

communiqué /press release**For immediate release****Dieter Appelt: The Catastrophe of Things**

From 17 April to 4 August 1996

In the Octagonal Gallery

Montréal, 16 April 1996 – The Canadian Centre for Architecture presents the exhibition **Dieter Appelt: The Catastrophe of Things** in its Octagonal Gallery from 17 April to 4 August 1996. The exhibition brings together 26 images of the attic of the Künstlerhaus Bethanien in Berlin. A former hospital designed by Ludwig Persius and Theodor Stein and built in 1845–47, the building has housed the Künstlerhaus Bethanien, an art centre in Mariannenplatz in the heart of the Turkish district of Kreuzberg since 1970. For the Künstlerhaus, Appelt made an installation of his Bethanien photographs, selecting 26 images which he accompanied with 26 sheets of paper each bearing the sentence “Die Katastrophe der Dinge ist ihre Realität” (“The catastrophe of things is their reality”) translated into a different language.

Dieter Appelt’s work, which began in the late 1950s, has been deeply involved with exploring the relationship of the artist to his physical and cultural space, constantly experimenting with the language of photography through series of images. *Bethanien* comprises a series of analytical views in which Appelt investigates the surface of wooden beams, and the interconnection of light, time, and space. He deliberately creates images that are not instantaneous; he experiments with extended and multiple exposures, sometimes with superposed negatives, recording a succession of states and creating the illusion of manifold dimensions in a single image.

Fascinated by sites charged with history, Appelt uses his examination of the attic to inquire into the invisible, mysterious, and indefinite forces of decay that lie beyond our experience. By concentrating on structural details, and by confronting the surfaces of the

wooden beams, he has photographed the attic in such a way that it becomes a new reality, marked by the corrosive signs of passing time. "I want more from photography than a representation of what an object is," he once declared. "I want to transform the simplest constructions and create a new cosmos."

This exhibition of one of the most important German photographic artists confirms the CCA's interest in documenting the most advanced and significant projects in contemporary photography, and in presenting to the public different approaches to the complexity of architecture at the present time. Consistent with previous initiatives, such as the exhibition **Letters from the People: Photographs by Lee Frielander** (presented in the Octagonal Gallery of the CCA in the fall of 1993), this exhibition is an opportunity to reflect upon the possibilities of representation of the spaces in which we live, and the variety of possible confrontations with our environment, setting the premises for a new program of activities of the CCA's Photographs Collection.

Dieter Appelt was born in 1935 in Niemegek, Germany. He studied music at the Mendelssohn Bartholdy Akademie, Leipzig, then at the Hochschule der Musik in Berlin. In addition to music, he studied experimental photography and art at the Hochschule für bildende Künste in Berlin, under Heinz Hajek-Halke's supervision. He was employed by the Deutsche Oper in Berlin from 1961 until 1979, when he left to concentrate exclusively on visual arts. In 1982 he was appointed head of the department for film, video, and photography at the Hochschule für bildende Künste. There have been numerous presentations of Appelt's photographic work, including a recent retrospective organized by the Art Institute of Chicago (1994), which was also shown at the Musée du Québec (1995). Dieter Appelt produced *Bethanien* (1984–1991) in an edition of three. This exhibition of the artist's proof has been curated by Paolo Costantini, Curator, Photographs Collection of the CCA.