

## Visual Culture, Session A

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### Visual Scenes of Model Trains

This paper aims at investigating visual representations of real world phenomena. More concretely I study how train enthusiasts represent real world in physical models, so called sceneries. Special focus will be on the social dimension, and how it is represented. The world of minitrains is mainly populated by older men who are highly enthusiastic about large as well as small trains. They come together in fairs, clubs and many are either individually, or collectively, involved in building sceneries centered around trains running on tracks built in various scales. The standard procedure of building a scenery is to map it on a really existing, or more commonly, a section of a track that used to exist, and build a scene in a scaled down version. Visual representations are central in the building of these scenes. The building process aims at creating a representation of reality. Representations can be more or less idealized and various kinds of transformations take place in the process of creating representations. In this sense the train enthusiast is in many ways in the same situation as the social scientists. Both have to scale down and reduce the complexity and the variation of real life, either into a theory, or into a visual representation. The train enthusiast is mostly interested in the real representation of some aspects of reality, those related to trains. The empirical material is generated through participant observation, magazines, internet sites and video films.