motionless objects, scale models allow a variety of gazes: a quick glance here and there, a systematic scanning, a measured view. The viewer's is a privileged gaze in that it not only entails unrestrained visual control over space but also a dynamic relationship to space—a flexibility possible only under the conditions of an "as if." While architectural spaces often position the subject, especially the preeminent subject, in particular ways (a process splendidly illumi-

nated by Starn),<sup>16</sup> represented space of this kind allows the viewer's gaze and, as a consequence, imagination to roam freely. The model does away with the various impediments, technical or social, that limit access to actual, inhabited spaces.

#### 1945 and 1960

Reconstruction had barely begun in Frankfurt when a model of the city's downtown destruction was made, though it is unclear who commissioned the model and whether it was shown to the public at the time.<sup>17</sup> The Römerberg district appears almost completely leveled. Only the walls of large historical buildings—the Kaiserdom, the Paulskirche, and the city hall (the Römer)—stick out of the rubble; Haus Wertheim is a notable exception to the destruction.<sup>18</sup> In the model, the debris is rendered in a kind of high realism. The streets are covered with rubble; passage seems impossible. The model's coloring reflects one of the city's primary building materials, red sandstone, but it also evokes the afterglow of a fire like the one that ravished the city after the attacks.

In all its emotive qualities, this model shows a haunting vision of Frankfurt in ruins rather than the grim reality of destruction—a feature acknowledged in the model's latest presentation in Frankfurt's Historisches Museum (history museum).<sup>19</sup> Its mode is visual hyperbole which, at least in the immediate postwar context, bolstered the argument for radical reconstruction, and seemed to suggest: "Nothing is left of the old city, we need to start from scratch and build anew." This argumentative dimension of models becomes particularly evident if we compare the model of Frankfurt with an exhibit in Vienna.

In 1946, the exhibit "Niemals vergessen!" (Never Forget) opened its doors to the public in Vienna's Künstlerhaus after more than a year of planning. As an antifascist manifesto—one organized primarily by Austria's left—it was an educational event, meant to pave the way for a new society and better future. But as Kos argues, the exhibition was dated by the time its doors opened—a fact evident in the exhibit's heavy reliance upon pre-1934 political propaganda for its pictorial repertoire. Nonetheless, 260,000 visitors saw the exhibit during the fourteen weeks it was on display. Upon entering the exhibit, visitors were confronted with a large-scale panorama of the bombed-out city, with its landmark cathedral in front of a dramatic sky. An image of Hitler in the clouds of smoke indicted National Socialism and the Führer for the disaster. Urban devastation served as a complex symbol of social, political, and moral ruin. In another room in the same exhibit, by contrast, the city in ruins formed the backdrop for a heroic appeal to the future: a stonemason and his female companion work to clear a ruinous cityscape featuring some of Vienna's most famous buildings.<sup>20</sup>

Argumentative uses of models are not peculiar to postwar Germany and Austria. Such propagandistic framings occur throughout the medium's history.

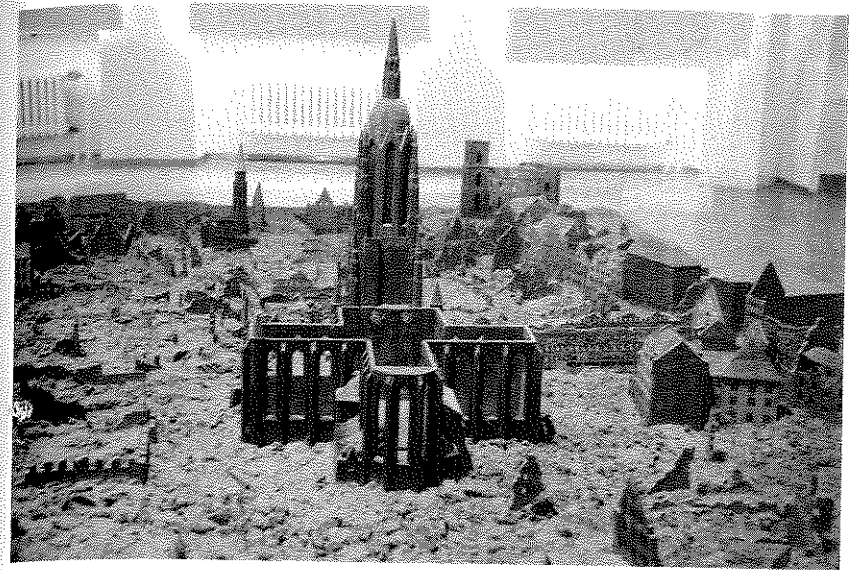
Since the fifteenth century, models have been produced not only to please aesthetically but to survey a realm, particularly a territory's fortifications; to plan military campaigns; and to impress foreign rulers or other viewers in a sort of specular containment policy.<sup>21</sup> Time is one of the argumentative dimensions of rubble models.

