

communiqué / press release**For immediate release****CCA presents *Utopia's Ghost: Postmodernism Reconsidered***

On view 28 February to 25 May 2008, the exhibition includes original works by Peter Eisenman, John Hejduk, Aldo Rossi, James Stirling and others in a new interpretation of postmodern architecture.

Montréal, 11 February 2008 — From 28 February until 25 May 2008, the Canadian Centre for Architecture (CCA) presents the exhibition ***Utopia's Ghost: Postmodernism Reconsidered***, providing an unorthodox reinterpretation of the postmodern period. The result of a research seminar led by Reinhold Martin at Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation, *Utopia's Ghost* is the third in the CCA's ongoing series of exhibitions developed in collaboration with university students.

Reflecting the spirit of the research seminar, the installation fills the walls of the CCA Octagonal Gallery by juxtaposing original works against a grid of duplicated reference images assembled by the student curators. The work of internationally renowned architects Peter Eisenman, Michael Graves, John Hejduk, Arata Isozaki, Aldo Rossi, James Stirling, Robert Venturi, and others is presented through models, drawings, and renderings from the CCA's extensive collection of architectural archives.

The exhibition title wall features a photomural depicting the dramatic implosion of the high-modernist St. Louis housing project Pruitt-Igoe designed by the architectural firm Leinweber, Yamasaki & Hellmuth in 1950-54. This spectacular and much publicized demolition in 1972 marked not only a public expression of the failure of certain modernist ideologies embodied by the project, but could subsequently be interpreted as a moment of "birth" for the postmodern period. According to Reinhold Martin, much of the architectural production of the past half-century has been haunted by the ghosts of modernist utopias: "the projects documented in the exhibition are understood as bearers of a latent discourse that contradicts the very same anti-utopian currents that many of these projects have been thought to represent."

The exhibition draws attention to an uncanny presence of the modernist notions that had been declared dead. The reproductions and originals representing a selection of projects of the 1970s and '80s take on the character of evidence assembled within five subject groups that trace a utopian afterlife: *Babble/Babel*, *Islands*, *Roads to Nowhere*, *(In)human Scale*, and *Worlds within Worlds*. In this reorganisation, the curators

challenge the traditional understanding of postmodernism and offer a new framework for approaching the architecture of this period.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

The exhibition is a result of the research seminar "Utopia's Ghost: Postmodernism Reconsidered," conducted at the Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation (GSAPP) in Fall 2006 and with a different group of students in Fall 2007. Led by Reinhold Martin, the first group of students developed a series of concepts for tracking the ghost or ghosts of utopia in a wide range of architectural works conventionally understood as postmodern. These concepts were first explored in a small prototype exhibition at the GSAPP in December 2006.

The second group of students worked in collaboration with CCA curators, archivists, and other staff to extend and develop these concepts in the context of the CCA collections. The resulting exhibition is built around material from the CCA's substantial holdings in architectural archives from this period. The curatorial team included Cristina Goberna, Brian Ackley, Marta Caldeira, Meir Lobaton Corona, Greta Hansen, Katherine Heck, Nika Grabar, Sharif Khalje, Karen Kubey, Ciro Miguel, Troy Therrien, Susan Thompson, Eirini Tsachrelia, Dimitra Tsachrelia, Elena Vanz and Micheal Young.

Reinhold Martin is Associate Professor of Architecture in the Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation at Columbia University, where he directs the PhD program in Architecture, and the MS program in Advanced Architectural Design. He is a founding co-editor of the journal *Grey Room*, a partner in the firm of Martin/Baxi Architects, and has published widely on the history and theory of modern and contemporary architecture. Martin is the author of *The Organizational Complex: Architecture, Media, and Corporate Space* (MIT Press, 2003) and co-author, with Kadambari Baxi, of *Entropia* (Black Dog, 2001) and *Multi-National City: Architectural Itineraries* (ACTAR, 2007).

RELATED PROGRAMS

During the course of the exhibition, the CCA will host a series of related public programs, including a gallery talk on Thursday, **28 February** at **7 pm** with members of the Columbia University curatorial team and Reinhold Martin.

ABOUT THE CCA

Utopia's Ghost is the third in a series of CCA projects developed in association with universities, and forms part of the CCA's mandate as an international research centre to initiate partnerships with academic and cultural institutions worldwide.



Previous exhibitions are *Clip/Stamp/Fold 2: The Radical Architecture of Little Magazines 196X – 197X*, in collaboration with Princeton University and Beatriz Colomina (2007); and *Inside the Sponge: Students Take on MIT Simmons Hall*, in collaboration with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's SENSEable City Laboratory (2006).

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 collections, 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.

FUNDING

The CCA thanks RBC Financial Group for its support of the exhibition and public programs.

The CCA gratefully acknowledges the generous support of the Ministère de la Culture et des Communications du Québec, the Canada Council for the Arts, the Department of Canadian Heritage, and the Conseil des arts de Montréal.

#

High-resolution digital images are available from the CCA press website at [**www.cca.qc.ca/press**](http://www.cca.qc.ca/press) under "Exhibitions." The login is **general** and the password is **journal**.

Media Contact: Isabelle Huiban
Head of Press Relations
Tel: (514) 939 7001 ext. 2607
Fax: (514) 939 7034
Email: ihuiban@cca.qc.ca