

communiqué / press release

For immediate release

The CCA presents *Speed Limits*, an exhibition that explores the conflicting powers and limits of the cult of speed**On view from 20 May until 12 October 2009, the exhibition is co-organised by the Canadian Centre for Architecture and the Wolfsonian-Florida International University.**

Seattle, 1983. CCA Collection, Montréal. © Tod E. Gangler.



View of secretary pool in the North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Building, Durham, North Carolina. Welton Becket and Associates, 1965. CCA Collection, Montréal. Gift of Elliott and Carolyn Mittler. © Balthazar Korab.

Montreal, 19 May, 2009 — The Canadian Centre for Architecture (CCA) presents ***Speed Limits***, an exhibition devoted to the inescapable presence of speed in modern life, in art, architecture and urbanism, and in the graphic arts, economics, and the material culture of the industrial age and our own age of information. The exhibition spotlights the hundredth anniversary of Italian Futurism, the movement to which we owe the famous statement that appeared in its founding manifesto: “The world’s magnificence has been enriched by a new beauty: the beauty of speed.” The exhibition is co-organised with The Wolfsonian-Florida International University in Miami Beach and is curated by Jeffrey T. Schnapp of the Stanford Humanities Lab. *Speed Limits* is on view at the CCA from 20 May to 12 October, 2009.

Critical rather than commemorative in spirit, *Speed Limits* explores a single Futurist theme from the standpoint of its contemporary legacies. The exhibition probes the powers and limits of the modern era's cult of speed in the domains of circulation and transit, construction and the built environment, efficiency, the measurement and representation of rapid motion, and the mind/body relationship. A variety of objects spanning a 100-year cultural history reveal the long-standing polarities and closely intertwined relationship between the fast and the slow.

"In recent years, the Canadian Centre for Architecture has undertaken a number of projects addressing the question of limits – the limits of visual perception in *Sense of the City*, of postwar notions of progress in *1973: Sorry, Out of Gas*, and of Modern urbanism and top-down planning in *Actions: What You Can Do With the City*," stated Mirko Zardini, Director of the CCA. "All of these exhibitions identified inventive and original ways of challenging some founding myths of contemporary life, while bringing to light practices that are shaping daily experience. *Speed Limits* investigates one of the greatest of these myths, and challenges us to find alternatives to the reliance on speed in contemporary society."

Presented in the CCA's main galleries, the exhibition features more than 240 objects from the collections of the CCA and The Wolfsonian, including books, photographs, advertising posters, architectural drawings, publications, and videos, which together illustrate the debate about speed and present a multifaceted view that is both a defence of speed and an implicit criticism of its negative effect on contemporary life. Covering the period from 1900 to the present, the exhibition analyzes the evolution of the process of production and construction, the beginnings of prefabrication, the household, traffic and transit, and the workplace, as viewed through the prism of speed, and focuses on the opposite poles of productivity and hyperactivity.

THE EXHIBITION

Conceived and installed in a linear fashion, each of the five distinct but interrelated themes is explored in its own gallery: Pace, Traffic, Fast Construction, Efficiency, Motion Capture and Measuring, and Mind/Body.

Pace

The exhibition introduces juxtaposing notions of fast and slow via two large-scale video projections. Entering the first gallery, visitors occupy the space between a slow-moving snail seen on a ceiling screen above, and footage of a vibrant cityscape on the floor below. The room also contains a group of Futurist material including a reproduction of Filippo Tommaso Marinetti's Manifesto of Futurism published in *Le Figaro* on 20 February 1909.

Traffic

Multiple perceptions of traffic and its models are vital to an understanding of the city and society. The exhibition bears witness to the prevalent dream of an urban space with freely-flowing traffic, and illustrates the concept of the grid or network that governs the movement not only of objects and goods but also of information. This is juxtaposed with the breakdown of circulation, the traffic jam. The overcrowding of city streets is captured in a series of photographs John Veltri took in New York City in 1938. Visual records are accompanied by archival documents and studies of transportation efficiency and accident patterns related to increasing speeds.

Fast Construction

Architecture is a motive force behind the speeding-up of life, reflected in the increasing efficiency of construction processes. The phenomenon is illustrated through photographic sequences capturing the erection of the Irving Trust Building (New York), the Eiffel Tower (Paris), and Rem Koolhaas's China Central Television building (Beijing). The fast pace of construction of these and other buildings can be analyzed by studying dated sequential images. While the quickly built Empire State Building was a masterpiece of construction, Andy Warhol's film *Empire* represents it in stark contrast, as a static "moving image."

