

communiqué /press release**For immediate release****A NEW EXHIBITION AT THE CCA WILL EXPLORE
"A HEALTHY BODY IN A HEALTHY HOUSE"**

Starting 13 November 1991 at the Canadian Centre for Architecture

Montréal, 11 November 1991 – Corpus Sanum in Domo Sano (a healthy body in a healthy house) explores the spatial, professional, and gender implications of the nineteenth-century public-health movement through the architecture of the late Victorian middle-class home.

The exhibition offers a unique view of nineteenth-century domestic architecture; exploring far beyond the idea of architectural style, **Corpus Sanum in Domo Sano** investigates the house from the interior, from the perspective of the body. Victorian medical experts insisted that houses were like bodies - that buildings could be sick - and that healthy architecture entailed a "systematic" approach to domestic sanitation, drawing from the burgeoning field of physiology. This attitude resulted in new roles for medical doctors and for women in the design of an improved domestic environment.

The story is told in texts, images, and objects intended mostly for readers outside the architectural profession: popular magazines, advice books for women, Victorian advertisements, medical texts and illustrations, plumbing manuals, and trade catalogues. The exhibition also includes long-neglected design projects by Victorian doctors, who undermined the authority of Victorian architects through their seemingly "scientific" approach to architecture. As the impetus for health reform began in England, the focus of the exhibition is on British material; American and Canadian objects and images illustrate, however, how these same attitudes spread quickly to other parts of the English-speaking world.

Corpus Sanum in Domo Sano: The Architecture of the Domestic Sanitation Movement, 1870-1914 is also a lucid illustration of the similarity of some of today's health concerns to those of the Victorians. Our present - day "sick - building syndrome" - illnesses unwittingly generated through inadequate ventilation and the use of toxic

substances in modern buildings - recalls in many ways the destructive powers attributed by Victorians to architecture and cities. Even the medical symptoms arising from the use of certain materials resemble the health problems associated with the arsenical wallpaper, untrapped drains, and poor ventilation of houses built a century ago.

Therefore, the "environmental" approach to healthy buildings espoused today actually predates modern architecture by several decades, rather than emerging, as is often supposed, from the energy crisis of the 1970s. The idea of a healthy body in a healthy house was at the heart of nineteenth - century health reform. By reconstructing the shifting boundaries between the body, the room, the house, and the city, it is hoped that this exhibition will lead to a fuller understanding of the complexities of nineteenth-century urban life.

This exhibition, presented in the CCA's Hall Cases from 13 November 1991 to 16 February 1992, is curated by Annmarie Adams, Assistant Professor at the School of Architecture, McGill University. A bilingual brochure, published by the CCA, is available in the CCA Bookstore for \$7.95.