

**communiqué /press release****For immediate release****Canadian Centre for Architecture Launches its Multi-Year Series  
on the American Century with "Scenes of the World to Come"****On View from 14 June to 24 September 1995, Exhibition Explores the World-Wide Impact of Americanism, 1893-1960**

**Montréal, 14 June 1995** – *Americanism*, the pattern of idealization, imitation and criticisms with which European architects greeted American urban models and building practices, is the subject of the exhibition ***Scenes of the World to Come: European Architecture and the American Challenge, 1893-1960***, on view at the Canadian Centre for Architecture until 24 September 1995. The exhibition, which provides an introduction to many of the themes of the CCA's multi-year series, **The American Century**, explores the myth of American cultural imperialism by revealing the mixture of enthusiasm and ambivalence with which Europeans responded to the evolving urban culture of the United States.

The skyscrapers, massive industrial plants, and new sense of mobility and efficiency of North America became a symbol of the future to Europeans, who perceived these developments with both visionary excitement and alarm. ***Scenes of the World to Come*** will make these responses palpable by drawing together more than 350 objects from collections throughout Europe and North America, many of them never before exhibited. The objects include gigantic Beaux-Art renderings of hotels "à l'américaine" and futurist visions of the vertical city; projects for skyscrapers by Mies van der Rohe, Adolf Loos and the Russian avant-garde; as well as travel sketches and photographs by

Erich Mendelsohn and Le Corbusier. Through these materials, the exhibition vividly conveys the impact of America upon cultures as different as Hapsburg Vienna, Stalin's Moscow, art-deco Paris, and Archigram's pop-inspired London.

***Scenes of the World to Come*** is curated by Jean-Louis Cohen, Professor at the École d'Architecture Paris-Villemin and at the Institute of Fine Arts in New York. Among his many accomplishments, Cohen conceived the landmark exhibition *Paris-Moscow* at the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, and curated its architectural section; organized the Pompidou's centenary exhibition on Le Corbusier; and installed the permanent exhibition at the Arsenale in Paris. For ***Scenes of the World to Come***, he secured the loan of drawings, sketchbooks, photographs and publications from more than fifty public and private collections including the Fondation Le Corbusier, the École des Beaux-Arts and the Institut Français d'architecture in Paris, the Albertina in Vienna, the Shchusev Architectural Museum in Moscow, the Technische Universität in Berlin, the Museum of Modern Art of New York, the Library of Congress in Washington, DC.

After its presentation at the CCA, ***Scenes of the World to Come*** will travel to City Art Centre in Edinburgh, Scotland (3 November 1995 to 8 January 1996) where it will be the feature exhibition at the first Edinburgh International Festival of Architecture, Building & Design. It will also be on view at the Centre Contemporània de Cultura in Barcelona, Spain (19 February to mid-April, 1996).

### **The Major Stages of Americanism**

When site engineers and architects from Europe visited Chicago for the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893, they looked behind the official, historicizing fantasy of the "White City" and discovered a surprising new landscape of iron- and steel-frame buildings and advanced mechanical systems. From then on, the European attitude toward America was transformed – a transformation that was confirmed as students of the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris sharpened their wits on projects with American themes. Following the First World War, when rebuilding and modernization became urgent priorities, Europeans looked to America for innovations such as Taylor's scientific management

techniques, assembly line production plants, and the skyscraper which they introduced to their cities – Paris, Brussels, Berlin, and even Moscow. After the Second World War, American building methods, such as the prefabricated house, were widely imitated and Europeans came to share America's infatuation with mechanization. In Great Britain, in particular, the circulation of illustrated magazines, comic strips, and images of daily life from America led architects of the 1950s to anticipate pop art and the new architectural utopias of the 1960s.

### **A Monograph on Americanism**

***Scenes of the World to Come*** is accompanied by a monograph written by Jean-Louis Cohen, with a preface by Hubert Damisch, Directeur d'études at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales in Paris. Published jointly by the CCA and Flammarion, the book traces the evolution of Americanism and features illustrations of most of the works presented in the exhibition. The 250-page book is available at the CCA Bookstore in both French and English for \$49.95.

### **The "American Century" Exhibition Series**

***Scenes of the World to Come: European Architecture and the American Challenge, 1893-1960*** is the first of five exhibitions in **The American Century**, a series that casts a fresh eye on critical aspects of modern America's architectural culture – its promises and disappointments, its roots and offshoots, its unparalleled world-wide impact. Running in sequence at the CCA from June 1995 through summer 1998, with the exhibitions continuing to travel in North America, Europe, and Asia until the year 2000, **The American Century** has been organised by Phyllis Lambert, Director of the CCA, drawing on the talents of an international roster of artists, architects, historians, critics, anthropologists, and other scholars. Other exhibitions in the series focus on Frank Lloyd Wright's 1920s proposals for buildings in the American wilderness, envisioning a reintegration of the human and natural worlds (summer 1996); Frederick Law Olmsted's visionary ideal of the landscaped city, and the fate of his work today (fall 1996); Disney theme parks as an expression of the ideals and ideologies of the television age (summer

1997); and the suburban lawn in the enactment of cultural, civic and family roles in post-war America (summer 1998). Each of the exhibitions in the series will be accompanied by a major publication.

### **A Film Series in Conjunction with the Exhibition**

A four-part film series presented in conjunction with ***Scenes of the World to Come*** offers another perspective on “americanism” and its impact on urban life in some of Europe’s major centres. Organised jointly by the CCA and the Cinémathèque québécoise and presented in the Paul-Desmarais theatre of the CCA every Thursday evening at 6:30 pm from 24 August through 14 September 1995, the series features Soviet, German and French classics *L’Homme à la caméra* (24 August), *Berlin, symphonie d’une grande ville* (31 August), *Metropolis* (7 September) and *À nous la liberté* (14 September). Admission is free but seating is limited.

**Transportation assistance has been provided by the Consulat général de France in Montréal.**

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Information: [www.cca.qc.ca/press](http://www.cca.qc.ca/press)