An Interview with Michael Kirkland

Michael Kirkland was in Montreal in February, 1983 for the Alcan Lecture Series. After his lecture, he met with the Editorial Board of THE FIFTH COLUMN *for the following interview.*

Michael Kirkland is an urban designer and architect with extensive experience in public and private practice. He is the recipient of several design awards and well-known for his prize-winning projects for Edmonton City Hall and Mississauga City Hall competitions.

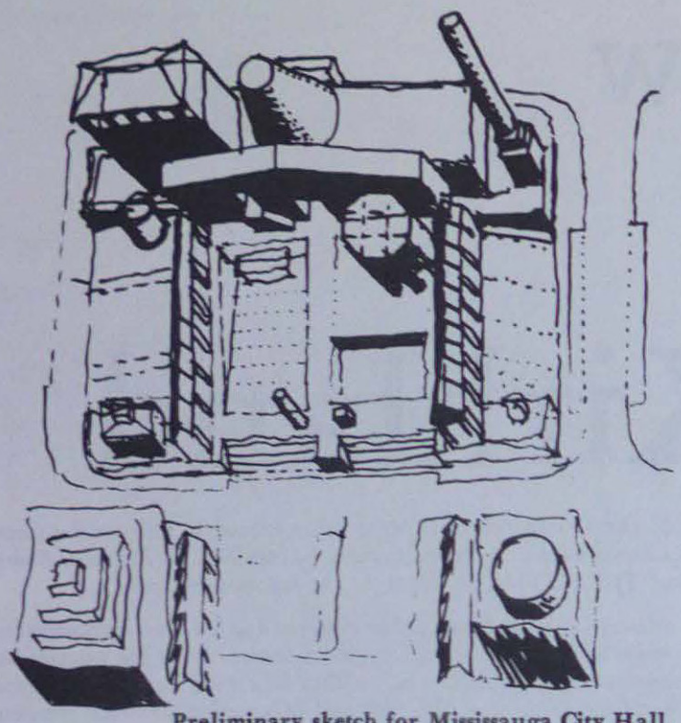
Kirkland: I think one of the problems that Canada has is that it is not an entirely self-confident culture. Consequently, many of the models that influence the country are from outside the country. There are a lot of derivative buildings and there are a handful of buildings that influence certain sectors of architecture in Canada, particularly corporate and some varieties of civic architecture, which don't influence necessarily the better practitioners or students. I could tell you of some in Toronto and I'm sure they exist in Montreal as well. So there's a curiosity that I think lies in regard to people who think about architecture, that the major influences lie outside the country. The people who practise architecture in relatively workmanlike, or — if we're charitable, and I hope we're not being uncharitable - in a corporate format, are influenced by some buildings which actually constitute nefarious directions in Canada.

TFC: Could you say that those influences basically come from the United States?

Kirkland: ...and to some extent Europe. I think Toronto is looking at the Alcan Series, which appears to be the greatest kind of intellectual ferment in Montreal. Now, Peter Rose has a very particular orientation which I would characterize as that of a Northeastern, and even a particular variety of Northeastern United States which has got to do with that Yale-Princeton axis, as opposed to, for example, the Harvard-Cornell-Columbia, sometimes Penn, axis, with two overlapping groups of people. That being so, it seems to me that Montreal is getting a tilt towards a particular variety of American architecture, whereas Toronto, for example, has a much more international, European kind of influence being exerted on it, and the other side of the American equation in the Northeast. So that we tend to be less connected to say, Yale and Princeton, and perhaps more connected to Cornell and Harvard than you would appear to be, particularly since your main vehicle of contact is Alcan and ours is, perhaps, a combination of teachers from outside, people going out and teaching other places, and a lecture series which is not as prolific.

Historically, Toronto has a strong connection to Europe, particularly England, but also to France, somewhat, and there are a number of people, such as Bernard Huet from Paris, who come to Toronto. There are other connections to Italy. And, say, the Institute in New York has a strong connection to certain ones of us, George Baird and me, in particular, in Toronto, so that there's a sort of different set of influences to some extent. Not entirely different.

Layout: Charles-Henri Brunet



Preliminary sketch for Mississauga City Hall.

