

Press release

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## **Saint-Étienne: the French Design Capital Imports the Commerce Design Montréal Concept**

**Montréal, 10:30 a.m., Monday, September 29, 2003** — The organizers of Commerce Design Montréal took advantage of the closing ceremonies for the 9th edition of the contest to announce a new opening: a partnership with the city of Saint-Étienne, in France. For Commerce Design Montréal, a radically innovative initiative, this agreement with the French design capital holds the promise of international expansion.

The creation of “Commerce Design Saint-Étienne” was announced this morning at the press conference at Montréal City Hall. Saint-Étienne Mayor Michel Thiollière, represented by his assistant, Martine Brard, councillor responsible for Business and Crafts, explained how the new contest came to be: “It was at the latest Biennale internationale du Design in Saint-Étienne, in 2002, that a partnership was struck between our two cities. Our discussions in the fall were very encouraging, and led to an agreement allowing Saint-Étienne to draw on the expertise and skills developed in Montréal, to establish the attractive Commerce Design Montréal concept in France.”

Montréal Mayor Gérald Tremblay, for his part, expressed his great pride at this first international cloning of the Commerce Design Montréal contest, confirming once again that Montréal is a leader in promoting design quality. He also explained the importance of this agreement with the City of Saint-Étienne: “We have found ourselves the ideal European partner, since after all Saint-Étienne has stood out as the design capital in France year after year, thanks to its exceptionally dynamic approach.”

### **Saint-Étienne, the French design capital**

“Saint-Étienne is to design what Cannes is to film and Angoulême to comic strips,” according to the French Minister of Culture, Jean-Jacques Aillagon. The city has indisputably carved out a place for itself as a design centre. As further recognition of its status, the French government has chosen Saint-Étienne as the site of the future Centre international Design.

Indeed, on the strength of its industrial know-how and vibrant creativity, Saint-Étienne has been the meeting place of art and industry in France for over a century now. Its inventors have transformed themselves into artists, merging aesthetics with practicality and functionality. It was only natural, then, that the city’s deep-rooted identity and its ambition should have combined to make Saint-Étienne the French capital of design. This vocation can be seen today in a wide variety of institutions (the Musée d’Art moderne, the Musée d’Art et d’Industrie, the École des Beaux-Arts and others), emerging projects (the future Centre international Design, etc.) and events, the best known of which is certainly the Biennale internationale du Design.

### **A great deal for Montréal...**

Saint-Étienne's enviable position on the international design scene means that Montréal and its Commerce Design contest will enjoy excellent strategic visibility, since credit for the concept is to be included in all communications materials for the new Commerce Design Saint-Étienne contest. Moreover, in return for authorization to use the Commerce Design concept, Saint-Étienne has authorized Montréal to use its unique concept for the Biennale internationale du Design, if it wishes, and has agreed to provide Montréal with expert advice to help it launch this kind of event in North America. The City and its partners will be studying this option for Montréal in the very near future.

### **... and for Saint-Étienne**

On the other side of the Atlantic, this partnership is also a remarkably advantageous arrangement. Saint-Étienne becomes the first city in Europe to set up a Commerce Design contest, thereby reinforcing its status in its field of expertise. The contest is bound to prove a success in Saint-Étienne, since it will be able to apply all of Montréal's extensive experience. In particular, it will benefit from all the promotional methods and tools developed and refined over the first nine years of Commerce Design Montréal. Lastly, Saint-Étienne will also be using the material and graphic image of the contest, with its trophy, ballot box, logo, etc.

### **Commerce Design Montréal recognized worldwide**

In fact, with the signing of this partnership agreement between Montréal and Saint-Étienne, Commerce Design Montréal is entering a new phase in developing its international reputation. Remember that this excellent news from Europe comes one year after a similar triumph in the United States, as Commerce Design Montréal brought home the Outstanding Achievement Award 2002, the overall grand prize from the International Downtown Association, an organization that bills itself as the world leader in promoting downtown renewal. As these two consecutive successes on two different continents show, the Commerce Design Montréal contest is earning itself a remarkably far-reaching and high-profile reputation.

### **The Commerce Design Montréal contest and its partners**

Commerce Design Montréal is an initiative of the City of Montréal, conducted in partnership with the Quebec government. The 2003 edition was produced by the Société de développement de Montréal, with support from the Ordre des architectes du Québec, the Regroupement des centres-villes et des artères commerciales and the Fonds d'études et de recherches en design intérieur de l'Est. Every year since 1995 it has rewarded Montréal merchants for the overall quality of their design, achieved with the help of qualified professionals.

Commerce Design Montréal 2003 was produced with financial support under the Agreement on the Cultural Development of Montréal. The City's partners in the 2003 edition are the Quebec government - ministère des Affaires municipales, du Sport et du Loisir, ministère de la Culture et des Communications, ministère du Développement économique et régional; MétromédiaPlus and the STM; the SAQ; Air Canada; Hydro-Québec; Tourisme Montréal; the Montréal International Interior Design Show; *d. le design à la télé*; and the Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal.

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**Source and contacts**

Source: Commerce Design Montréal

Website: [www.commercedesignmontreal.com](http://www.commercedesignmontreal.com)

Media contacts: Hélène Reeves, Annie Boudrault

Reeves et Associés, conseillers en communication, (450) 656-4420