

R.A.I.C. AT THE CROSSROADS

by Stefan Wisniewski

Introduction

The Royal Architectural Institute of Canada's reluctance to be concerned with strictly practice-related matters was a logical adjunct to its move to a voluntary membership in 1980. Nevertheless, the historical debate over the nature of the Institute today continues unabated. Whether the R.A.I.C. will exist to promote excellence in architecture in Canada or to promote architects' business interests hinges on the outcome of the debate. Although the Institute needs to maximize its membership, the Associate Member category is in danger of becoming a casualty of the changes made in 1980. The nature of the Institute must be clarified before any conclusions can be drawn about the consequences on membership.

Architects or Architecture?

Of one mind are those who would see the R.A.I.C. as the *national Institute of architects*, acting as a national counter-part of the provincial associations, or even as a union thereof, working to maintain Canadian architects' privileges, prerogatives and market-position. This is especially prevalent in view of increasing encroachment by non-professionals and other professions into the fields of practice traditionally enjoyed by architects. Its concerns with architecture would be on the legal and on the financial planes; the business aspects of architecture.

Of the opposite persuasion are those who would see the R.A.I.C. as the *national Institute of architecture*: a group dedicated to the promotion of architectural excellence and to the advancement of the state of Canada's built environment. Its concerns with architecture would be on the plane of issues, research and policies. It would be concerned with the intellectual aspects of architecture, and not those directly benefitting the business of the practising architect. (This school of thought is now ascendant in our sister institute, the American Institute of Architects.)

One way of illustrating their differences is by examining the membership implicit in each of the two organizations. The first (*architects*) group would clearly consist only of *registered architects*, and would be a club of sorts in whose interest it would be to keep any additional members out so that the shrinking market *pie* would not have to be cut into smaller pieces.

The second (*architecture*) group could legitimately be made up of all persons in architecture as a field of activity: as clients, as concerned citizens, as researchers, as scholars, as legislators or as architects of various degrees of professional standing. It would be in their interest to count in additional members to draw on their resources and to broaden debate.

Both of these interest groups have valid orientations, but their two goals cannot co-exist with the same degree of validity in one organization and would in fact create a direct conflict of interests. They would best be handled separately and at their appropriate levels of jurisdiction.

Provincial or national ?

Due to the regional nature of varying economic and legislative conditions across Canada, it is sensible for the *architects* (business) interest to be primarily addressed at the level of the Provincial Architects' Associations. There are fewer practice-related issues involved at the Federal level, and they could be dealt with through a special interest sub-committee of the national body in conjunction with the Provincial Associations (for example, the Board of Practice). However, this function would not embody the main vocation of the national Institute. Due to the more universal nature of architectural and research issues, it would be sensible to address these *architecture* matters on a concerted national level rather than duplicating efforts in pursuing them concurrently on many local levels.

Past efforts:

Peter Barnard Associates had the *architecture* group in mind in their 1979 report on Canadian Architects' Services, where they commented that: "*the architectural profession appears unique in creating the attitude that when a trained architect leaves private practice for employment in government or industry, he effectively 'leaves the profession'.*"

It is with the spirit of the *architecture* group that the new Institute identified itself on January 1, 1980 when it consciously ended its formal dependence on the Provincial Associations, and invited registered architects (*Members*), graduate architects (*Associates*), architectural students (*Students*) and affiliated professionals (*Affiliates*) to voluntarily join its ranks.

It is also with the spirit of the *architecture* group that a resolution was passed at the First Annual General Meeting of the Institute in 1980 which called for Membership in the Institute for all Canadian architectural graduates, whether they subsequently became registered architects or not.

The architectural profession is relatively small in numbers in Canada. It is also noted that perhaps half of all trained architects are locked out of the architectural associations because they many not have the desire or intent to practice as a professional. In response to a resolution at its 1980 annual meeting, and with the intention of attracting some of these excluded persons in to the Institute, its Council sponsored by-law amendments at the 1981 meeting that opened Associate membership to all who had graduated from a Canadian School of Architecture, also giving them a vote at future Institute meetings.

