



Radical mobilities the motorway aesthetics on display of post-war Oslo

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In the spring of 1959, the British Road Federation's travelling exhibition *The Car and the City* was on display in Oslo. The exhibition consisted of a series of illustrated motorway projects and photographs of ongoing construction work; a rhetoric statement on behalf of the motorway as a wondrous feature in the urban landscape. In mediating the splendours of car-based infrastructure, the exhibition offered up a visual blueprint for the urban scenario that was about to emerge in Oslo. *The Car and the City* visited Oslo just as the municipal planning department was preparing to unleash a string of ambitious infrastructural plans for the city. This paper investigates how the exhibition influenced the

visualization of these plans and how the circulation of similar images from other sources informed the post-war architectural discourse on motorways in Oslo. While it may be difficult to trace the exact impact of one-off event like *The Car and the City*, the exhibition certainly mirrored the huge fascination with mobility that informed the post-war architectural debates. It is my argument that images displaying radical interpretations of the concept of mobility, as seen in the work of Alison and Peter Smithson and Yona Friedman, were more influential than any other factor that contributed to the making of the huge infrastructural plans for Oslo. I particularly look into the extensive pub-

lic document called *The 1965 Transport Analysis*, in which the routing of a 6-lane urban motorway through Central Oslo is richly illustrated by a series of striking hand drawings and graphic prints. I argue that these images were not only used to sell in ideas with the politicians of Oslo but, more importantly, that they were designed to negotiate the aesthetics of the new motorway scheme. As motorways became architecture, as the Smithsons would argue, the images played a significant part, providing the *Transport Analysis* with a visual dimension capable of linking the motorways of Oslo to international theories on mobility and the visual culture that underpinned these thoughts.