George Baird has said that Canadian architecture is good upper-middle practitioner architecture, by and large, rather than world-class, and I think that's true. If you talk about the influences that tend to affect Canadian architecture more generally, then you're discussing people like Zeidler and Moriyama and, lately, Barton (Myers), and maybe Webb Zerafa (Menkes and Housden), but you know we're into some strange territory already, when you're discussing some of that sort of work. So, maybe you should prompt me with some questions, otherwise I'm going to be always tilting to what I would consider to be respectable opinion. And who's influencing that? A kind of more nefarious and amorphous phenomenon which is the general production of architecture in the country, which I think is more influenced locally.

TFC: Why did you decide to come to work in Canada and what differences do you find practicing here as opposed to the United States?

Kirkland: Well, I'm a person who is temperamentally an itinerant practitioner, and I have always failed to see national boundaries. I thought of Canada, not as Canada, but rather as Montreal and Toronto, as well as Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Washington. And, I'm temperamentally not a West Coast person. I'm interested in this cosmos and Europe. I also considered going to London and Zurich and Rome, where I was a student. After I thought about it... Montreal was actually a preferred location to me, but I could see at the time that I was going to do the move that Montreal was going to have some terrific problems.

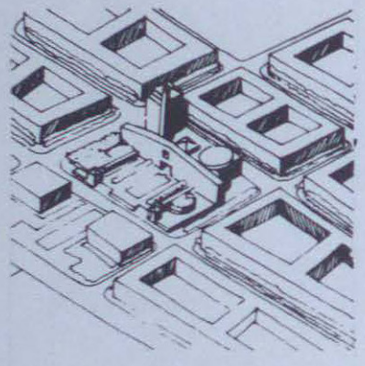
TFC: That was just about 1976.

Kirkland: Yes, between the Anglos and Francophones, I decided that Toronto was better. And my great discovery was that Toronto was geographically east of Miami, which satisfied me quite nicely.

But the reason that I moved out of New York — I was doing very well in New York, thank you — was that I was stuck like everyone else there. You can't be in New York and not be famous, if you want to have a practice which is national, or even the more important projects in the city. I mean, there can be twenty painful years of renovating friends' apartments, which I started doing, and maybe if you are very good, you get to do a house in the Hamptons in your fifth year. At a time when there was a lot of interesting public sector stuff to do, I spent two-and-a-half years at the New York State Urban Development Corporation, where we did housing prototypes and a lot of research analysis on typology, essentially assessing the production that they had done in their first wave. They built thirty-five thousand housing units. While I was there they did twenty-five thousand and I got to travel around a lot, and it was something that was a good companion to teaching at Columbia, which is what I was doing at the time.

The second half of my time, which was another two-and-a-half years, was as the Director of Urban Design for Midtown. The City of New York had a very interesting and ambitious urban design component to it, and it was the latter days of Lindsay, so that was another thing which I found very interesting. During that time I was teaching at Penn and Harvard. So, at the end of that five year run, which I saw as a kind of extension of my general interests from my academic period, it was time for me to decide where to operate. I had the choice of those Northeastern handful of cities, plus Montreal and Toronto, plus some European cities, and at the end of the day decided that Toronto, becoming the national city in Canada, displacing Montreal in that function, was probably a good place to operate from. So it had no significance to me, immigrating to Canada. I could have been going to Philadelphia or Boston, just as well.

Boston has about one architect per square foot. Philadelphia has very few architects of any stature, but also little work, by comparison. Washington is a national city and commissions are given out in a way that commissions are given out in Ottawa, which we won't delve into too deeply — I might get stuck.



"...the dense-pack Acropolis..."

TFC: It's obvious that you, throughout your career, have been connected to a lot of schools and the teaching process. I know that at McGill and some of the other schools, there is a questioning that goes on as to what the role of the professional is in the educational process. I suppose that from your point of view its obvious that the professional really does have an important role to play in architectural education. But how important do you think it is? How much of the actual teaching process should rely on people who are practising? In the United States I believe it is very important that the people who are actually teaching in the design studios of many schools have a practice that's going quite strong.

Kirkland: That's an interesting and difficult question. I think that architecture, like any other applied craft, can't get too distant from some reality about practice, lest it lose its cutting edge. I think the School of Architecture in Toronto has gone through a great trauma. It is, in a sense, the flip side of the American system, the American system being predicated on practicing stars to both generate students and to give a kind of style to the curriculum of different schools. The difficulty with that system, frankly, is that these stars, by the very nature of their activity, tend to be inaccessible. It tends to be an illusion that they give substance to the schools, and I think that many of the American schools are, in fact, a kind of hollow vessel. There's not as much going on as there appears to be.