Unfortunately, not very many persons requested Associate membership in the Institute in the subsequent two years. Perhaps this was due to the lack of communication between the Institute and potential associate members. Perhaps it was also due to the perceived *status* of the Associates. They were clearly senior student members (some potential associates have been architecturally active since before any of the student members were even born), yet they had no representation on the RAIC Council as did the students. Associates received inferior services, and were even listed after Members and Students in the RAIC List of Members.

Future action:

The present state of affairs was largely due to factor beyond the control of the Institute — potential associates are notoriously hard to identify. They are not registered with the Associations, nor as students with the Schools, but fall between the two groups. However, today the Institute is presented with an opportunity to reach out to non-registered graduates and better encompass the general architectural community by welcoming them in to its ranks. This is largely due to two movements occurring from opposite directions within the Institute.

On the one hand, registered architects (*Members*) are becoming more inclined to leave practice-related matters to the Provincial Associations and therefore have reason to be less protective of their exclusive membership in the national Institute. A national Board of Practice has been set up for the *architect* (business) issues, thereby freeing the Institute itself to deal with *architecture* issues. The Institute can also see the value of potentially doubling its human resources with trained, talented, energetic (and non-registered) persons.

On the other hand, the architectural students have now carved out an important role for themselves in the Institute, participating at executive levels and, through the Canadian Students of Architecture/RAIC, with programs on a national scale. By their nature, students tend to be interested in *architecture* and not in business issues. Moreover, while there are

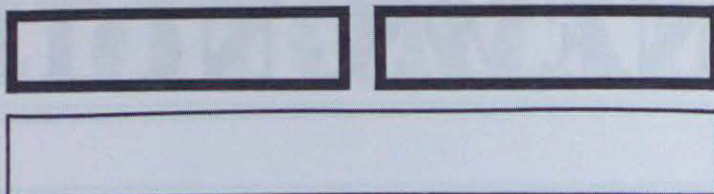
NATIONAL STUDENT DESIGN COMPETITION

THE LIVABLE WINTER CITY: POSSIBLE CONCEPTS, FORMS AND DEVELOPMENTS

The Livable Winter City Association in Ottawa is holding a competition for students to encourage the development of useful and innovative ideas, applicable during the severe winter season, in different places in Canada as alternatives to present situations and trends. The organizers wish to encourage creative thinking. Participants should not feel too restricted by present regulations, rules or existing legislation. On the other hand, entries must show sensible and viable solutions, which implies that they must be feasible from the economic, technological and institutional points of view. They must also be acceptable to the envisaged future users and to future society in general, with regard to overall human behaviour and human needs.

Entries are invited from (groups of) university students at institutes for urban or regional planning, architecture and landscape architecture or at other faculties where bio-physical social and/or economic aspects of urban and regional development, as well as urban design, are being studied. The Jury, to be announced at a later date, will select then the ten most innovative, but viable proposals for special mention. From these ten entries, the Jury will then select three 'Best Ideas' to be awarded prizes of \$700.00 (First Prize), \$400.00 (Second Prize) and \$200.00 (Third Prize). Admission to the competition is gained by completing and sending the Competition Registration Form to the LWCA for receipt before January 16, 1984. The deadline for entries is April 18, 1984.

For more information, contact:
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over 2,000 architectural students in school at any time, it is estimated that only half of them will ever *practice* as architects. These students are now graduating and are looking for a continuing role in the architectural community.

With these two groups in place, *now* is the time so start bridging the gap remaining in the Institute's membership. This will require an understanding of the needs and aspirations of graduate architects and a means for their participation in decision-making at the executive and committee levels of the Institute. Most of all, it will require a vision of the potential residing within the architectural community to effect an excellent Canadian built environment.

Stefan Wisniowski is a graduate of the School of Architecture of McGill University and has served on RAIC Council. He is now a Consulting Editor of THE FIFTH COLUMN and is working for the architects Hierlihy and Thériault in Ottawa.

