

## communiqué /press release

## For immediate release

**MYRON GOLDSMITH: POET OF STRUCTURE**

13 March to 2 June 1991

"If I have a total vision of architecture, it is that the majority of building should be a structural solution, the most modest solution to the problem that one can find, executed carefully and placed carefully in its setting. If buildings are approached this way, there will be civic order."<sup>1</sup>

**Montréal 12 March 1991** – It was said of Myron Goldsmith in 1962 that he "may well prove to be the master of his generation."<sup>2</sup> Time has proved this prophecy. He has shown how an economy of means and a modest approach can generate a profoundly poetic expression. His explorations of problems of structure have revolutionized our approach to the engineering and aesthetics of tall buildings. The interaction between his theoretical work, his teaching and his built work has created some of the most significant and beautiful buildings of our time.

In the last half of the twentieth-century there is no more compellingly beautiful structure than Myron Goldsmith's Solar Telescope at Kitt Peak, Arizona. Goldsmith's unbuilt Ruck-A-Chucky bridge of 1975 rivals Maillart's 1933 Schwandbach Bridge in the "superb relation of bridge to its setting."<sup>3</sup> The architectural expression of tall buildings, and indeed the height they can attain, have been revolutionized by the theories proposed by Goldsmith in his Master's Thesis of 1953. The elegant lightness and openness of Goldsmith's steel framed Chicago Transit Authority rapid train stations of 1970 and the Republic Newspaper Plant at Columbus, Indiana make them the very exemplars of his desire to find "the most modest solution to the problem that one can find, executed carefully and placed carefully" in their settings.

Goldsmith's decisive contribution to architecture is widely acknowledged in the profession, but a broader familiarity with his work and ideas and efforts to place his contribution in context are lacking. This exhibition, **Myron Goldsmith: Poet of Structure**, shows

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<sup>1</sup> Myron Goldsmith: Address to the Royal Institute of British Architects, 1966.

<sup>2</sup> Allan Temko, writing in *Architectural Forum*.

<sup>3</sup> As Goldsmith wrote of Maillart's Salginatobel Bridge in *Myron Goldsmith: Buildings and Concepts*, New York, p. 40.

how the methods and ideas of such a major figure are formed, developed, and disseminated by drawing upon the remarkable body of notes, sketchbooks, and study documents found in the collection of Goldsmith's personal papers at the CCA.

These documents serve as a window on a mind at work, allowing one to see how Goldsmith's powers of observation and analysis, his disciplined and persistent curiosity about the built world, and his choice of varying sources and ideas produced a uniquely important sensibility. In a final section, the exhibition also shows some of the most compelling of the projects in which this sensibility finds expression.

Among the 140 objects in the exhibition are notes that he made in courses and on conversations with Mies van der Rohe and Pier Luigi Nervi; construction photographs, notes, and sketches made during his involvement in the construction of the Farnsworth House; and travel sketchbooks and notes that show Goldsmith's fascination with scale and structure, and with the directness of expression and the economy to be found in industrial and vernacular buildings. At the same time the exhibition includes the important drawings and study materials for his 1953 thesis on the effects of scale and on the aesthetics of engineering tall buildings; and there are drawings, studies, photographs and models for six of Goldsmith's major projects: Skidmore, Owings and Merrill's United Airlines Hangars for San Francisco, 1955-58; the proposed Steel Pavilion for the New York World's Fair (1960); the Kitt Peak National Observatory in Arizona of 1962; the Republic newspaper plant in Columbus, Indiana of 1971; and recent proposals with the engineer T. Y. Lin for such bridges as the Ruck-A-Chucky Bridge in California and the new Williamsburg Bridge for New York.

The CCA hopes through this exhibition to extend a general understanding of architectural ideas; to introduce the scholar to a remarkable body of unpublished research material; and to inspire serious critical discourse on the work of this Chicago master. The exhibition is curated by Barbara Shapiro Comte, Adjunct Curator, and Robert Desaulniers, Archivist, under the direction of Phyllis Lambert, Director, and Nicholas Olsberg, Chief Curator. The accompanying full color catalogue/brochure, which contains foreword by Phyllis Lambert and a narrative essay by Barbara Shapiro Comte, is available at the CCA Bookstore and throughout Canada, the United States, and Europe.

This exhibition is sponsored by the Canam Manac Group and Sidbec-Dosco inc. with the additional support of the Graham Foundation.

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