

Public Spirit (Installation)

Public Spirit tells the story of Hirshhorn, Ontario, a town planned for the wilderness of Canada, but never built. The town was the brainchild of Joseph Hirshhorn, the uranium mine investor and founder of the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington, DC. Hirshhorn entrusted architect Philip Johnson with the design of the town. This installation was mounted as a *Directions* project for the Hirshhorn Museum in 2008-09. The research for the project was carried out with a Smithsonian Institution Artists Research Fellowship. The results of this research project were presented in four showcases, described in detail in the link below. Aside from the Smithsonian, documents were sourced from the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Getty Archives in Los Angeles, and the Canadian Architecture Archives in Calgary. In addition to the document showcases, the installation featured a 3 minute video, *Wilderness Utopia*, and a two-part sculpture *Private Enterprise | Public Spirit*, each with their own project page on this website.

Documentation: Installation views; views of showcases 1 through 4; layout views of showcases 1 and 2; details of three showcase documents, *Financial Post*, July 30, 1955, *Colliers Magazine*, October 2, 1953, *Canadian Art*, November, 1960

Terence Gower, 2008

Aluminum sculptures, digital video projection, four showcases with documents and artworks

Curator: Anne Ellegood

Showcase layout: James Peel

[Text: Showcase Guides](#)

[Brochure: Public Spirit](#)

[Text: Roulotte Magazine](#)

[Article: Washington Post](#)

[Article: Onsite Review](#)

[Link: National Post](#)

[Link: Canadian Architect](#)

[Link: Treehugger](#)

[Related Work: Private Enterprise | Public Spirit](#)

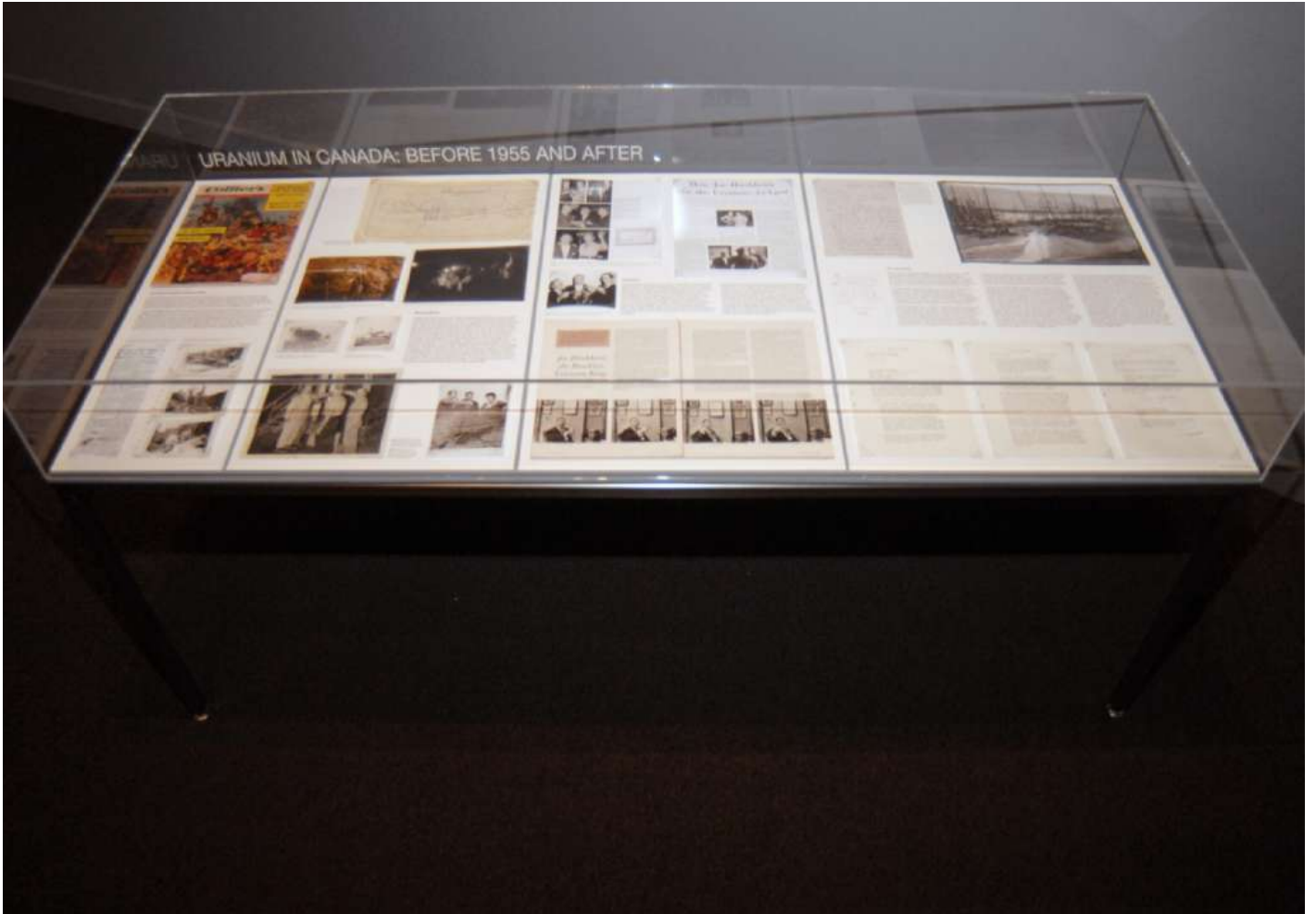
[Related Work: Wilderness Utopia](#)





