

**communiqué /press release****For immediate release**

**CCA Exhibits New Photographs of the Disney Theme Parks  
Commissioned from Artist Catherine Wagner**  
***Realism and Illusion: Catherine Wagner Photographs the Disney  
Theme Parks***

From 17 June to 28 September 1997

On View in the Octagonal Gallery

**Montréal, 17 June 1997** — In conjunction with its major exhibition ***The Architecture of Reassurance: Designing the Disney Theme Parks***, the Canadian Centre for Architecture presents a new visual essay by photographer Catherine Wagner. Created through a photographic commission by the CCA, ***Realism and Illusion: Catherine Wagner Photographs the Disney Theme Parks*** which comprises 23 photographs, is on view in the Octagonal Gallery from 17 June to 28 September 1997. Known for her photographs of sites in development (the George Moscone Convention Center, San Francisco), classrooms (*American Classrooms*), domestic interiors (*Home and Other Stories*), and laboratories (*Art and Science*), Wagner has shown a special concern throughout her career for “fabricated” environments. In 1984, the CCA commissioned her to photograph the construction of the Louisiana World Exposition, and in 1995 offered Wagner a new assignment: photographing the Disney theme parks in Anaheim, Orlando, Tokyo, and Paris.

Visiting the parks for the first time, Wagner saw them as “the contemporary landscape *par excellence*, archetypes of American culture.” From the start, she chose to photograph the parks when closed to the public, hoping to encourage viewers to project themselves into the images, at the same time intensifying the ambiguities of the sites. Fascinated by the

importance of illusion (“magic” in Disney terminology) in the design and layout of the parks, Wagner aspired “to add yet another layer of deception to this already simulated world, *our* world, where illusion is now more real than life.”

In keeping with her usual practice, Wagner constructed this photographic project as if the photographs were episodes in a story, episodes that, taken together, reveal the meaning of the whole. By cloaking her metaphorical reading of the subject matter in an apparent objectivity, Wagner eases the viewer into her way of looking, meanwhile heightening the formal and expressive power of the images.

In this series, Wagner has subtly reinforced the fictive qualities of the Disney parks by multiplying their optical illusions and shifts in scale and by taking advantage of the parks’ intense colour (this is the first work by Wagner to use a colour process). In demonstrating both the magic of the parks and how that magic is constructed, these photographs function not only as mini-narratives but also as a critical essay, a visual exploration of the mechanisms that place realism at the service of illusion.

***Realism and Illusion: Catherine Wagner Photographs the Disney Theme***

***Parks*** has been organized for the CCA by Paolo Costantini, Curator of the Photographs Collection, and Nicholas Olsberg, Chief Curator.

**The exhibition has been organized by the Canadian Centre for Architecture.**

**The CCA gratefully acknowledges the extraordinary co-operation of Walt Disney Imagineering, Walt Disney Attractions, and The Walt Disney Company in the preparation of this exhibition.**

**The exhibition has been made possible by the generous support of Dayton Hudson Foundation.**

**The series "The American Century" is supported by a grant from the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts.**

**The CCA thanks Bell Canada, Royal Bank of Canada, and Teleglobe Canada Inc. for their support of the exhibition.**

**The CCA benefits from the operating support of the Ministère de la Culture et des Communications du Québec and the Conseil des arts de la Communauté urbaine de Montréal.**

**The CCA thanks the Government of Canada for assistance received to mark Canada's Year of Asia Pacific.**

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