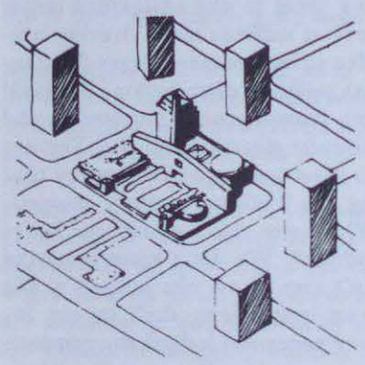
The Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies is a perfect ex-

All drawings courtesy of Michael Kirkland.

ample of that. Their education program is, in fact, a fraud. Students come there to study, ostensibly with Peter Eisenmann and Gandelsonas or whoever. They don't show up because they are distracted. Terrific recruiters but not good teachers. Maybe if you saw them, they'd be good teachers, but who knows?

The Toronto system if the opposite in that, in the aftermath of a typical five year North American curriculum, it instituted, under Peter Prangnell, this core problem idea which was a completely integrated analogue to practice as an educational system. However, because they had this old guard of tenure staff, it meant that all the junior and new staff that came into the School had to be full time just for reasons of offsetting the effect, and what was viewed as the ineptitude, of the tenured, existing staff. So, it developed a group of full-time permanent staff members, many of whom had been weak practitioners, or mediocre ones, and because the curriculum is so demanding on personal crit time individually, it means that they haven't developed any sort of interesting theoretical or other academic work. Consequently, the School of Architecture at Toronto has stagnated with this very introverted, if devoted, group of teachers. And a handful of people like Goerge Baird and myself and Klaus Dunker and others who have an ongoing interest in practice and other schools, have recently not been there at all.

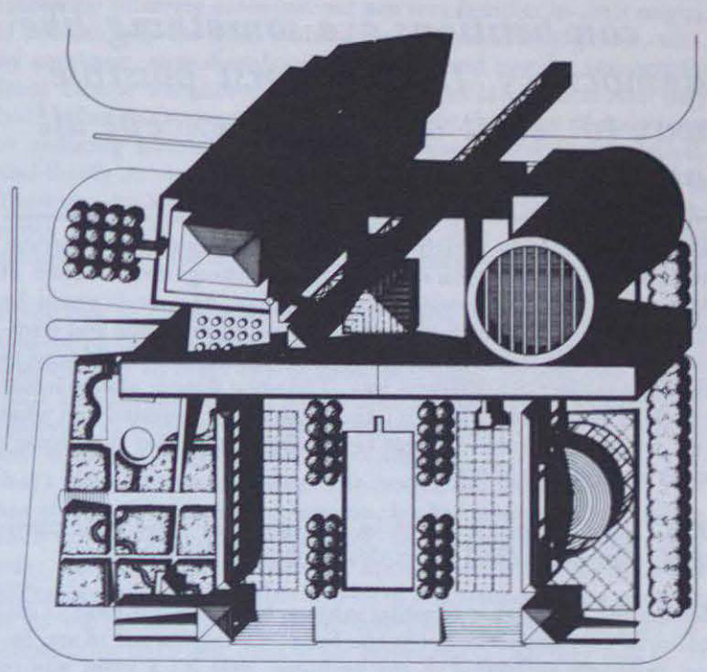
I'm on leave. George (Baird) is on leave. Bruce Kuwabara from Barton Myer's office is on leave. Mark Baraness is on leave. You're



"...the tabula rasa *neutral ground..."*

going to read in *The Globe and Mail* an expose by Adele Freedman. The School of Architecture at Toronto is in terrible disarray. This is going to be a killer. It could be a kind of *National Enquirer* type of piece.

But the school at Toronto, what I will say about it is that I think that it's in terrible condition momentarily, but it could, just by virtue of the quality of the students and the availability of high quality staff and the minimum tenure that now exists, because we haven't given tenure for a long time, is in a position to spring into a terrific condition in a short period of time. It's very close to striking distance. So I have to say that I think that one of the major reforms we've done here is dismantling the core problem system in favour of a three-afternoon-a-week option studios and other apparently traditional pedagogical mechanisms, essentially because it allows a greater degree of accessibility by practitioners. Which is not to say that you go and get some guy who has no kind of academic interests in architecture, but rather you go and get people who are temperamentally teachers but that want to practice, and you allow them to do a studio a year. I might do one studio a year rather than working five afternoons all through the year. I might do one term, or George (Baird) or Barton (Myers) or Jack (Diamond) or any number of people, who you wouldn't say are the mainstay of the school on a day-to-day basis, nor should they be, but add a lot to the place. And so we can get Michael Wilford, or we can get people from New York to come and do a course on that kind of basis, where it probably would have meant immigrating and living in



Final design for Mississauga City Hall.