In the immediate postwar years, ruins referenced a multilayered temporality. To be sure, they were reminders of a fraught past. Yet this temporal-symbolic nexus relied on absences—that is, it obfuscated the specifics of individual guilt or collective entanglements behind an all-encompassing cipher of disaster. At the same time, however, ruins operated as an appeal for their removal. In other words, they conjured up the construction worker as a figure central to the imaginary of the late 1940s and 1950s, possibly with the vague promise to remove the past with the rubble.<sup>22</sup>

No wonder, then, that during the reconstruction of Germany the rhetorical force of city models acquired a specific edge. Commonly, public presentations coupled a model of the city at its worst, most ruinous state with a model of the rebuilt city; that was the case in Kassel, Heilbronn, and Hannover. While one can also encounter such juxtapositions in museums, this arrangement has been particularly popular in city halls. By inviting comparison, pairs of models with their mutual referentiality highlight a city administration's efforts to restore buildings for its populace. Ironically, the model of Kassel's postwar rebirth was constantly updated and, as a result, reduced to its present ruinous state; thus the model of Kassel in ruins is now on display in the local history museum, while the remnants of the model of "Kassel rebuilt" have been relegated to storage.<sup>23</sup>

In Frankfurt, for instance, the rubble model is displayed with a meticulously crafted model of downtown Frankfurt. Between 1926 and 1955, the brothers Hermann and Robert Trenner used builders' records to create the model of Frankfurt before the raid. Because of the city's demise as a result of the air raids, their model changed from an image of the present city into a monument to a place that no longer was.<sup>24</sup>

Hannover's Rathaus, built in a commanding historicist style and opened to the public in 1913, was one of the few buildings to survive the devastating air raids of the last years of the Second World War; today it provides a grand setting for an impressive group of city models. In its monumental central court, four models of the city—showing it in 1689, 1939, 1945, and today—are on display. No exhibit interrupts or, rather, frames one's encounter with these objects. Visitors are left to make sense for themselves of Hannover's urban history, including its destruction,<sup>25</sup> and to contemplate what has been lost. Without commentary, rubble models are likely to reinforce existing narratives, rather than challenge or transform them.

