



VANCOUVERISM: WESTCOAST ARCHITECTURE + CITY-BUILDING

Background on the Exhibition

For Release:

LONDON - *Vancouverism* was announced over half a century ago in a single visionary sketch—Arthur Erickson's then entirely hypothetical *Project 56* — a massive range of housing sweeping up from English Bay on the visual scale of the snow-capped mountains behind. A decade later in came Erickson's 1965 MacMillan Bloedel Office Tower - perhaps the best example of a Brutalist style office tower, anywhere. By the mid-1970s, the same Vancouver-born architect's Robson Square won international praise as a downtown set-piece, combining lush gardens, government offices, space-framed law courts, and an Edwardian courthouse turned-art-gallery—a diverse range of uses filling three entire city blocks.

Two of Erickson's staff architects on the Robson Square design have since gone on to re-design to shape Vancouver and its suburbs with their own firms, and their work is featured in the London exhibition. Hong Kong-born Bing Thom is re-invigorating Vancouver's multi-ethnic suburbs with bold new public spaces, innovative architecture, and unexpected combinations of ever more intensive uses of land in Surrey Central City and Richmond's Aberdeen Centre.

James K.M. Cheng's newly-opened Spectrum complex for Concord Pacific Developments is four 40-storey condo towers built literally on top of a 'big box' Costco store, the kind of hybrid of building types and functions only found in Vancouver now, but of great international interest as cities conserve energy by pushing density to the limit. Spectrum is a superior architectural resolution of Vancouver's characteristic downtown housing configuration: the thin-condo-towers-on-continuous-townhouse-base urban 'typology.'

The Canada House exhibition also features work from innovative engineers Fast + Epp, frequent collaborators with architects Erickson and Thom. Their firm is increasingly recognized as a global leader in structural uses of sustainably-harvest BC engineered wood. While Beijing 2008 and London 2012 have opted for steel and concrete for their Olympic structures, Fast + Epp span six hectares with a roof for the Vancouver-Whistler 2010 Speed Skating Oval *almost entirely made of wood*. This major piece of Olympic design will have its public and media debut at the 'Vancouverism' exhibition.

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Vancouverism: Westcoast Architecture + City-Building highlights how one of North America's most unusual and creative young cities is being transformed with new designs, and in turn, now Vancouver's city-building ideas are now shaping urban development, from Dallas to Dubai. The exhibition features architectural drawings, detailed models, stunning photographs, world debut video installations and demonstration constructions of a serpentine structure made from sustainably-harvested British Columbia timber.

Green, global, and generous of spirit, *Vancouverism* shines a light of hope for diverse urban life dwelling in balance with nature. The exhibition will tour to other European cities later in the year. *Vancouverism: Westcoast Architecture + City-Building* is produced by Trevor Boddy, and presented in London by the Morris and Helen Belkin Gallery of the University of British Columbia, and hosted by the Canadian High Commission at Canada House, Trafalgar Square

This exhibition has been generously supported by: British Columbia Forestry Innovation and Investment, the Canada Wood Export Programme through Natural Resources Canada, StructureCraft Builders Inc., Bing Thom Architects Inc., Fast and Epp Structural Engineers, James KM Cheng Architects, the Canada Council for the Arts, Architecture Program, Aeroplan, the Western Red Cedar Export Association and in-kind support from the Canadian High Commission, London.

For further information about the London Festival of Architecture visit: www.lfa2008.org.

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Media construction site tours are available from 10 June, upon prior booking, as well as interviews with the designers and Vancouverism creative director.

For more information and construction progress images, please contact:

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