

communiqué /press release**For immediate release****Luigi Ghirri/Aldo Rossi: Things Which Are Only Themselves**

From 21 August to 24 November 1996

In the Octagonal Gallery

"There is a mosque in Isfahan in which, when you stand at a certain place, the least sound, from a word to the snap of your fingers, is echoed seven times. Rossi's architecture evokes for me the same feeling of the miraculous: no matter where one stands or under what light one sees it... it becomes like the spreading and multiplication of an echo, reverberating between memory and invention."

– Luigi Ghirri

Montréal, 21 August 1996 – The Canadian Centre for Architecture presents the exhibition **Luigi Ghirri/Aldo Rossi: Things Which Are Only Themselves** in the Octagonal Gallery from 21 August to 24 November 1996. The exhibition brings together a critical selection of 39 photographs by the late Luigi Ghirri on the architectural work of Aldo Rossi, as well as a montage of Polaroid photographs made by Aldo Rossi himself and never shown before.

Luigi Ghirri/Aldo Rossi: Things Which Are Only Themselves is the first exhibition in a new CCA series concerned with the intersection between architecture and photography as it relates to the development and perception of the built world in our time. It represents a visual dialogue between two leading figures in contemporary Italian art and culture. Their discussion is based on a sympathy between photographer and architect that is grounded in a shared fascination for a region – the Padana of northern Italy – and a shared belief both in the autonomous eye of the photographer and in the potential of that eye to reveal something new to the architect.

Ghirri first came upon Aldo Rossi's works in the late 70s, as he journeyed through the landscape of the Po Valley. The works, he recalled, amazed him "not because they belonged to the category of the unusual or the abstruse, but because they were at once immediately familiar and yet mysterious: an extraordinary fusion of the rediscovered and the never-before-seen, of the known and the unknown... I also liked the courage and civility with which Rossi was able to forget himself, leaving to space, materials, and volumes the task of becoming architecture for us, letting time and use add meaning."

With his photographs of Modena Cemetery in 1983, Ghirri began an examination of Rossi's work that would deepen – over the nine years left him – into an intense dialogue, through which both advanced their ideas in unexpected ways. For Ghirri, the encounter with Rossi's buildings transformed his notion of architectural photography, which he had come to see as a set of stale conventions, the last step in the process of authentication by which a building moved from concept to published realization, and, with its effort to create a static and precise iconography, as "still-lives" –more like photography of models than of buildings. Confronted by the apparent simplicity and linearity of Rossi's constructions, Ghirri discovered their inherent vitality, and set about trying to capture the surprises and variations offered by changes in light, little movements through space, and unexpected resonances between a building and its surroundings. As he probed further, Ghirri began to share in Rossi's investigation of the elements of form, and to find in their rediscovery layers of memory, melancholy and meaning.

The work that results – seeking the unexpected, rejecting any kind of visual or emotional shock, constructing images in a rigorously frontal fashion – reasserts the autonomy of the observer as it recognizes the autonomous character of the object observed. Rossi was quick to recognize Ghirri's work as a "discourse" with his own, and to learn from it: "Ghirri's photographs of my work as well as my studio are that 'something new' that only an artist recognizes. And I see in them something I was looking for but never found." From his reading of Ghirri's work, and from its ready recognition of the essential characteristics of his architecture, Rossi found a new symbolic force in his forms rather than exhausting them, discovering in the "universe of rigorously selected signs... stripped-down and essential figures... the language in which silent objects speak."

It should come as no surprise that Ghirri took a profound interest in the Polaroids taken by Rossi in recent decades, seeing in them a concealed passion, the “secret” images of the architect. In them anonymous building facades mingle with his own work, sacred images with billboards, the houses and interiors of a Shaker village with the baroque facades of churches in Lecce. Ghirri called the Polaroids “puzzles that are solved with the heart”, quoting a phrase that he loved to repeat as a definition of photography: “a tangle of monuments, lights, thoughts, objects, moments and metaphors forming the landscape we are searching for in our minds... as would the points of an imaginary compass, which indicates a possible direction.”

The exhibition **Luigi Ghirri/Aldo Rossi: Things Which Are Only Themselves** is curated by Paolo Costantini, Curator of the CCA’s Photographs Collection. Aldo Rossi will lecture on Luigi Ghirri on Thursday 7 November at 6 pm in the Théâtre Paul-Desmarais. Admission is free but seating is limited.

The accompanying catalogue, co-published by CCA and Electa, reproduces all the photographs presented in the exhibition, along with a preface by CCA Director Phyllis Lambert, an introductory essay by the curator, Paolo Costantini, a text by Luigi Ghirri on Rossi, and a text by Aldo Rossi on Ghirri written especially for this occasion. Priced at \$34.95 (Canadian) and published in French, English, and Italian, the 84-page book will be on sale at the CCA Bookstore.

Luigi Ghirri/Aldo Rossi: Things Which Are Only Themselves will be on view in several galleries in Europe and the United States from 1997 to 1998.

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Information: www.cca.qc.ca/press