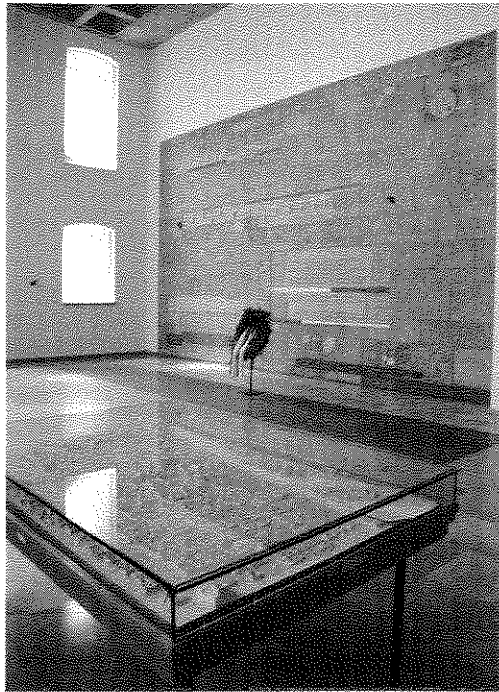


1. Rubble model of Frankfurt (1946?), Historisches Museum, Frankfurt. Photo by author.

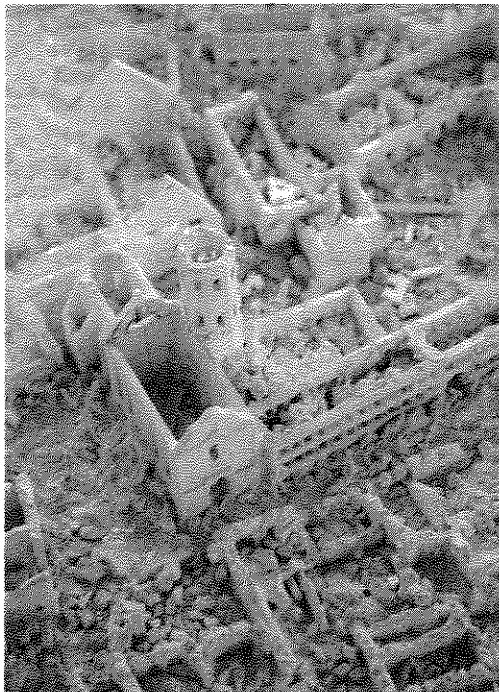
In Heilbronn, three city models, one of them showing the city in ruins, are on display in a monument constructed in 1960 to commemorate the lives lost in the war, the devastating air raid of December 4, 1944, and those inhabitants who were persecuted because of their "race, faith, and their beliefs," as an inscription on the monument specifies. The models are installed in a two-storied structure between the old and new city halls. Austerly white, the exhibit space speaks of devastation and loss, accentuated by the unfiltered light breaking in through the windows from the outside. An inscription on the wall opposite the windows puts the manifold losses together in an attempt to articulate meaning and to create a bridge, however tenuous, to the future: "May the will to do good arise from the memory of the dead."<sup>26</sup>

#### Absences and Presence

As mentioned before, all the city models are utterly devoid of people. To be sure, this absence is generic: it distinguishes models from dioramas. Yet when it comes to representing ruins in the form of models, this absence accords with iconic representations of fragmented material remains. These pictorial conventions can be traced back to paintings by Claude Lorrain and Caspar David Friedrich, and etchings by Giovanni Battista Piranesi, to name a few of the artists whose work shaped the poignant visual code for representing ruins—and whose images have depicted the tension between absence and presence, past and present, with nostalgia and desire.<sup>27</sup>



2. City models of Heilbronn (1960), City Hall, Heilbronn. Photo by author.



3. Detail of the model of Heilbronn in ruins (1960), City Hall, Heilbronn. Photo by author.

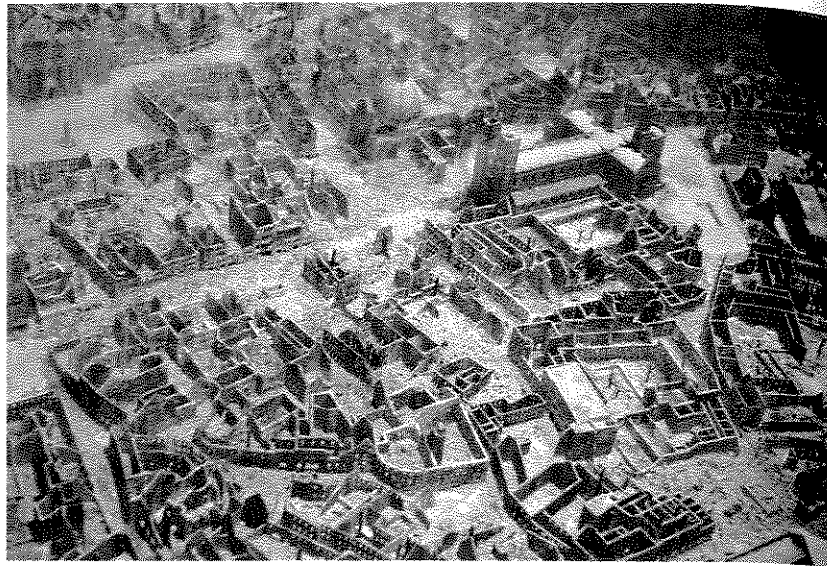
Yet these classic invocations of ruinous beauty are more multivalent than a mere emphasis on their aesthetic qualities suggests. However obliquely, images of ruins gesture toward the disastrous events that turned once-flourishing settlements into deserted heaps of stone. In fact, depictions of more recent disasters often make use of a similar imagistic register.<sup>28</sup> Fritzsche has contended that since the early nineteenth century, ruins have increasingly been imbued with a historicist spirit—namely, a past that promises to be different from the present. “Ruins,” he writes, “were increasingly regarded as the sites of particular and knowable historical events.”<sup>29</sup> Yet the revolutionary ruptures might not have been as clear-cut as this comment suggests. Ruins did not lack references to concrete events before the Napoleonic Wars, nor did the ruins of modernity exclude the moral reflections typically associated with classic ruins.

