

## communiqué /press release

For immediate release

**CCA presents original commissioned works by British artist Victor Burgin inspired by a Fratacci photograph in its collection****Tangent e | Victor Burgin: Voyage to Italy, on view 7 December 2006 to 25 March 2007**

*Basilica II* (2006).  
CCA Collection © Victor Burgin

Montréal, 9 November 2006 — From 7 December 2006 until 25 March 2007, the Canadian Centre for Architecture (CCA) presents **Victor Burgin: Voyage to Italy**, a *Tangent* exhibition featuring new works commissioned by the CCA. British conceptual artist Victor Burgin has created formally powerful black and white photographs and an evocative video that engage the timeless beauty and lasting resonance of a Carlo Fratacci photograph of Pompeii. Conceived by Hubertus von Amelunxen, visiting curator of the CCA Photographs Collection, the *Tangent* exhibition series seeks to bring contemporary artists into dialogue with the CCA's rich collection.

Presented in the Octagonal Gallery, the exhibition comprises Burgin's two photographic series and video projection, as well as the nineteenth-century photograph by Carlo Fratacci that inspired them. Fratacci's image of the Basilica at Pompeii derives from an album of 26 albumen silver prints in the CCA Photographs Collection entitled *Principales Vues de Pompéi par Charles Fratacci, Naples 1864*. The photograph depicts a wide flight of stone steps in the foreground leading to a rectangular space flanked by broken colonnades. Standing in this space is a woman whose wide crinoline skirt and broad brimmed hat give her a strong geometric presence. Likely included by Fratacci to lend the architecture a sense of scale, the figure becomes Burgin's main focus. Her placement among the columns and her field of view are Burgin's point of departure for a reflection on the architectural space as well as the emotional impact of a lonely figure among the ruins.

The ruins of Pompeii are understood by Burgin as a simultaneous moment of destruction and preservation: the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in AD 79 annihilated the city of Pompeii and its inhabitants while conserving the traces for later civilisations. The ruin thus acts as an archive of the past. Photographs perform a similar action, fixing a living

presence into a still image while capable of recalling a life long since ended. As Burgin writes, "every photograph is the trace of a previous state of the world, a vestige of how things were. The sum of all photographs is the ruin of the world."

Burgin is the third artist to participate in the *Tangent* series, following German photographer Dieter Appelt (2005) and Canadian artist Alain Païement (2003). The concluding *Tangent* exhibition, to be presented in autumn 2007, will feature Japanese photographer Naoya Hatakeyama.

## ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

A reflection on architecture and loss, on archives and ruins, *Victor Burgin: Voyage to Italy* is composed of three works created in 2006: *Voyage to Italy*, a single screen digital video projection with sound, and two series of black and white photographs accompanied by text, *Basilica I* and *Basilica II*. The Fratacci album, open to the image selected by Burgin, is on view at the entrance to the Octagonal Gallery. Burgin's photographic and textual essays are displayed in superposed horizontal rows within the gallery, while a separate space is created for the video projection.

*Basilica I* consists of 24 photographs and one text. Burgin photographed the 12 columns on each long side of the nave of the Basilica at Pompeii. The base of a broken Corinthian column dominates the foreground in each image, while the outer walls of the building are visible beyond. Variations in the background convey the photographer's movement from column to column, and a sense of the physical space of the excavated Basilica emerges. *Basilica II* features 17 photographs of the same site, taken at a greater distance. In the text portion of both series, a solitary figure is described as standing among the columns, and her depiction matches that of the woman from the Fratacci image. The video installation *Voyage to Italy* adds a melancholic narrative component to the overtly formal photographs. Burgin reworks still images to create virtual camera movements that glide in a slow, seamless panoramic journey around the site while a voiceover describes an alienated couple's visit to Pompeii.

## ABOUT VICTOR BURGIN

Over the past thirty-five years Victor Burgin has been highly influential both as an artist and as a theorist of the still and moving image. Burgin first came to prominence in the late 1960s as one of the originators of Conceptual Art. He participated in the exhibition *British Painting, British Pavilion*, at Expo 67 in Montréal. Initially working mainly in photography he turned to digital video when the technology became available in the early 1990s. Burgin is Professor Emeritus of History of Consciousness at the University of California, Santa Cruz. His academic books include *The Remembered Film* (2004),

*In/Different Spaces: Place and Memory in Visual Culture* (1996), *Some Cities* (1986), *The End of Art Theory: Criticism and Postmodernity* (1986), and *Thinking Photography* (1982). The many monographs of his visual work include *Relocating* (2002), *Victor Burgin* (2001), *Shadowed* (2000), and *Between* (1986). Burgin's photographic and video work is represented in such public collections as Museum of Modern Art, New York; Corcoran Gallery, Washington DC; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; The Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; The Tate Gallery, London; The Victoria and Albert Museum, London; and the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.

#### RELATED PROGRAM: ARTIST IN CONVERSATION

On the opening day of the exhibition, the CCA will host a conversation between Victor Burgin and Hubertus von Amelunxen on the formal and conceptual framework and the implications of *Voyage to Italy*. The free event will be held in the Paul Desmarais Theatre on **Thursday, 7 December** at **6 pm**.

#### EXHIBITION CATALOGUE

A catalogue accompanies the exhibition, published by Hatje Cantz (Ostfildern, Germany), and co-edited by Hubertus von Amelunxen and Thomas Zander. Burgin's photographic and video reflections on Pompeii are richly reproduced in duotone and accompanied by essays by the artist and curator. The volume is available at the CCA Bookstore at a cost of \$46.95 (CAD).

*Victor Burgin: Voyage to Italy* is presented at Galerie Thomas Zander, Cologne, from 19 September to 23 November 2006.

#### ABOUT THE CCA TANGENT SERIES

The *Tangent* exhibition series was conceived to engage artists in reflection on the relationship between photography and architecture, beginning with a body of photographs from the CCA's collection selected by Hubertus von Amelunxen. The commissioned works enter the CCA collection.

The Carlo Frattacci album that inspired Burgin is one of many remarkable works in the CCA's extensive holdings of Italian nineteenth-century photography. The contents of the collection include images of the classical monuments and ancient ruins of Rome, surveys of villas and gardens, and major works on such cities as Venice, Pompeii, Naples, and Florence.



The CCA Photographs Collection is dedicated to the history of photography as it relates to architecture and the built environment. Begun in 1974, it comprises more than 55,000 items dating from 1839 to today. The objective of the collection is to bring together works that will make it possible to study and understand the presence and role of photography in the representation—a cultural activity in itself—of architecture, the city, and landscape from the nineteenth through the twentieth centuries.

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.

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