Toronto in order to stay with the school.

We're saying that the school has got to have some vital dialectic between practitioners or a certain sort and between the core teaching staff. You can never settle into a completely academic core teaching staff, nor can you allow yourself to get into a position where you have Arthur Erickson ostensibly teaching a studio, who shows up once every two weeks for an afternoon. Something in between is what the object has to be.

TFC: At the beginning of your lecture last night you were discussing North American versus European notions of urban space. The Mississauga project transplants a piece of this notion of European positive urban space onto a suburban North American landscape with almost no concessions. Do you feel that this may remain an anomaly? Is there not a difference to the structures of the urban space?

Kirkland: Well, there are two questions there, really. One is the general discussion about North American versus European space, and basically what I was arguing in the talk is that I don't think there's such a thing as the North American city *per se*. Don't forget Europeans laid down the American grid. In so far as it is possible, I would argue that by the dialectical competition for land, buildings have taken on a much more familiar behavior and the cities that are more mature have more familiar European patterns, and the ones that are new tend to have what look like the more hybrid or deviant patterns. I think the idea of the city is that you cannot invent, anymore than you can decide that from now on you will talk a different language. You can't invent a new city. It's an impossibility and Milton Keynes and all those things prove it. So the greater question is whether or not Mississauga, which is what I would consider to be the most primitive urban condition, whether or not that building is a suitable measured response to that place at that point in time. Because if you consider Mississauga within the process that it will eventually become a city, and I'm not sure it will ever become very intense as a city, then one would say: Is the building sort of out of sync with that procedure? The building has a hundred year life and Mississauga is not going to be anyplace for the first fifty. Is that an appropriate response? And I think what we were trying to do, in fact, was to make a building that could both exist as what I call the 'dense-pack' Acropolis, which is sitting on a plinth, complete with a whole spectrum of activities in it, self-supporting, which acted in the suburban way in that people dropped into the building from all over. It had to be able to exist in that

"...competitions are something like democracy. It's the worst possible way to select architects, except all others."

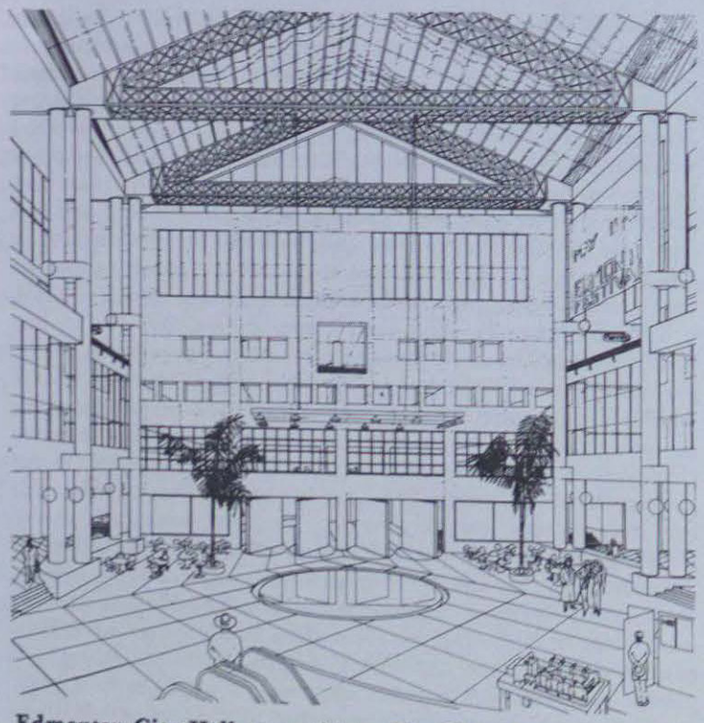
kinds of phenomena which would tend to mediate and moderate, as it always does. If you're building Mississauga in a suburb of Miami, that project wouldn't look like that, because it would be dealing with a whole other set of conditioning problems and traditions. The latin cultural things and also the climate would tend to skew the project in a different way. The worst danger always is that anything that's done which is influential will be imitated and what can one do about that, except to say don't do it. But that doesn't seem to have any effect.