Prefabrication served as a major drive towards increasing construction efficiency, and is represented by various trade catalogues of homes and other building types, as well as photographs documenting their assembly. The exhibition includes works by J.J.P. Oud and Cedric Price, reflecting the sustained interest in modular housing by architects throughout the 20th century.

Efficiency

Examining how notions of efficient production evolved over time, the exhibition focuses on two types of space transformed by speed, one public and the other domestic: the office and the kitchen.

Filing systems, processors, and office furniture play a central role making work spaces fast and efficient. A remarkable 1936 project by Josef Ehm features an electrically-powered mechanical classifier, allowing workers of the Central Social Institution in Prague to access large-scale card catalogues via mechanised desks on lifts. The exhibition also includes photographs by Balthazar Korab that capture the modernized workspaces of the 1960s, as well as studies of the productivity of workers and their equipment such as Frank B. Gilbreth's films of American workers in the 1910s and '20s. Photographs of Christine Frederick show her testing and demonstrating kitchen efficiencies in the early 20th century, when electrification, new equipment and appliances, and a redesigned space increase

the speed of domestic activities. Alongside commercial artefacts and documentation, the exhibition includes architects' studies such as drawings by Le Corbusier analysing kitchen dimensions and by Cedric Price for modular kitchen in a prefabricated steel house.

Motion Capture and Measuring

Addressing the cognitive challenges with which humanity is surrounded, the exhibition features material about information compression through strata of signs, signals and messages, or diagrams that reduce complex traffic data to a usable visual representation. Increasingly, humans are processing complex overlapping of information including time and related data. This growth is reflected in a collection of clocks and calendars illustrating the tempo of modern life, and the increasing sophistication and number of instruments and devices that measure motion: accelerometers, altimeters, odometers, speedometers.

Also presented are posters and graphics whose design captures the notion of speed in order to more effectively promote cars, tires, oils, and other products or services built celebrating new levels of speed.

Mind and Body

The exhibition suggests different ways in which acceleration is associated on the one hand with pleasure – ecstasy, the search for powerful sensations, and overstimulation – and on the other with exhaustion, risk, and injury. Representations of the body in motion include the transformation of the body itself into a speeding object, gymnastics and popular athleticism in the early 20th century, the current cult of the body, natural and artificial improvements in physical culture, stimulants and tranquilizers, and the remedies associated with stimulants. Among speed's pharmaceutical avatars are caffeine, cocaine, amphetamines, and the active ingredients in energy drinks.

This final gallery bridges the century by combining the photographic studies of motion conducted by Edward Muybridge in 1887 with a large-scale projection of Usain Bolt's record-breaking performance at the 2008 Olympic Games.

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

Speed Limits is co-organised by the Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal, and The Wolfsonian-Florida International University, Miami Beach. The exhibition is curated by Jeffrey T. Schnapp, Pierotti Chair in Italian Literature at Stanford University. Schnapp is professor of French, Italian, and Comparative Literature and founder of the Stanford Humanities Lab, a transdisciplinary research centre devoted to exploring scenarios for future production and reproduction of knowledge in art and the humanities. He is a

cultural historian and a researcher whose eclectic interests range from medieval poetry to contemporary architecture and design. Schnapp recently edited *Crowds* (with Matthew Tiews, Stanford University Press, 2006), which received the Modernist Studies Association prize for best book of 2007, and *Italiamerica* (with Emanuela Scarpellini, Il Saggiatore, 2008), and published a collection of essays, *Neoantiqua* (Eduerj, 2008). He curated *I Trentini e la Grande Guerra*, an experimental exhibition on World War I installed in two abandoned highway tunnels in Trento, Italy, for the Fondazione Museo Storico del Trentino, and *Casa per tutti*, in collaboration with Fulvio Irace, for the Triennale di Milano (May to September 1, 2008).

EXHIBITION DESIGN

The exhibition installation is designed by Los Angeles-based Michael Maltzan Architecture, with graphics by New York-based Project Projects. Both Michael Maltzan Architecture and Project Projects were recently named 2009 Finalists for the prestigious Cooper-Hewitt National Design Award in recognition of the excellence, innovation, and public impact of their work.

