

communiqué /press release

For immediate release

Sense of the City

An Alternate Approach to Urbanism

Montréal, 25 October 2005 – From **26 October 2005** to **10 September 2006**, the Canadian Centre for Architecture presents *Sense of the City*, a major exhibition dedicated to the theme of urban phenomena and perceptions which have traditionally been ignored, repressed, or maligned. Challenging the dominance of the visual in the urban environment, the exhibition proposes a re-thinking of latent qualities of the city, offering complex analyses of the comforts, communication systems, and sensory dimensions of urban life—thus advancing a new spectrum of experience and engagement.

"The most banal and ubiquitous phenomena," remarked curator and CCA director designate Mirko Zardini, "like asphalt, the second crust of the earth, cacophonies of everyday sounds and smells, competing light effects, manipulations of temperature and climate, heat and cold, the junk and graffiti that disfigure buildings and streets, as well as the subtle, mostly hidden signs of regeneration in the urban environment, will be presented through artefacts and images that collectively suggest the rich array of urban experiences and behaviours lying just beyond traditional interpretations of the city."

The communicative and symbolic character of the contemporary city has until now resided primarily in visual phenomena. Smell has been systematically erased from the urban domain in the name of hygiene, the outcome of a process which had begun by the 14th century. A barrage of electronic sounds and ambient noise today pervades the social space once reserved largely for verbal communication, driving pedestrians and motorists to retreat into controlled personal soundscapes. Tactility is largely unexplored as a means of navigating and understanding the city, while continuous efforts are made to neutralize or conquer variations in temperature. *Sense of the City* explores overlooked modes of perception, offering a complex analysis of urban phenomena and proposing a new 'sensorial' approach to urbanism.

Sense of the City will be presented in five interrelated sections focusing on fundamental sensory conditions and technological interventions in the urban environment: *nocturnal city*, *seasonal city*, *sound of the city*, *surface of the city*, and *air of the city*. The materials exhibited will include drawings, photographs, artefacts, maps, printed ephemera, models, installations, videotapes, projections, recorded sounds, and odours.

A catalogue of the same name will accompany the exhibition, co-published by the CCA and Lars Müller Publishers, and edited by Mirko Zardini. Following the thematic structure of the exhibition, the book comprises a critical interpretation of the city through sensory experience. With an introduction by Mirko Zardini and a preface by Phyllis Lambert, the volume features essays by cultural historians Constance Classen and Wolfgang Schivelbusch, anthropologist David Howes, urban designer and planner Norman Pressman, and historian Emily Thompson. In keeping with the synaesthetic and heterogenous character of the contemporary city, it juxtaposes text and image in a format that is open to multiple readings. Insightfully illustrated with over 400 colour and black and white images, the 350-page catalogue will be published in English and French editions. Available at the CCA Bookstore at a cost of \$60.00 CAD, *Sense of the City* will also be distributed internationally.

Born in Verona, Italy, Mirko Zardini is an architect whose research, writings, and design projects engage contemporary architecture, its transformations, and its relationship with the city and the landscape. A former editor of *Casabella* magazine and *Lotus international*, Mr. Zardini also served on the editorial board of *Domus* magazine. He has taught design and theory at various architectural schools, including the Swiss Federal Polytechnic University in Zurich, and Harvard University. Among his numerous publications, the most recent is *Asphalt* (Milan, 2003), the result of in-depth research on the character of the contemporary city for a series of exhibitions, of which *Asphalt* (Milan Triennale, Spring 2003) was the first. He conceived the innovative exhibition *Out of the Box: Price, Rossi, Stirling + Matta-Clark* for the Canadian Centre for Architecture in 2004.

The Canadian Centre for Architecture is an international research centre and museum founded on the conviction that architecture is a public concern. Based on its extensive collections, 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.

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