

communiqué / press release

For immediate release

Actions: What You Can Do With the City

On view 26 November 2008 until 19 April 2009, new CCA exhibition challenges visitors to think differently about how to walk, play, recycle, and garden in order to reshape the city



Parkour Montréal, 2007 © Rachel Granofsky

Pasture in the City project, Turin, April 2008
© Daniele Hosmer Zambelli

Montréal, 20 November 2008 — The Canadian Centre for Architecture (CCA) presents ***Actions: What You Can Do With the City***, an exhibition of 99 actions that instigate positive change in contemporary cities around the world. Seemingly common activities such as walking, playing, recycling, and gardening are pushed beyond their usual definition by the international architects, artists, and collectives featured in the exhibition. Their experimental interactions with the urban environment show the potential influence personal involvement can have in shaping the city, and challenge fellow residents to participate.

On view from 26 November 2008 until 19 April 2009, ***Actions: What You Can Do With the City*** is curated by CCA Director and Chief Curator Mirko Zardini and CCA Curator for Contemporary Architecture Giovanna Borasi. The exhibition and its accompanying publication present specific projects by a diverse group of activists whose personal involvement has initiated vital transformation in today's cities. These human motors of change include architects, engineers, university professors, students, children, pastors, artists, skateboarders, cyclists, pedestrians, municipal employees, and many others who address the question of how to improve the urban experience. Their actions push against accepted norms of behaviour in cities, at times even challenging legal limitations. The individuals and groups presented in the exhibition employ a range of approaches, from skating and parkour to dumpster diving and urban foraging. Some engage architecture directly by finding new uses for abandoned buildings, while others create tools for guerilla

gardening. In their individual critiques of urban modes of production and consumption, these actors share a conviction that the traditional processes of top-down civic planning are insufficient, and new approaches and tools must be developed from the ground level upwards.

“The exhibition gathers up but a minimum of the new actions we find with increasing frequency in today’s urban environment. They reveal the existence of a world rich in inventiveness and imagination, alien to our contemporary modes of consumption,” said CCA Director and exhibition co-curator Mirko Zardini; “These actions propose alternative lifestyles, reinvent our daily lives, and reoccupy urban space with new uses.”

Actions: What You Can Do With the City features international contemporary architectural projects, design concepts, and research conveyed through a range of materials including architectural drawings, photographs, videos, publications, artefacts, and websites. The 99 distinct actions presented in the exhibition are drawn from a larger number identified by the curators. They include projects related to the production of food and urban agriculture; the planning and creation of public spaces to strengthen community interactions; the recycling of abandoned buildings for new purposes; the appropriation of urban sites into terrain for play, such as soccer, climbing, skateboarding, or parkour; the alternate use of roads for walking or rail lines as park space; the design of clothing to circumvent urban barriers against loitering or resting on benches; and many others. The exhibition places particular emphasis on the activists’ tools, which comprise unusual materials ranging from large-scale inflatables and fruit-collecting dresses to seed-bomb rocket launchers and wheelbarrow-bicycle hybrids. Included are masks disguising children as horses, or sneakers customised for sliding along railings.

The design concept for the exhibition is by Andrea Sala, Milan, and the graphic design including display brochures is by Project Projects, New York City.

ACTIONS PUBLICATION

Actions: What You Can Do With the City is accompanied by a book of the same title, which presents original research and writing that further examines the exhibition’s exploration of how the design and experience of contemporary cities can be shaped by human actions. International in scope, the 30 essays are published for the first time and include personal observations by a range of activists alongside scholarly reflections on the positive impact these individual initiatives have on the city. The texts are interspersed with 34 specific actions drawn from the exhibition.

Introductory essays by the editors Mirko Zardini and Giovanna Borasi provide historical perspective and establish the curatorial framework for the exhibition and publication.

Original essays are contributed by Jochen Becker, Vikram Bhatt, Katrin Bohn, Brendan M. Brogan, Coloco, Henk Döll, Fergus the Forager, Omar Freilla, George J. Grella Jr., Fritz Haeg, Tali Hatuka, Dan Hill, Sarah Hill, Ocean Howell, Hans Ibelings, Momoyo Kaijima, David Ker Thomson, Zoe Laughlin, Sonia Lavadinho, Nina-Marie Lister, Alejandra López, Thomas Leo Ogren, Emily Rauhala, Richard Reynolds, Debra Solomon, Yoshiharu Tsukamoto, Jeroen van Nieuwenhuizen, and Andre Viljoen.