Established in 1995, Michael Maltzan Architecture (MMA) is dedicated to engaging the realm of interaction between the built environment and its users, and to exploring the complexity and possibility inherent in architecture in order to foster actual experiences and change. MMA designs a wide range of projects, which include many cultural and research institutions such as the Getty Information Institute Digital Laboratory, Kidspace Children's Museum in Pasadena, the temporary MoMA QNS, and the Vancouver Art Gallery.

Founded in 2004 by Prem Krishnamurthy and Adam Michaels, Project Projects is a New York-based design studio focusing on print, exhibition, and interactive work with clients in art and architecture. The large-scale text in *Speed Limits* is set in "Luigi," a custom typeface designed by Project Projects for use in the exhibition. The font is primarily inspired by the title page from Luigi Russolo's 1916 *L'Arte dei rumori (The Art of Noises)*, a Futurist manifesto stating the need for new music responding to intensified levels of noise in urban, industrialized daily life.

THE CATALOGUE

Speed Limits is accompanied by a catalogue of the same title, edited by Jeffrey T. Schnapp, co-published by the Canadian Centre for Architecture, The Wolfsonian-Florida International University and Skira Editore, Milan. The catalogue contains prefaces by Mirko Zardini, Director of the CCA, and Cathy Leff, Director of The Wolfsonian. It includes

new essays by Timothy Alborn, Yve-Alain Bois, Edward Dimendberg, Maria Gough, Antonino Mastruzzo, Jeffrey L. Meikle, Pierre Niox, Marjorie Perloff, Mark Seltzer, and Anthony Vidler; an anthology of historical texts; the visual essay *Rush City* by Jeffrey T. Schnapp; and studies of the impact of speed on contemporary society.

The 320-page book contains 140 colour and black-and-white illustrations. It is available in an English edition for \$47 CAD at the CCA Bookstore as of May 2009.

EXHIBITION DATES

Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal, 20 May until 12 October 2009.

The Wolfsonian-Florida International University, Miami Beach, 17 September 2010 until 20 February 2011.

THE CCA

The Canadian Centre for Architecture (CCA) is an international research centre and museum founded in 1979 on the conviction that architecture is a public concern. Based on its extensive collections, the CCA is a leading voice in advancing knowledge, promoting public understanding, and widening thought and debate on the art of architecture and its history, theory, practice and role in society today. Twenty years after opening its doors to the public, the CCA is celebrating its anniversary with an ambitious series of activities presented by Phyllis Lambert, Founding Director and Chairman of the Board of Trustees, and Mirko Zardini, CCA Director and Chief Curator. They consist of programs and initiatives that underscore the achievements of the CCA throughout 2009 and are intended to increase its influence and its role as a unique cultural institution.

Speed Limits continues the CCA's long-standing exploration of major questions posed by contemporary architecture, in particular about urban, social and environmental issues. The exhibition follows *Actions: What You Can do with the City; Some Ideas on Living in London and Tokyo* by Stephen Taylor and Ryue Nishizawa (2008); *1973: Sorry, Out of Gas* (2007); *Environment: Approaches for Tomorrow* with Gilles Clément and Philippe Rahm (2006); and *Sense of the City* (2005), an innovative exhibition dedicated to the theme of urban phenomena and perceptions that have traditionally been ignored, repressed or maligned.

FUNDING

The CCA wishes to express its gratitude to Hydro-Québec and RBC Financial Group for their support of the exhibition.

The CCA also wishes to thank the Ministère de la Culture, des Communications et de la Condition féminine du Québec, the Canada Council for the Arts, the Department of Canadian Heritage, and the Conseil des Arts de Montréal.

###

High-resolution digital photographs are available over the Internet at the CCA press room, www.cca.qc.ca/presse, under the heading "Exhibitions". To access them, the user code is **general** and the password is **journal**.

Source: Isabelle Huiban
Head of Media Relations
Tel.: (514) 939-7001, ext. 2607
Email: ihuiban@cca.qc.ca

Press conference: Tuesday, May 19, 3 pm

Vernissage: Tuesday, May 19, 6 pm – 8 pm

Post-vernissage: Tuesday, May 19, 8 pm – 11 pm

Guided tour: Thursday, May 21, 7 pm
Led by Jeffrey T. Schnapp, curator of the exhibition, with Michael Maltzan, designer of the exhibition.