In a study on photography in the immediate postwar period, Dagmar Barnouw observes that for the war photographer Margaret Bourke-White, “The fascination of the photograph was the distance that allowed her to see only one-dimensional shapes forming intriguing patterns undisturbed by human fears and hopes.”<sup>30</sup> Iconic images of German cities at the end of the war regularly evoke the vast emptiness of uninhabitable, hollow spaces that the viewer knows—the architectural skeleton of a city is recognizable after all—once teemed with life: a past which seems, due to the degree of destruction, irredeemably lost, except for a ruinous reflection. The material ruins thus function like a synecdoche for the people who once lived there, and the urban space that continues to exist only insofar as it is enshrined in personal memory or historic documentation. The horrors of destruction are cloaked in renderings that, as is often remarked, generate a silence of eerie beauty. Hardly anyone appears in such photographs to tell the disaster’s story. If there are people to be seen, they gaze over the vast desert of devastation, magnifying the spectacle of destruction by their detached, shadowy presence.<sup>31</sup>

Not accidentally, several exhibits—for instance, in Frankfurt, Heilbronn, Kassel, Münster, and Würzburg—interlace two-dimensional photographic representations with three-dimensional reconstructions, thus inviting visitors to make comparisons between photography, a medium often associated with authenticity, and what is obviously a reconstruction, a city model.

An industry has sprung up based on images of bombed-out cities. In Frankfurt, numerous postcard vendors in the city’s rebuilt heart sell aerial views of the Römerberg district, the city’s center, at unspecified dates after the war.<sup>32</sup> One postcard, captioned “Frankfurt: yesterday and today,” was included in Sebald’s *Luftkrieg und Literatur*, juxtaposing a ruinous past with the rebuilt present in the form of photographs.<sup>33</sup> One may wonder what buyers write on the cards when sending them to friends and loved ones. The popular appeal of such





4. Detail of rubble model of Würzburg (1989), memorial to the air raids, City Hall, Würzburg. Photo by author.

postcards for today's visitors to Frankfurt may lie not least in their connotations of an antitourism that, as Buzard remarks, has always been the mark of the true tourist.<sup>34</sup> These postcards may provide an ironic commentary on postwar Frankfurt. But they emerged from the aesthetic and emotional nexus alluded to above and show pride in a quick reconstruction and return to civic urbanity.

Absences invite interpretive pirouettes—acts that give meaning and fill the void. Therein lies one of the appeals of ruins, be they real remains or artifacts like models. The attempt to see the bombed-out German cities as ruins rather than as piles of rubble began almost immediately with their large-scale destruction. When, in 1943, vast parts of Kassel had been reduced to ashes, Joseph Goebbels hastened to give meaning to the smoldering remains of the city. Beyond making the destruction a sign of the enemy's barbarity, Goebbels's speech recast loss and human suffering as a sacrifice for a better future: "[After a German victory] you will march through the fields of rubble in happiness . . . You will view these ruins as pledges and guarantors of victory. You will stand still in front of every house and say: we have sacrificed this house, too, for the victory."<sup>35</sup> Note how buildings as signifiers mask the more lurid aspects of what many people in the audience must have witnessed themselves. Note also how the text proceeds from "rubble" to "ruins." This act of signification elided the present and envisioned the future as a time that would be better than the lost past.

As Benjamin puts it, "In the ruin history has physically merged into the setting."<sup>36</sup> In the case of models, the viewer's response to this dialectic invocation of presence and absence depends, at least in part, on what is physically present—the model's materials. Different material modes generate different viewing experiences. Plaster models, like the ones of Heilbronn, possess few contrasts, which makes it hard to identify specific places and causes the details to recede into an overall impression. As a result, the models' very material evokes absence. The uniform texture and off-white color may in fact remind us how futile it is to attempt to recover what has been lost. The models of old, postwar, and ruinous Heilbronn blend into a melancholic engagement with the past and the present, appropriate for the models' location in a memorial to the city's dead.

Traditionally, however, models are made of painted wood, a material capable of depicting the details that lend these objects an aura of reality.<sup>37</sup> In Bielefeld's Historisches Museum, the representation is ruptured in a way that makes only the ruins seem real: buildings that remained intact are represented as mere wooden blocks, while ruins are painted. This difference helps the viewer assess what and how much was destroyed.