Co-published by Canadian Centre for Architecture, Montréal, and SUN, Amsterdam, the catalogue is designed by Novak, Amsterdam. The 240-page, soft-cover book includes 70 colour and black and white illustrations, and features a folded poster as cover wrap. The volume is available as of 1 December 2008 at the CCA Bookstore in English and French editions for \$42.95 CAD/USD.

ACTIONS ONLINE

The exhibition is accompanied by the website www.cca-actions.org, which presents a toolkit to inspire actions in the city. This databank of individual actions featured in the exhibition can be sorted and browsed in multiple ways, including by the type of tool employed in the action or the curatorial organisation of the exhibition. The website features photographs and video resources, and challenges users to respond by posting their own thoughts or initiatives on how to improve the city through individual action.

The website is created by Bluesponge, Montréal, with creative direction by Marian Kolev and concept by Mouna Andraos. The CCA's online initiatives are led by Steffen Boddeker, Director of Communications, with Alexandra McIntosh, Editor, CCA Website.

CURATORIAL TEAM

Actions: What You Can Do With the City is curated by Giovanna Borasi and Mirko Zardini, with Lev Bratishenko, Meredith Carruthers, Daria Der Kaloustian, and Peter Sealy.

Giovanna Borasi is CCA Curator of Contemporary Architecture since 2005. She curated the exhibitions *Some Ideas on Living in London and Tokyo* by Stephen Taylor and Ryue Nishizawa (2008); *1973: Sorry, Out of Gas* (with Mirko Zardini, 2007); and *Environment: Approaches for Tomorrow* on the work of Gilles Clément and Philippe Rahm (2006). Before joining the CCA, she co-curated *House Sweet Home, Different Ways to Live*, Spazio Ventisette, Milan (2000), and collaborated on several exhibitions with Mirko Zardini including *Asphalt, The Character of Cities* at the Milan Triennale (2003). Borasi was an editor and writer for *Lotus International* and *Navigator*. She served as Assistant Editor for

the book series *Quaderni di Lotus*, and was a member of the editorial staff of *Lettera*, the graphic design supplement to *Abitare*.

Mirko Zardini is the Director and Chief Curator of the CCA since 2005. Under his direction, the CCA is deepening its commitment to investigating the social, environmental, and political issues facing contemporary architecture through its exhibitions, publications, programs, and internationally acclaimed research centre. At the CCA, he curated the exhibitions *1973: Sorry, Out of Gas* (with Giovanna Borasi, 2007), *Sense of the City* (2005), *Out of the Box: Price, Rossi, Stirling + Matta-Clark* (2004), and has initiated a series of exhibitions developed with universities including Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Princeton University, and Columbia University. Zardini is a practicing architect whose research, writings, and design projects engage contemporary architecture, its transformations, and its relationship with the city and landscape. He has taught at prestigious architectural schools, including the Swiss Federal Polytechnic University in Zurich and Lausanne, Harvard University, and Princeton University, and is a former editor of *Casabella* magazine and *Lotus International*.

ABOUT THE CCA

The CCA is an international research centre and museum founded in 1979 on the conviction that architecture is a public concern. Based on its extensive collection, the CCA is a leading voice in advancing knowledge, promoting public understanding, and widening thought and debate on the art of architecture, its history, theory, practice, and role in society today.

Actions: What You Can Do With the City is part of the CCA's ongoing exploration of key issues in contemporary architecture with a specific focus on urban, social, and environmental concerns. The exhibition follows *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), the groundbreaking exhibition dedicated to the sensory dimensions of urban life that have traditionally been ignored or repressed.

PARTNERS

The CCA thanks Hydro-Québec and RBC Financial Group for their generous support of the exhibition.

The CCA gratefully acknowledges the generous support of the Ministère de la Culture et des Communications et de la Condition féminine, the Canada Council for the Arts, the



Department of Canadian Heritage, the Conseil des arts de Montréal and the Department of Canadian Heritage.

###

Information: www.cca.qc.ca/press