TFC: Your practice seems to be extensively involved in competitions. How do you feel about this method of design?

Kirkland: That's an interesting subject. I just recently gave a CBC editorial on competitions. On one hand, it's easy for me to say, being relatively successful in competitions, that it's a good way to select architects. I'm not sure that five years from now, when I'm tired of doing competitions and I think I deserve to have direct commissions, that I'll be such a grand supporter of competitions, but my version of it is, in fact that competitions are something like democracy. It's the worst possible way to select architects, except for all others.

There are problems with competitions, theoretically, but we have so little experience with them in Canada, we don't even know what the problems are. Europeans don't seem to be worried and they've been doing it a lot longer than we have.

A country like France is having an international opera house competition, which means they see a public building as a cultural event, in which they want to advance or solicit ideas about what an opera house might be, and also advance their own architectural culture. The net benefit of that kind of activity far offsets the vagaries that have to do with other things, like technical competence of small firms, and all of that. Those things are remedied by having joint ventures. There are a number of ways of offsetting those problems having to do with what the submission requirements are, proposing that joint ventures might have to happen to satisfy the client to proceed. They're sometimes expensive and they sometimes take more time to do a building that way, and some kinds of buildings, particularly small ones, are probably not suitable for competitions because they have to do so much with internal spatial accomodations very particular to the user. But when you are dealing with public buildings, that have public space in them, for which normally there is no constituency, and the combination of offices can be conceived in one manner as *poché*, that is, you can make it like that subsequent to the competition, and the building is going to last for a hundred or two hundred years, and you're having a three month delay, it seems to me a fair price to pay.



Edmonton City Hall competition: The City Room.

I have no doubt whatsoever that we would not have gotten the Mississauga as a direct commission, nor if we had ever got it, would we have produced a building of that quality. So that for public buildings, particularly larger and more important ones, I think competition is the best vehicle. One could argue that a limited competition is better than an open one, because the people competing have a good probability of winning, you can give them some money to offset their expenses. But the trouble with limited competitions is who gets to play? I have some grave suspicions about how, for example, in the National Gallery competition the choices were made about who got to play.

Frankly, I think that after giving spots to the obligatory larger firms that either would do or were of suffient merit, having conceded the point that it's a good idea to have some younger firms involved, it was time for a national political distribution. So you'll notice there were not small firms from Toronto involved in the competition because they had already given out all the Toronto spots to the big firms. I find that it's a sad parochial country that behaves like that. Who's judging the National Gallery competition? What were the criteria? What were the alternatives? We're never going to see what was produced. We don't know what the basis for judging was and we don't even know who judged it. We certainly suspect that there was an insufficient, shall we say, informed opinion. And if the Gallery personnel judged the competition, I would say that is totally inappropriate because it's not very interesting what the acoustical or environmental conditions are for a particular collection in a *pochéd* piece of space. Basically what you are judging is the building as an urban design solution plus its public order, which is a matter of public concern, not just for the Gallery. So, I am discouraged by that. I certainly think that that is not a suitable remedy to the problem of the Washington Embassy. That's supposed to be the handout to the Washington Embassy.

TFC: It seems even that with a number of recent competitions people are taking stabs at what possibly a competition could be, what the guidelines should be and how it should be structured. The Mississauga competition has been both praised and criticised because of its rigidly structured and extensive guidelines. How did you feel about the way the competition was arranged?

Kirkland: Personally, I think the people who complained about the Mississauga competition guidelines complained early on. It was more obviously constraining than it was actually constraining. The guidelines were that you would build a minimum square of a recognizable proportion on the south side of the site. The guideline was that the building would face onto that square on the northern edge. The guideline was that the building would not cover more than twenty-five percent of the site. That one was a bit curious, but I suppose it had to do with trying to accumulate open space at grade. And there was a guideline that there be retail on the northern boundary. And all of those guidelines, if you sift the project down to that, that seems to be a minimum given, a minimum set of clues. I can't really imagine why anyone would much object to that. The fact of the matter is, if you've seen the results, anyone who saw the exhibit in Toronto, would realize that there were a hundred and fifty out of two hundred and fifty schemes of profoundly different qualities, all within the same guidelines. So, I