Quite a different effect is achieved in a museum on the history of Münster (Stadtmuseum) that opened to the public in 1979. Among the museum's more than twenty models is one showing the city at the end of the Second World War. While models of earlier versions of the city feature bright, cheerful colors like red and green, this one is in shades of brown, indicating dirt, detachment, and, ultimately, what has to be left behind.<sup>38</sup>

#### Absence and Agency

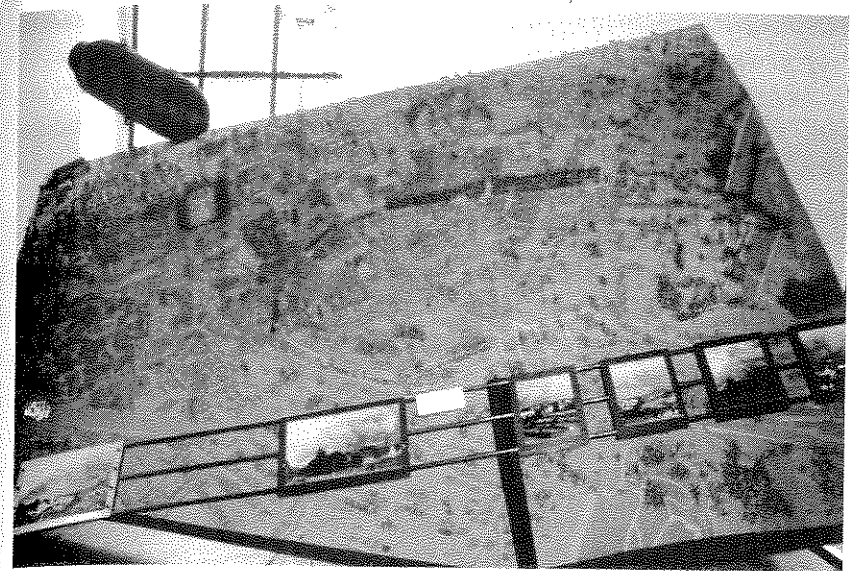
Palpable absences conjure up notions of loss—most prominently, unimaginable human loss. Notably, some of the exhibits—at Frankfurt, for instance—feature no factual account of this loss in the war. Like the victims of the bombings, however, the agents of destruction are also absent in three-dimensional objects. Questions of who bombed the city, why, and how are addressed in the text that frames the objects, or not at all. The exhibits provide a variety of answers to these questions or refuse to answer at all.

Importantly, destruction was not only caused by the Allied attacks. Once German cities had been bombed, Nazi officials seized the opportunity to clean up the urban slate for projected reconstructions in a Nationalist Socialist future that never came. That was the case in Kassel, although there is no mention of this in the extensive exhibit surrounding the model.<sup>39</sup>

But the issue of agency also touches on viewing and the viewer. Because of their nature, most city models assume a rather static relationship to the beholder. Although the models are displayed at varying heights, they tend to invite

the visitor to assume the standard position that, in a radically different context, Pratt calls the “monarch of all I survey.”<sup>40</sup> Spread out before one’s eyes, the city model opens itself to a bird’s-eye view, drawing the viewer into its minutiae, inviting inspection, arresting the gaze. Postcards of models give the vieweroscopic control over a long vanished urban space, with pictures that underline the models’ claim to realism.<sup>41</sup> Although the installations are themselves immovable, viewing models suggests the actions of collapsing as bombs fell. Not surprisingly, architectural models are a favorite backdrop for images of rulers. The static nature of the city models is particularly striking if we compare them with models of urban disasters other than the bombings of German cities. The Museum of London, for instance, offers visitors an interactive exhibit called *London’s Burning: The Great Fire of London 1666*: “a combination of models, lighting effects and sound,” accompanied by a recorded narrative that brings to life this long-past catastrophic event.<sup>42</sup> Similarly, the model of the great fire of Hamburg, formerly on display in the Hamburg Historisches Museum, hints at the unfolding of the destruction rather than its aftermath. For reasons of comparison, I also want to bring up a model of a fictional devastated city. In 1960, the *Katastrophenschutzschule des Bundes* (German School for Disaster Management) in Bad Neuenahr commissioned a model of Bonn that displays various forms and degrees of destruction after a supposed atomic strike on the city’s Kennedy Bridge. While Bonn’s downtown is presumed to have been erased and is therefore not shown at all, the model depicts the city’s northern suburbs, where survival would have been possible.<sup>43</sup> This feature calls attention to a commonality of all the models discussed so far: they focus on urban centers. To be sure, these parts of cities were often hit most dramatically, especially in places like Heilbronn, Pforzheim, and Würzburg, with their premodern timber-frame structures. But the models evoke city centers as symbolic spaces, especially cathedrals as focal points of their communities.

