Architectural Cardboard Topography Models

Large Scale Architectural Cardboard Topography Model

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Residential Architectural Cardboard Topography Model
Planning Your Architectural Cardboard Topography Model

The first and most important step for any architectural model making project is to establish a clear goal for the model. In other words, what is the model for, what is its purpose, what does it need to communicate? Very few people have the budget and resources to make a model that shows everything about their project. It is more realistic to choose an aspect of your design that the model can show well.

For example, if you are designing a building in a sensitive area, a monochrome massing model can show the overall form and layout of your design and how it sits in its context. This will give viewers an instant general understanding of your project. The colors, materials and any other detailed elements can be explained through additional drawings, photographs, swatches, etc.

Another approach is to let your drawings show the general overview of your project and use an architectural model to illustrate one of the detailed aspects. For example you could make a part-model of a particularly interesting area of the building, an entrance feature perhaps or a decorative elevation. Or you could make a sectional model that slices through the building to show the internal spatial organization.

The important thing is to start with a clear purpose for your architectural model and then work out what sort of model will best achieve your goals.

Selecting the scale for your Architectural Cardboard Topography Model

Whatever the purpose of your model, being able to understand scales will enable you to work out practical, achievable options for your particular project.

Scales are actually very simple. The scale of architectural models is a ratio - in other words, the relative size of the model to the real thing. For example, 1:1 scale (we would say it as "one to one") would be a life size model. Whereas, 1:10 scale ("one to ten" or "one tenth scale") would be one tenth of actual size. Likewise, 1:100 would be one hundredth of actual size, and so on. The larger the scale indicator number, the smaller the model, which means less detail can be shown.

If the purpose of the model is to show just the building itself you could consider 1:200 or even 1:100 scale. At these scales you can show windows, doors, balconies, etc. However, if your goal is to illustrate a particular area or detailed element of the building you may well need to go bigger again, say 1:50 scale or even 1:20 scale.
Building tips for your Architectural Cardboard Topography Model

- Use cardboard or cork tiles built up in layers to show roads, pathways and changes in level. The number of layers depends on the thickness of the cardboard or cork, the scale of the model, and the heights you are trying to represent.
- If you need very few layers, each layer can simply be cut and glued to the layer below.
- If you need a lot of layers, this will use up too much material. Instead, cut out only the edges of each layer. This kind of “landscape” will need propping underneath. Use cardboard fins, off-cuts of wood or stacks of cardboard scraps glued together.
- Surround the base with a rim to hide the supports. For large sites, streets or public spaces, the easiest way to plan the layers is to follow the contour lines on an OS map, adding more cardboard or cork “contours” in between, if necessary.