

MEDIA RELEASE

The Evidence Room opens at the ROM on June 25, 2017

Exhibition examines the devastating role of architecture in constructing Auschwitz

THE EVIDENCE ROOM

(Toronto — June 5, 2017) On **Sunday, June 25, 2017**, [*The Evidence Room*](#) opens at the **Royal Ontario Museum (ROM)**. This powerful exhibition examines the chilling role architecture played in constructing the Auschwitz death camp. Widely acclaimed as a critically important work on its debut at the 15th International Architecture Exhibition of the 2016

Venice Biennale, this haunting installation is on display in the ROM's Samuel European Galleries until Sunday, January 28, 2018.

Josh Basseches, the ROM's Director and CEO, says, "We are proud to bring this profoundly important exhibition to the ROM. By examining the Holocaust through the lens of architecture, *The Evidence Room* compels us to look at history in ways that help us better understand and acknowledge our responsibilities to one another."

The Evidence Room features reconstructions of key objects central to the research work of Dr. Robert Jan van Pelt, one of the three exhibition principals. His careful analysis of the architecture of Auschwitz, introduced as evidence in a landmark court case, established that it was purposefully designed as a death camp. This ground-breaking research became a source for a new and emerging discipline—architectural forensics—which encompasses architecture, technology, history, law, and human rights. The exhibition is a compelling illustration of the role of architectural forensics as a means to establish the past and capture collective memory.

Robert Jan van Pelt says: "Architecture can achieve good, even great things. Through the creation of public buildings and the articulation of public spaces it can teach us to live together, and in providing dwellings that transcend the immediate need for shelter it can make our lives more enjoyable. Yet architecture can also render harm. This exhibition, based on three decades of research, looks at the unfathomable damage wreaked by the discipline when architects set out to design a factory of death."

Designed by Waterloo architecture professors Donald McKay and Anne Bordeleau, *The Evidence Room* includes full-scale reconstructions of three key components of the Auschwitz gas chambers—a gas column, gas-tight door, and gas-tight hatch—augmented by more than 60 plaster casts of architectural evidence, including blueprints, architects’ correspondence, contractors’ bills, photographs, and drawings. Constructed entirely in white, the installation compels visitors to recognize the enormity of the calculated architectural decisions which culminated in the creation of a death chamber, and the reconstructed elements serve as silent material witnesses to the horrors of Auschwitz.

In preparation for this exhibition, the ROM bought together an advisory council consisting of a diverse group of community leaders to ensure its challenging themes were appropriately and sensitively addressed.

The exhibition will be included in related Secondary School Visits programs led by ROM Learning teachers. Related programming, including the popular ROMSpeaks and ROMConnects series, will take place throughout the exhibition’s engagement, many events in partnership with community organizations. More details to be announced soon.

The Evidence Room is included with Museum admission.

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Organized by the University of Waterloo School of Architecture

The Evidence Room was originally created for the 15th International Architecture Exhibition of the 2016 Venice Biennale by a team from the University of Waterloo School of Architecture, including O’Donovan Director Anne Bordeleau, architecture professors Donald McKay and Robert Jan van Pelt, independent curator and editor Sascha Hastings, and students and consultants. The installation at the ROM was co-curated by Anne Bordeleau, Donald McKay, Robert Jan van Pelt, with Waterloo alumna and project manager Piper Bernbaum, and a team of students.

Lead Patrons: Rob & Penny Richards, The Gerald Schwartz & Heather Reisman Foundation

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The ROM would also like to thank the following donors for helping make this exhibition possible: Hal Jackman Foundation, Ron and Vanessa Kimel & Family, KPMB Architects, Sam Mizrahi, Jonas & Lynda Prince, Sandra Simpson, Jay Smith & Laura Rapp, The Jack Weinbaum Family Foundation, Joy Cherry Weinberg & Family, Henry Wolfond & Rochelle Reichert, Donald McKay, Sr., and Dr. Paul Munk.

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About the ROM

Opened in 1914, the ROM showcases art, culture, and nature across time and around the globe. Among North America's most renowned museums, the ROM is Canada's largest with the dual mandate of natural history and world cultures. The Renaissance ROM expansion project (2007) preserved the best of the Museum's beautiful historic architecture while merging its iconic heritage building with the Studio Daniel Libeskind-designed Michael Lee-Chin Crystal. The ROM is the country's largest field research institution and an international leader in areas encompassing the visual arts, material culture and archaeology, biodiversity, palaeontology, and earth sciences — originating new information towards a global understanding of historical and modern change in the natural and cultural worlds. For tickets and 24-hour information in English and French, visit www.rom.on.ca or call 416.586.8000. For Membership enquiries, please call 416.586.5700.