"...A building in the suburb...really is a kind of uninteresting de Chiricoesque enigmatic object sitting on a tabula rasa*..."*

condition which is both the short term and the immediate term future. And at the same time it had to be, it had to induce more familiar patterns around it potentially, which has got to do with the attitude of the facade, the attitude of the street in relation to other things, which are not as they would be if you were building in Belgium. But on the other hand, it is familiar in a certain way and does have certain common attitudes about building on the back street lines, about producing a front and back side, about trying to account for the line of the street with landscape elements where we couldn't do it with building instead. But it's still clear that the building still has to be able to exist in that kind of *tabula rasa* neutral ground, with the cactus buildings around it, for the foreseeable future and I think that I would argue that the building, whether it's successful or not, certainly is aimed at having it both ways. So, it's not everyone who looks at it to judge whether it's credible or not.

One thing I'm interested in is the suburbs, frankly. I don't think the're been very much good work done in the suburbs lately.

Something I'm interested in is taking the kind of understood phenomena of buildings and objects that we know from the city and applying them in different contexts in the suburbs. For example, if you go out and look at the image of any city, what we have now is what I call the *Ville Radieuse* paradox, apparently unrelated to each other or in spatial conception, sitting around the perimeter of every North American city, and then some disconnected low-rise stuff. But if you can imagine large pieces of space which have an iconic relation to major building pieces, and those are hemmed in and defined by the settlement of ground-related low-density housing that works in the way of producing spatial conglomerations in a direct association with the density of buildings, and using those smaller things that define an urban space. It seems to me there's a kind of looser but familiar kind of pattern that might emerge, which would be a very interesting one. You know if you were in a tower out there and actually dominated a piece of space like Versailles, and hemming into Versailles on hedgerows were low-density garden dwellings, that would be fabulous. But that's not what the suburb is. It's a datumlesss, aspatial phenomena lacking in orientation.

It really is a kind of uninteresting de Chiricoesque enigmatic object sitting on a *tabula rasa* because there's no idea to it. It's like landscape architecture. There's no idea in landscape architecture in North America which governs their activity. There's no history. It's a completely economic phenomenon, putting expedient buildings down. But I think there's nothing implicity about the pieces that are being put down, which disallows the possibility of much more interesting formulation in places like Mississauga or, indeed, the fringes of other cities. That's something somebody ought to work on.

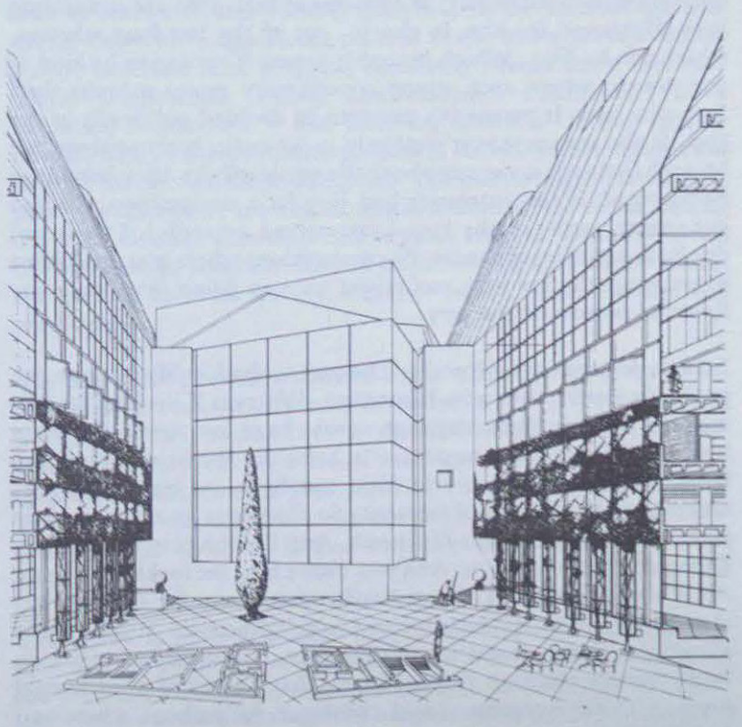
TFC: Your recent work, particularly the Mississauga City Hall, shows a strong influence of certain European architects, particularly Leon Krier and James Stirling. How do you relate that influence to practicing in Canada?