In Bielefeld’s Historisches Museum, set up in a former factory in 1994, the curators decided to dramatize the visitor’s encounter with a 1985 model of the city during, rather than after, the war.<sup>44</sup> It can be viewed almost cinematically. Installed in an angled, sloping position in front of windows at the end of a room, and bounded by lockers on one side and steel machinery on the other, the model is protected only by a railing and can be approached at close range, as in a low-level flight. Hung from the ceiling, an actual bomb adds to the dynamism and the staged quality of the design. The installation’s cinematic effect is further heightened by color photographs which are attached to the railing and arranged to look like film stills. Strangely, this exhibit turns the visitor into a pilot. Whether one imagines flying an Allied or German plane, the installation



5. Model of Bielefeld (1985), Historisches Museum, Bielefeld. Photo by author.

counters a narrative of mere victimhood while conveying, at the same time, the unsettling sensation of a world turning upside down.

More than sixty years after the end of the war, rubble models have apparently ceased to speak for themselves. Increasingly, younger visitors do not have access to personal narratives of destruction from family members, one of the key modes of disseminating knowledge on the air raids in the immediate postwar period—when public memory was limited in scope and rarely went beyond local commemorations.<sup>45</sup> Notably, the postwar era has become the object of intense historical research. Public debates on the air raids in the wake of Sebald’s Zurich lectures have led to further reflections on the topic. A wave of publications has moved the air war to center stage with the German public, a public with a knack for military history.<sup>46</sup>

Germany’s network of local history museums has begun to take up the challenge of creating displays on the war and postwar periods. New forms of presentation have come into existence. Older models, including those originally made for city halls, have become part of up-to-date exhibitions with extensive coverage of the air war on German cities, as in the Kassel Stadtmuseum (city museum). Exhibits in Würzburg’s Mainfränkisches Museum, the Museum für Hamburgische Geschichte, and elsewhere feature models built especially for displays on the war. New exhibits are currently being planned for museums in Frankfurt and Dresden whose collections include rubble models. The Bielefeld

Historisches Museum provides a novel viewing experience, countering standard ways of displaying such models in memorials and museums.

As a result, verbal information increasingly frames, or rather encroaches on, one's encounter with these artifacts. Originally displayed with little commentary, scale models of bombed-out cities have become embedded in various explicit historical contexts. As didactic tools, the models will continue to play a role in shaping the perception of the air raids, as well as raise questions about the interplay between visual and textual histories.

As I have argued, the history of the meticulously crafted objects discussed here registers a subtle semantic shift, from rubble model to the term used for Würzburg's model in the 1980s, "city of ruins." Regardless of what we call them, the three-dimensional models contribute to a mode of seeing loss which helped to transform rubble into ruins. Scale models of ruined cityscapes turn destruction into a visual spectacle, offering the postwar viewer scopic control over a cityscape pregnant with painful memories and emotions. Viewed thus, rubble models cannot escape their status as a medium of representation, despite their naturalism. They promise immediate access to the past, yet they position the viewer at a comfortable distance from the disastrous events that occasioned their making. Their muteness or abstraction is striking. On the one hand, their visual form shows the anxiety of those who commissioned them that memories of the air raids were virulent. On the other hand, the models' documentary precision serves as an antidote to the lure of forgetting the past altogether.

Devoid of human life, rubble models conjure up a host of visual traditions in representing ruins. They bear visible traces of a particular aesthetics, what Young calls a "rhetoric of ruins,"<sup>47</sup> while summoning a variety of other representational genres, including the architectural model and wartime and postwar photography. In combining various codes, the maquettes have also created a tradition of their own. The latest among them, currently under construction in Pforzheim, has, like the model in Würzburg, been inspired by its ancestor, the Frankfurt rubble model.<sup>48</sup>

Germany, unlike America, has ruins: this is what Janson and Heckscher signal, if only indirectly, in "Amerika." The city models discussed here attest to the presence and importance of German ruins.

#### Notes

Profuse thanks to Elizabeth Sears and Charlotte Schoell-Glass for having shared their lucky find with me. Thanks also to the Janson estate for allowing me to publish my thoughts on an unpublished essay by Horst Janson.

1. Horst Janson, "Amerika." See Charlotte Schoell-Glass and Elizabeth Sears, *Verzetteln als*

*Methode*, 71–74; and Charlotte Schoell-Glass and Elizabeth Sears, "Amerika kennt keine Ruinen: Horst W. Jansons Amerikabild," *Zeitschrift für Ideengeschichte*.

