



House Model 'Neovision'

Stephen Gilbert

Not on display

Title/Description: House Model 'Neovision'

Artist/Maker: Stephen Gilbert

Born: 1955

Object Type: Architectural Model

Materials: Aluminium, Paint, Steel

Measurements: h 16 x w 36.4 x d 38 cm

Inscription: Artist signature and date

Accession Number: 31271

Historic Period: 20th century

Production Place: Europe, France

House Néovision was an experimental collaboration between Stephen Gilbert and Peter Stead, to create a house design for a sloping site in Huddersfield. Gilbert's prototype model forefronts his interest in geometric, free-flowing spaces and the dynamic use of colour and new materials.

Stead, who was based in Huddersfield, invited Gilbert to propose a design for the project in January 1955. Gilbert's initial drawings and letters document his emphasis on using colour to animate the experience of architectural space:

'One should be able to circulate so that there is a rhythmic change of colour relations in equilibrium from any point of view, inside or out.' [1]

Gilbert achieves this in his model for House Néovision by carefully positioning brightly coloured panels throughout, encouraging a fluid engagement with the whole space, from a range of positions.

Gilbert had trained and worked as a painter in the 1930s and 1940s, and in 1952 began to use large, flat, geometric forms in his paintings. In 1954 he began a series of freestanding constructions, using orthogonal planes of thin aluminium sheet and colour to determine the spaces and overall rhythm of the work.

Gilbert's use of flat coloured planes to activate three-dimensional space was influenced by the Dutch art movement De Stijl, especially the work of Piet Mondrian. Gilbert was based in Paris in the 1950s where these ideas were being developed by Groupe Espace, an association of geometric abstract artists and architects committed to the synthesis of architecture and the visual arts. Gilbert joined Groupe Espace in 1954 and later acknowledged the influence it had on his design for House Néovision:

'The model house is certainly very close to the work of say Gorin, who was in the Groupe - but also others, such as Baljeu, Rietveld etc., in that it is an experiment - i.e. an attempt to animate real space with freed colour planes.' [2]

Gilbert exhibited his model for House Néovision at the Salon des Réalités Nouvelles in Paris in 1955. Later that year an image of the model was reproduced in *Aujourd'hui, Art et Architecture*, a journal set up by André Bloc, the founder of Groupe Espace.

Lisa Newby, July 2021

[1] Letter from Stephen Gilbert to Peter Stead, 20 February 1955, cited in Alastair Grieve, *Constructed Abstract Art in England: A Neglected Avant-Garde* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2005), p.208.

[2] Letter from Stephen Gilbert to Alastair Grieve, 15 August 1982. Sainsbury Centre Archive.

[3] Grieve (2005), p.208. *Aujourd'hui, Art et Architecture* , No.4 (September 1955), p.30.

Exhibitions

'Rhythm and Geometry: Constructivist art in Britain since 1951', Sainsbury Centre, UK, 02/10/2021 - 17/07/2022

Further Reading

Alastair Grieve, *Constructed Abstract Art in England: A Neglected Avant-Garde* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2005), p.204-9, ill. p.208.

Tania Moore and Calvin Winner (eds.), *Rhythm and Geometry: Constructivist art in Britain since 1951* (Norwich: Sainsbury Centre, 2021), p.74.