Kirkland: Well, I'm influenced by my environment. It depends what you perceive as your environment. If you accept my argument that there is the Western city and Western architecture — not being an expert on Oriental matters — I'm not sure that there's not a lot of commonality there, too, but I'm not prepared to make any assertions. But I am prepared to say that I can see North America consisting of very familiar building types that have had a somewhat different evolution but are very familiar in their origin. If you can take the villa, we have a continent of immigrants, who, by and large, were disenfranchised from land owning; immigrants from Europe who came and imitated patrician houses. And they built villas on the landscape and gradually, by force of economics or reducing possibility, those things became later compromised, and finally we're getting an anomaly like a semi-detached house in Toronto which tries to look like a villa, has no land, but the instinct is there. It's still behaving in that tradition, and its recognizable if you try to think back where it came from.

If you look at institutional buildings, if you look particularly at the nineteenth century ones, you can see the kind of residue, the then classical past in every one of those buildings. So that one thing I think that the period after Modernism is about is that like all other moments in architectural history where people look again for roots and origins, and that's what Neo-Classicism is always about, and that's where we are in a way. The book *Classicism Is Not A Style* has an arguably interesting position. It's Rykwertesque, it's looking back to what we're all coming from, and consequently I don't consider that Canadian or American architecture is coming from any different place than Belgian or Italian architecture. It's a question of having taken a certain evolutionary course and it's equally interesting for us to look back at the same origins that they look to. It so happens that a lot more people in New York and London and Milan are a lot more interested in theoretical matters than there are in Winnipeg, and so those tend to be people that you read, but there's nothing holy about scriptures being handed from any given place. It's just a question of where are people thinking and writing about such things?

TFC: So you don't think a new International Style is emerging?

Kirkland: I think that any time there is a radical Neo-Classical reaction, you could say there's a danger there becoming a new International Style. But I would argue that Mississauga is verging on regional style, very particular in its choice of parts and behavioural pieces, distinguishable from a lot of the European pieces in certain ways. There's a fascination with platonic Neo-Classical form, but on the other hand there's also an agrarian tradition. There's the particular problem of trying to build something in a place like Mississauga, where you're speculating about a future which isn't here yet and referring to a past which is no longer imminent. And so, I think that there's a danger in that, but on the other hand, it would be tempered by climate and regional traditions and other



Edmonton City Hall competition: The Courtyard.

think at the end of the day, I think that it is very unconvincing to say that the guidelines were a horrifying constraint on the project. I think the guidelines, in the end, the urbanistic ones were the ones that people tended to complain about. In addition to that, there was departmental information. I don't see how one could operate with less information than that. If you look at people who really know how to do competition briefs well, like the French, who have recently done one for La Defense and one for the Opera, which we have received, they are far, far more extensive and specific than George Baird's guidelines for Mississauga. But I think George did a terrific job.

TFC: Ultimately the jury has a great deal of influence on the direction a competition takes. How do you deal with this aspect? What contribution does the jury make?

Kirkland: Well, two things. First, I think it's a dreadful mistake to pander the jury, to do a scheme which you think they will like, because juries are funny animals. You are liable to get what you think of as your patriarch reacting, being embarrassed by your imitation of his work. Better not to try it. Some people did what I would consider pandering to Stirling, which was a burlesque of his work, which I think just devastated their possibilities. On the other hand, the flip side of that is don't enter competitions that don't have juries that you respect. So you could look at our stuff, or Barton Myer's stuff, or whoever was considered to have succeeded in that competition, and you could say, "Look at those projects. They have things that are familiar or sympathetic to Stirling," or Phyllis (Lambert), or whoever you wanted to name. The truth of the matter is, I know in our case, or in Barton's case, it's not because we were pandering to the jury. It's because it tends to be a project which has a sympathetic parallel to the work we normally do, anyway. Consequently, those are the competitions you should enter. You should choose competitions carefully.