2. Woodward, *In Ruins*, serves as a good introduction to this topic.
3. Bredekamp, *The Lure of Antiquity and the Cult of the Machine*, 44–45.
4. Wendland, *Biographisches Handbuch deutschsprachiger Kunsthistoriker im Exil*, 271–75; Sears, "The Life and Work of William S. Heckscher," 107–33.
5. I am grateful to Julia Hell for having first pointed me in this direction, as she has done for other contributors to this volume.
6. Quoted in David Walsh, "Detroit in Ruins: Downtown Detroit: An American Acropolis," May 5, 1997, World Socialist Web Site, <http://www.wsws.org>.
7. See, for instance, Friedrich's widely read and much debated *Der Brand* (*The Fire*).
8. This term, with its echo of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (coming to terms with the past), is heuristically valuable. I am aware of the problems that continue to trouble the use of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, among other things because of its suggestion that it is possible to bring to a close the memory of Nazi atrocities.
9. This is the name of the model of downtown Frankfurt, on display in the city's Historisches Museum.
10. In a larger project, "City in Ruins: Modeling German History," I will approach the museological form of scale models of ruinous spaces through the lens of the historical traditions on which they rely.
11. Sebald, *Luftkrieg und Literatur* (On the Natural History of Destruction).
12. Huyssen has contextualized Sebald's text in a desire for "Rewritings and New Beginnings," symptomatic of the ongoing traces of historical trauma in German public life and writing. Read thus, *Luftkrieg und Literatur* does not indicate the radical turning point in coming to terms with the suffering of the air raids that Sebald claims. See Huyssen, "Rewritings and New Beginnings: W. G. Sebald and the Literature on the Air Raid," in *Present Pasts*, 138–57.
13. Buisseret, "Modeling Cities in Early Modern Europe," 141.
14. Kagan, "Urbs and Civitas in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Spain."
15. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 38.
16. Starn, "Seeing Culture in a Room." From this article, I took the three modalities of seeing mentioned in the text: the glance, measured view, and scan.
17. This model is 2.1 by 1.86 by 0.4 meters.
18. There is a strong resonance with the aesthetic concept of preserving individual historical buildings in a context that often differs radically from the buildings' original neighborhood. This emerged as one of the dominant concepts for monument preservation in the 1950s in response to wartime destruction. See Koshar, *Germany's Transient Pasts*.
19. The caption for the model describes it as "Plastische Skizze der zerstörten Altstadt von Frankfurt—sogenanntes Trümmermodell: . . . Das Modell wurde offensichtlich als 'Argumentationshilfe' in einem städtebaulichen Wettbewerb 1946 eingesetzt: je größer der Grad der Zerstörung, um so leichter die Überzeugung zum absoluten Neubeginn. . . ." The term "plastische Skizze" (three-dimensional model sketch) derives from the original description on the object itself: "Plastische Skizze von der durch Kriegseinwirkung 1939–1945 zerstörten Altstadt von Frankfurt am Main." So far, I have not been able to substantiate the caption's claim about the context for the making of the model.

