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EASY XPS MODELS

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Physical model making is an essential tool in architectural and urban design education because it allows designers to explore space through tactile and visual experimentation. Unlike digital models, physical models immediately communicate form, scale and spatial relationships and therefore support fast idea testing and collaboration within design teams. They also help students develop three-dimensional thinking and provide a clear way to present concepts to mentors, stakeholders or the wider public.

In the studio process, simple and efficient XPS foam (extruded polystyrene) models are widely used during early design stages to test ideas. XPS is lightweight, affordable, easy to cut and shape, which makes it an ideal material for building terrain, building volumes and street layouts. With just a few basic tools such as model knives, hot wire cutters, cutting mats and glue it is possible to construct study models quickly and adapt them as ideas evolve.

Accurate site representation can be achieved by using Google Earth to analyse terrain, orientation and urban context before starting the model. Real dimensions are translated into the chosen model scale using practical online tools such as the Scale Calculator. Visual references available online provide inspiration for landscape and building modelling, while video tutorials (for example on YouTube) demonstrate cutting techniques, layering and assembly of XPS foam to achieve professional results.

XPS models support teamwork and communication because they make ideas tangible and easy to understand for both designers and non-experts. They play an important role in design studios and participatory workshops, where they help compare alternatives, identify spatial challenges and develop shared design proposals. Their simplicity encourages experimentation, and because they are easy to modify, they naturally support iterative learning and creative problem solving.