

## **EXTRACTION wins national competition to represent Canada at the 2016 Venice Architecture Biennale**

*Ottawa, December 7, 2015* – A cutting-edge, multimedia exploration of our extractive industries and mineral lives is set to represent Canada at the 15th International Architecture Exhibition of the Venice Biennale, the Canada Council for the Arts announced today. Provocatively called *EXTRACTION*, the project will feature an installation, film and book addressing the ecologies and territories of resource extraction.

The project explores the architectures, histories and economies of Canada's culture of resource extraction, to profile the rise of a "global resource empire" where, in the words of revered political economist Harold Innis, "Canada has emerged as a political entity not in spite of geography, but because of it." Through the lens of the territorial infrastructures and political ecologies of resource urbanism, *EXTRACTION* engages contemporary and historic media across a range of cultural, spatial and industrial views. It brings together perspectives from business, history, art, activism and elsewhere, to radically rethink Canada's global position, as home to 75% of our planet's prospecting and mining companies.

The team is led by landscape urbanist Pierre Bélanger and includes:

- [OPSYS](#), a design and media organization managed by Christopher Alton and Zannah Matson, in collaboration with:
- Geoffrey Thün, Kathy Velikov and Colin Ripley of the architectural firm [RVTR](#),
- Nina-Marie Lister with Ryerson University's [Ecological Design Lab](#), and
- Kelsey Blackwell of Studio Blackwell,
- In the production of a multimedia exhibition project that features contributions from prominent Canadians including Michael Awad, Jennifer Baichwal, Edward Burtynsky, Nick de Pencier, Eriel Deranger, Max Haiven, Thomas King, Alessandra Ponte, John Van Nostrand, Mel Watkins and Suzanne Zeller to name a few.

As the Official Commissioner for *EXTRACTION*, Catherine Crowston and the [Art Gallery of Alberta](#) (AGA) will support the launch of the project in Venice on May 27, 2016. The project will tour in 2017 during the 150th commemoration of Canada's Confederation, with [The Walrus Foundation](#) as Official Media Sponsor.

## Quotes:

“It’s a great honour and responsibility to represent Canadian design in Venice. Canada has become a global resource culture – our operations, technologies, and services are nearly in every country on the surface of the earth, yet almost nobody knows the full extent of it. Imagine what natural resources are required to support contemporary urban life. Every time a building goes up, or a road gets laid, there’s a hole that gets dug into the ground across different territories. If resource extraction defines Canada at home and abroad, then it’s part of our contemporary culture and collective history. Every single Canadian is touched and implicated by the economies and infrastructures of extraction. What this mineral medium means and what it communicates – in its advantages, challenges, complexities and contestations – is imperative as we learn to share it with the world. At the base of this complex yet democratic conversation is the question of land, and landscape. That’s powerful.”

– Pierre Bélanger, Curator & Director, OPSYS

“*EXTRACTION* speaks to what Canada is in a deep, material and fundamental way. Many Canadian communities and institutions were built on a foundation of resources mining and distribution. This project will shed new light on Canada’s heritage, but also on our maturity and future as a nation. It will also challenge conventional understandings of what architecture is and does. The Venice Biennale is an unparalleled showcase for Canadian creators to reach international audiences through their work. With *EXTRACTION*, Pierre Bélanger has pulled together an extraordinary and multi-disciplinary team to explore one of the most complex and challenging issues of our time, showing once again the power of the arts to provoke thought, dialogue and learning for Canadian and global audiences.”

– Simon Brault, Director & CEO, Canada Council for the Arts

“The Art Gallery of Alberta (AGA) is honoured to be the National Commissioner for the *EXTRACTION* project. Resources run deep in Alberta, through the ground itself, but also through our economy, politics, land, daily life and ultimately through the province’s public identity and our own private lives. We are all connected – directly or indirectly – to resource extraction and, in Alberta, this connection is very strong, for we are conscious of both its benefits and the responsibilities this requires us to bear. The AGA is a forum for public discussion and debate about art and its connection to the world, and it is in this spirit that we proudly support the presentation of this important exhibition in Venice and to share *EXTRACTION* with Canadians in 2017.”

– Catherine Crowston, Executive Director & Chief Curator, Art Gallery of Alberta

## About the project:

- *EXTRACTION* premieres in Venice: May 27 to November 27, 2016.
- To learn more about the project and team, and to follow their progress, visit [www.extraction.ca](http://www.extraction.ca).
- The [Venice Architecture Biennale](#) is the world’s most prestigious showcase for new design projects by emerging talent, attracting over 350,000 visitors every two years. The [2016 Edition](#) is curated by Chilean architect and founder of ELEMENTAL, Alejandro Aravena.

- The Canada Council for the Arts convenes and administers the peer committee that selects the winning Venice Biennale projects. The peer committee for the 2016 edition was comprised of Peter Buchanan (freelance architectural writer and curator, London, England), Lise Anne Couture (Founding Partner, Asymptote Architecture, New York, USA), and Léa-Catherine Szacka (post-doctoral research fellow, Oslo Centre for Critical Architectural Studies, Oslo School of Architecture and Design, Norway).

### About the partners:

The Canada Council for the Arts is Canada's national public arts funder. We champion and invest in artistic excellence so that Canadians may enjoy and participate in a rich cultural life. In 2013-14, we allocated \$153.6 million towards artistic creation and innovation through our grants, prizes and payments. We also conduct research, convene activities and work with partners to advance the sector and help embed the arts more deeply in communities across the country.

OPSYS is a vanguard research and media organization producing knowledge, design and strategy based in Toronto and Boston since 2001. Founded by Pierre Bélanger, OPSYS collaborates on a wide range of infrastructural projects with government agencies, university institutions and resource industries. Past and present collaborators include the Ontario Food Terminal, ACME Environmentals, Jardin International de Métis, Brinkman & Associates Reforestation, YVR Vancouver International Airport Authority, Haitian Department of Civil Protection, and the World Bank.

Founded in 1924, the Art Gallery of Alberta is the oldest cultural institution in Alberta and the province's only dedicated art museum. Renowned as a centre of excellence for the visual arts in Western Canada, the AGA is focused on the development, presentation and interpretation of original exhibitions of contemporary and historical art from Alberta, Canada and around the world. In May 2015, the AGA opened the Poole Centre of Design, an integrated series of exhibitions and programs to encourage research and public discussion about contemporary issues in architecture and design

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