- Apparently, there was no urbanistic exhibit in Frankfurt in 1946. The fact that the model is barely mentioned in the extensive discussions on the city's future between 1945 and the present raises the question whether the model was ever on display before it was discovered in the attic of the state of Hesse's construction department in the mid-1970s and subsequently transferred to the museum. The model was cleaned and restored for the current exhibit, which has been open to the public since 2002. The previous exhibit in the museum's lobby did not mention the distortion.
20. Kos, "Die Schau mit dem Hammer," in *Eigenheim Österreich: Zu Politik, Kultur und Alltag nach 1945*, 22–24. See also Kos, "Zukunftsfroh und muskelstark: Zum öffentlichen Menschenbild der Wiederaufbaujahre," in the same volume, 59–150.
  21. Buisseret, "Modeling Cities in Early Modern Europe"; Andrew Martin, "Stadtmodelle."
  22. On "Frankfurt oder Bonn?" *Rhein-Neckar-Zeitung*, 30 June 1949, a cartoon by Schaal, see Bauer, "Seid einig für unsere Stadt," 70.
  23. Karl-Hermann Wegener, Director, Kassel Stadtmuseum, interview by the author, May 22, 2003. The model, first on display in the city hall (1953), was first exhibited in the Kassel Stadtmuseum in 1983. The current exhibit opened its doors in 1993.
  24. The model of the city before the raid is 4.5 by 1.7 meters. Its scale is 1:200, while most of the models under consideration here use the scale of 1:500.
  25. See Steinweg, *Das Rathaus Hannover*, 6.
  26. "Aus der Toten Gedächtnis erwachse der Wille, das Gute zu wirken."
  27. For introductions to this topic, see Roth, Lyons, and Merewether, eds., *Irresistible Decay*; and Dekkers, *The Way of All Flesh*.
  28. Contemporary images of the destruction wrought by the great fire of Hamburg in 1842 work within the representational frame of romantic ruins. I have chosen this event as an example since it occurred shortly before the medium of photography transformed the representation of disasters. See Horbas and Pelc, eds., *Es brannte an allen Ecken zugleich*.
  29. Fritzsche, *Stranded in the Present*, 101.
  30. Barnouw, *Germany 1945*, 101.
  31. This is evident, for instance, in an oft-cited view of Dresden, with its many religious overtones, shot in 1945 from the city hall: "Dresden nach der Zerstörung am 13.2.1945: Blick von Rathausurm nach Süden," in Sächsische Landesbibliothek, Abteilung Deutsche Fotothek. See also David Crew, "Buildings or Bodies? Using Photographs of the Bombing of Dresden, 1945–1975," talk presented at German Studies Association meeting ("Indelible Images: The German Visual Archive after World War II"), September 18, 2003. There is a different kind of photo that foregrounds survival; yet they often did not achieve iconicity. See Hauschild-Thiessen, ed., *Die Hamburger Katastrophe vom Sommer 1943 in Augenzeugenberichten*.
  32. This is also true of Cologne, though not to the same degree.
  33. Sebald, *Luftkrieg und Literatur*, 15. The caption for "Frankfurt—Gestern + Heute," designed in a font suggesting a person's handwriting, says: "Frankfurt am Main Blick zum Römer 1947"; "Frankfurt Heute"; "Blick zum Römer 1997." As in his other works, Sebald comments little on the image. Sebald reads this postcard as an example of pride in having rebuilt Germany "bigger and better," comparable to the forms of display of "rubble models" in German city halls in the postwar period.

34. Buzard, *The Beaten Track*.
35. Goebbels's speech, quoted in Dettmar, "Kassel im Luftkrieg," 11, my translation.
36. Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, 177–78.
37. Frankfurt's rubble model is made of wood, cardboard, and sand. More recent models, like that of Würzburg, seem to use plastic.
38. See *Münster im Modell*, 62–65. A similar effect is achieved in Hannover.
39. Sascha Winter, e-mail message to the author, January 29, 2003. The issue of agency also concerns the makers of the models, who frequently are not acknowledged in the exhibits—an issue I will not address in this chapter.
40. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 204–5.
41. See, for instance, "Braunschweig um 1671 im Stadtmodell: Umgebung des Altstadtmärkts" and "Braunschweig um 1671 im Stadtmodell: Burggelände" (undated postcards) or the large-format postcard of the destroyed city on sale at the Stadtmuseum Münster: "Stadtmodell 1945, Modellbauatelier Steiner, 1966" (undated photo, Stadtmuseum Münster, Tomasz Samek).
42. See [www.museum-london.org.uk](http://www.museum-london.org.uk).
43. Baumunk and Brunn, eds., *Zentren, Residenzen, Metropolen in der deutschen Geschichte*, 431. The model is now held at the Haus der Geschichte in Bonn. It has been shown only as part of special exhibits in 1989 and 1999. Wolfgang Kreutzer was kind enough to send me two digital photographs of it (the Baumunk and Brunn volume does not include an image of the model).
44. The model, Modellbauwerkstatt der Stadt Bielefeld, is from 1985.
45. To date, no systematic study of such activities exists (regular or annual church services, city commemorations, lectures).
46. Sebald, *Luftkrieg und Literatur*. Here is a small selection of recent publications: Ballerstedt and Buchholz, *Es regnet Feuer!*; Deppert and Engels, *Feuerturm und Widerstand*; Kanther and Olejniczak, *Bomben auf Duisburg*; Keller, *Mannheim im Bombenkrieg*; Kempowski, *Der rote Hahn*; Peschke, *Zwickau und Planitz im Bombenhagel*; Serup-Bilfeldt, *Ins Gedächtnis eingebrannt*; and Trost, *Eine gänzlich zerstörte Stadt*.
47. Young, *Texture of Memory*, 119–54.
48. Information from Christian Groh, Associate Director, Stadtarchiv Pforzheim, e-mail message, January 30, 2003.