It so happens with the Opera, in Paris, there's a horrifying jury, which, were it not for the fact of it being the Paris Opera, which is a kind of once-in-a-century throwing down of the gauntlet; you almost have to show up for a thing like that. It's like not showing up to World War Two, you know. I wouldn't do it, customarily, but we're tempted by the nature of the event. The jury is Mathias Ungers, Aymonino, Huet, Venturi, Hertzberger. This is horrifing — forget the schemes. It's going to be, probably, a brass knuckles fight. So, this is not a promising jury. This is the kind of jury that customarily one would steer away from. The thing will either be decided wholly politically, as a matter of fact, they are submitting it to Mitterand for him to choose, out of the last four schemes, which one he likes. Which probably means it's going to be kind of *pot pourri*, where each strong constituency group submits their favourite one. It means it's going to be decided politically in the end. It also means that it's unlikely to get built, because there can be such fantastic acrimony about the whole affair. All other things being equal, it's an extremely bad jury for a competition. It's also got twenty people on the jury; I just named a handful. I think you don't, as a matter of course, do competitions where you don't have some sympathy for who you might view as being principally influential person on the jury.

I think, for example, if we had the jury we had in Mississauga, we probably would have won Edmonton. Whereas if we had the Edmonton jury on Mississauga, we would have lost again. So, it's a lesson. Ed Jones did a wonderful scheme for the Prime Minister's house in Dublin, and it was Aldo van Eyck, on his high horse, defending the Modern Movement. So there was no chance, right away. For him, that was his lesson. And I think that the jury for Edmonton was my lesson. And you didn't find me looking at doing the Calgary City Hall, immediately after that, for exactly that reason. It took me a year to recover from Edmonton. Stirling came along; that was a promising opportunity. I normally wouldn't do Paris, but it's the Paris Opera House; that's a sort of phenomenal event. I think everyone should think carefully about where you spend your time.

TFC: What would you see as an ideal way to form a jury for a competition in Canada? There were some complaints about why James Stirling was on the jury, about why it was international?

Kirkland: Originally, the jury consisted of James Stirling, Phyllis Lambert, and Barton Myers, and the OAA complained that this jury was not good because it was only one view of architecture. Well, I was waiting with bated breath to hear the OAA explain what view of architecture that was. Apparently, the view of architecture they had in mind was one of people who think and talk about architecture. So, I don't really get it; I don't really understand why one would have any complaints about the jury, with Jerome Markson substituting for Barton (Myers) in the final formulation.

How you would form a jury, this again is a question of... what you have to do is you have to talk to respectable opinion about who would be appropriate to have on the jury, respectable local opinion. In most cases, people who sponsor competitions don't know much about architecture, or at least the ones who have decided to have one, so they have to rely on someone to advise them. A good professional advisor is a good start. A good professional advisor will concoct a jury that has enough coherence and conviviality to it that it will be workable. It's probably a good idea also to consult with others. It's probably a good idea to get some combination of respectable local opinion and someone brought in from outside with a fresh view, who has no political axe to grind.

TFC: There were some complaints here last fall about the OAQ *Prix d'Excellence* because it was all just local people on the jury. There were some complaints that a lot of projects got ignored because of that. They would have liked to have some people from the outside.

Kirkland: I think there's a whole area of discussion in the aftermath. Some of my friends were doing National Gallery or Museum of Man projects, so they weren't really interested in joining the war about how architects are selected. They might now be ready to join the discussion. It's really time to do something about that. The RAIC guidelines for architect selection are appropriate for run-of-the-mill, conventional commissions of relatively small- or medium-sized building. It is prudent for buildings like that, where there are scores of them, hundreds of them done, to have a procedure like they're suggesting.

TFC: The selection procedure that they are proposing...

Kirkland: Yes, where there's a list of people and you bring them in and they make proposals and you sort of gradually select someone. For major public buildings, that's simply not acceptable. I think there ought to be some discussion, both at the municipal level and the federal level, on how competitions are designed, in terms of jury and content. We ought to do some real serious work on that. The RAIC guideline has almost nothing to say about that because they are preferring the 'old boy' selection procedure. Macy (Dubois) is a well-intended person, but after all, he is acting on behalf of the RAIC.

TFC: We just have one last question. All architects seem to have a hero. Who would be your hero?

Kirkland: I didn't talk about this last night, but this is a thing which I will fastidiously resist, either naming a hero or a style. The trouble with the Modern Movement was that it, in fact, postulated heroes who were, in some ways, true geniuses, individually. People who you were always waiting for the other shoe to drop, because they were doing mysterious things. Now, when you hear all the discussion about Post-Modernism, Contextualism, Primitivism, and every other -ism, one is inclined to imagine that there is some new, imminent alchemy which will bail architecture out. That's the trouble, that's not the solution. And just as I'm not prepared to cite any new alchemy, I'm not prepared to cite any new messiahs.