

CANADA Europa

United Kingdom

Canadian High Commission in London

A Fresh Look at the Essence of Canada: Two Innovative Canadian Design Exhibitions to open

The Canadian High Commission (London) has partnered with the Design Exchange – Canada's national design museum, education and research centre – and the Bark Design Collective – a West coast Canadian collective comprising of product, furniture and industrial designs – on two spectacular exhibitions at Canada House, Trafalgar Square.

"We are delighted to be hosting the London début of these two cutting-edge exhibits," said High Commissioner Mel Cappe. "Both exhibits will showcase progressive Canadian design in the UK, by putting innovative new spins on traditional Canadiana, and by showing the unique ways of how we see ourselves."

Douglas Coupland, known for his written works *Generation X* and *Girlfriend in a Coma*, has created a distinctive design exhibit entitled CANADA HOUSE. An established cultural observer of Canadian icons, Coupland has applied his insight into what it means to be Canadian by thoughtfully showing familiar Canadian materials and products in unexpected settings, and put to unusual use.

While thought-provoking, the exhibit is light-hearted and affectionate in tone, with a tongue-in-cheek approach to beloved Canadian materials. Among the many items are a set of floor lamps made from fishing floats found outside Newfoundland; a Thousand Dollar Quilt, replacing the native button blanket with loonies – the Canadian dollar coin depicted by the loon; and *Separate But Equal*, a sleek birch veneered tête-à-tête chair upholstered in red and blue lumberjack fabric.

Douglas Coupland is in London for the opening of the exhibition and media interviews. While in the UK, Coupland will also be bringing new writing and experiment to the first Royal Shakespeare Company New Work Festival in Stratford-upon-Avon by performing a three-part monologue entitled *September 10, 2001: Looking Back at the '90s*, about North America before 9/11.

Running parallel to the Coupland exhibit is RED+WHITE – a showcase of the necessities of contemporary Canadian living. The exhibit features products from 19 designers and companies that show the way Canadians use innovative materials and manufacturing processes. It also illustrates how geographic and cultural influences shape Canada's design ethos. Whimsical new lighting designs are a product of Canada's northern and nightly latitude. Ice Cider is a food invention combining both climatic and culinary influences. The World Clock can simultaneously keep time in Canada's five time zones. The Exosuit – a fitting design for a country with the longest coastline in the world – allows divers to descend to depths of 200 metres for 48 hours in the deep-sea dive suit. And the sleekly modern Float Tea Lantern serves the favoured beverage of Canadians of both English and Asian descent.

The exhibit features products from a broad cross-section of Canada's creative design community with items ranging from sporting apparel, shoe design and jewellery, to furniture, home accessories and glass. RED+WHITE reveals what Canada is made of and what Canadians are making in the 21st century.

Among others, Bark Collective member Christian Blyt, associate professor of industrial design at Emily Carr Institute of Art and Design and a specialist in the innovative uses of wood, will be present at the opening of RED+WHITE and available for interviews with interested media representatives.

CANADA HOUSE and RED+WHITE will run concurrently at Canada House, Trafalgar Square, in the large and small galleries respectively, from September 24, 2004, to January 21, 2005. The exhibits are open to the public from 10:00 am - 6:00 pm, Monday to Friday, and are free of charge.

A private media and VIP preview of the CANADA HOUSE and RED+WHITE exhibitions will be held at Canada House, Trafalgar Square, Cockspur Street Entrance, on Thursday, 23 September 2004 (6:00 - 8:00pm).

For information on the exhibitions and designers please contact:

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