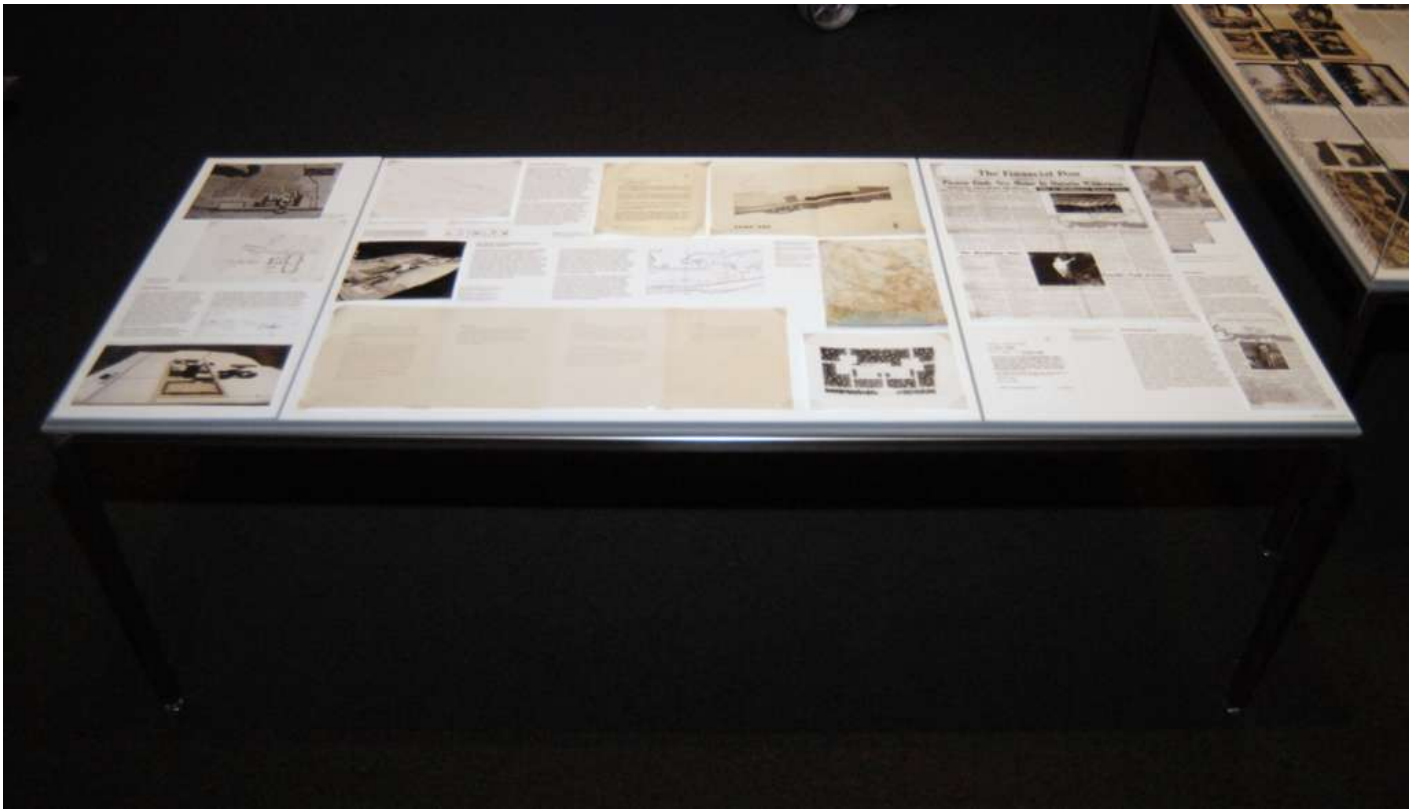


HIRSHHORN TOWN PROJECT: 1955

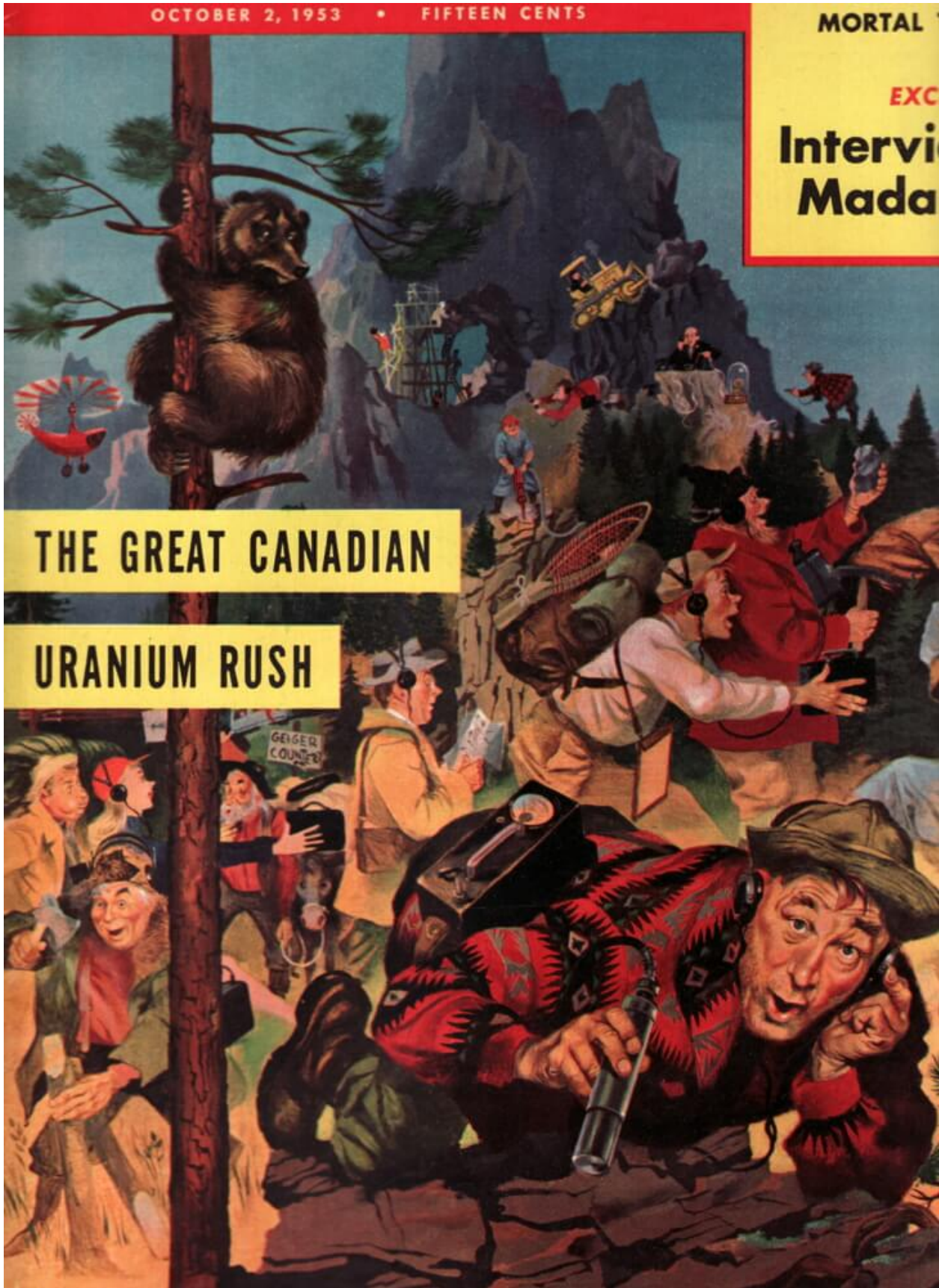


URANIUM IN CANADA: BEFORE 1955 AND AFTER

The display case contains several historical documents and photographs. On the left, there is a copy of *Collier's* magazine with the headline "The Struggles Of the Immigrants" and "The Great Canadian Struggle". Next to it is a map of Canada with a grid overlay, titled "PROPERTY & MINING AGREEMENTS". Below the map are two photographs: one showing a person in a dark environment, possibly a mine, and another showing a group of people. To the right of the map is a newspaper clipping titled "How Joe Hirschhorn Hit the Uranium Jackpot" with several photographs of Joe Hirschhorn. Below this is another newspaper clipping titled "Joe Hirschhorn, the Brooklyn Uranium King" with a photograph of him. On the far right, there is a large black and white photograph of a mine entrance with a stream of water flowing down a set of stairs. Below this are several columns of text, likely newspaper clippings or historical records, and a document with a signature.





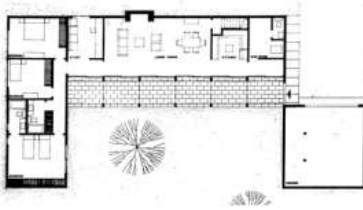




THE JOSEPH H. HIRSHHORN HOUSE

BLIND RIVER, ONTARIO

Architect: JOHN S. PARKS ASSOCIATES, Architects
and Engineers in partnership with STEVE JOHNSON,
A.I.A., New York City



Truly creative and adventurous domestic building is rare in Canada, no doubt because of the lack of inspired or inspiring clients. In developing the Blind River area Mr. Hirshhorn, whose patronage of the arts is well-known and whose collections of modern painting and sculpture are among the world's finest, envisaged a model town of contemporary design. Much work was done on this project, but unhappily, changing political and economic circumstances prevented Mr. Hirshhorn from realizing his dream.

Among the projects which reached completion was his own house and guest-house. This is sited on well-wooded, rolling land, facing Doodlegger's Bay, an inlet off Lake Huron. The estate had been shockingly despoiled but Mr. Hirshhorn has restored it to a remarkable example of the combination of man-made and natural beauty.

It is ironic that this house, like the Filberg house, should be so inaccessible to public view.

