

communiqué /press release**For immediate release****POTENTIAL ARCHITECTURE****The second exhibition devoted to the CCA Collection
of Architectural Toys and Games**

Montréal, 21 November 1991 -- Architecture, though constrained by boundaries of function and structure, is always ultimately an act of the imagination. **Potential Architecture: Construction Toys from the CCA Collection**, to be presented at the CCA from 4 December 1991 to 8 March 1992, explores twenty-one construction toys, made in the hundred years from 1850 to 1950, that were designed to challenge a child's creativity. Each consists of parts or pieces that allow a variety of possible wholes. They range from *Crandall Blocks* (USA, 1967), and *Batima* (Belgium, ca. 1905), which provide simple components for the free-form construction of toy buildings, to *Urbania* (France, mid 20th century), which invited children to organize its prefabricated toy buildings into entire cities. Taken together, they illustrate how children learn to invent relationships between space, structure, and building forms, and hence to better understand the world around them. In this second annual exhibition devoted to the CCA Collection of Architectural Toys and Games, Norman Brosterman, the young architect and sculptor who built the collection, presents a selection of toys in which this relationship of part to whole, of given component to invented structure, is most compellingly realized.

It was the aspect of construction toys that most fascinated Brosterman when he was developing the collection. As he explains,

"Boxes of possibilities are what I sought - potential architecture. Whether the kit built one particular structure or could be used for an infinite variety, process was paramount. My search was for toys that were inherently dynamic, where change was a given; where the child was cast as director, designer, and architect, and buildings could be erected and demolished at will, the parts repacked, still but ready - choices waiting to be made. Modularity was my only criterion, and is the reason the collection so well reflects and refers to the world of architecture. It's no mistake that the word *building* is both verb and noun.

"Collectors of toys seek abstractions of reality in a more comprehensible, miniature form. Cast - iron trains, tin boats, and porcelain dolls each have their scores of fanatic aficionados to whom the *idea* of a steam locomotive, or a sailing ship, or Victorian baby is paramount. Building blocks are another level removed. In their unbuilt form they are ideas for ideas of things and as such often mystified people who wondered why someone would be so eager for yet another musty box full of boring fragments.

"Without building the sets (I rarely did - the ideas usually sufficed) it was hard to explain that the pieces were actually buildings and that each box contained not one building but dozens, hundreds, an entire imagination full - whole cities waiting to spring forth under the touch of an interested adult or curious child."

The Acquisition of the CCA Collection of Architectural Toys and Games was made possible through the generosity of Bell Canada.

In conjunction with this exhibition, play sessions for 3 to 12 year olds will be held at the Canadian Centre for Architecture on Saturdays and Sundays throughout the exhibition. These sessions will give an opportunity to get to know and try modern construction toys within an informal framework. The proposed activities are inspired by the Toys found in the exhibition. Parents are encouraged to participate in the games. The National Bank Play Sessions will begin Saturday 14 December 1991.