UNE COMPETITION NATIONALE DE DESIGN POUR ETUDIANTS

LA VILLE HIVERNALE HABITALE: LES CONCEPTS, LES FORMES ET LES DEVELOPPEMENTS POSSIBLES

L'organisation 'Livable Winter City Association' lance une compétition pour étudiants qui a pour but d'initier le développement de nouvelles idées qui seraient favorables aux hivers rigoureux du Canada. Les organisateurs espèrent ainsi encourager l'innovation et la créativité de concepts qui présenteraient des alternatives aux tendances actuelles. Les participants ne doivent pas être restraints par les lois et règlements présentement en vigueur. D'un autre côté, les soumissions doivent être raisonnables, bien constituées et présenter des solutions praticables du point de vue économique, technique et institutionnel. Les soumissions devraient aussi considérer le comportement et les besoins changeants de la société de l'avenir.

La compétition est ouverte aux étudiants ou groupes d'étudiants qui fréquentent les écoles d'urbanisme, d'architecture, d'architecture paysagiste ou tout autre département où les aspects biophysiques, sociaux et/ou économiques du développement et du design urbain sont enseignés. Le Jury, qui sera présenté d'ici quelques temps, choisira les dix soumissions les plus innovatrices et viables pour une mention spéciale. De ces dix soumissions, le jury choisira les trois meilleurs projets. Le premier prix sera de \$700.00, le deuxième prix de \$400.00 et le troisième prix de \$200.00. Afin de s'inscrire à la compétition il suffit de compléter le formulaire d'inscription et de le faire parvenir au LWCA avant le 16 janvier, 1984. La date limite pour les soumissions est le 18 avril 1984.

Professor N. Pressman, Chairman
LWCA National Competition
School of Urban and Regional Planning
University of Waterloo
Waterloo, Ontario
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TRUTH AND ARCHITECTURE

by Mitchell Merling

There, where life is pure and good, I will go back to the deep origins of the races of men, to the time when God still taught them heavenly wisdom in earthly tongues and they did not have to rack their brains.

GOETHE,
West-Eastern Divan

*Yet shall (my Lord) your just and noble Rules
Fill half the land with Imitating Fools,
Who random drawings from your sheets shall take,
And of one Beauty many Blunders make...*

POPE,
to Lord Burlington

The villas of Pliny and Classical Architecture in Montreal, organised by Professor Pierre du Prey of the Canadian Center for Architecture and beautifully installed in the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, is without a doubt one of the most important architectural exhibitions yet assembled in Canada. It is characterized by an overwhelming wealth of material and content, a finely tuned aesthetic and historical sensibility and an overriding intellectual self-assurance which places it far above many similar but far less ambitious efforts. Indeed, *The Villas of Pliny* calls to mind the Museum of Modern Art's re-examination of the *Ecole des Beaux-Arts*: both exhibitions take as a primary theme that of emulation and its role in the design process. *The Villas of Pliny*, however, concentrates not only on the historical past, but has also, as its avowed intention, a critical examination of the present. Further, it is an examination of the present moment of rupture; no longer one of rupture with the past, but a moment of rupture in the structure of the present itself, through which the past reappears and by which it is framed.

The Villas of Pliny, in its present form, is an enlargement of a 1982 exhibition of the same name. That exhibition, shown at the Institut Français d'Architecture, displayed the results of an international *concours d'emulation*, based on Beaux-Arts models, which had as its object the re-construction of Pliny the Younger's Laurentine Villa, as described in his *Letters*. In addition to the results of this *concours*, the Montreal exhibition traces the history of the villa as a design typology and relates this theme to that of classical architecture in the Laurentian region of which Montreal is a part.

The introductory section presents the text of Pliny's letters, an analysis of "the four cardinal points" which constitute the villa as a type, and the illustration of eight villas on Mount Royal which demonstrate the wide applicability of these criteria. According to Pierre du Prey's analysis of Pliny's letters, the villa is defined by various environmental qualities. First, the villa must give "room to breathe." The idea of rural retreat is, then, governed by an ideology of health which presupposes the benefits of a certain proximity to nature. Second, the villa must both "see and be seen," both provide a view which exists for the delectation of its inhabitants, and also exist as a quasi-sculptural element in the landscape, in itself and for others. Further, the villa must be

within easy access of an urban environment from which it nevertheless remains apart. Third, the villas must provide "Openness and movement". It must allow nature itself to provide comfort in the form of the circulation of air and the direction of light and heat. This requires, too, the surrender of the villa's inhabitants to forces of nature which they cannot control, wherefore separate spaces are created for different climatic considerations. Finally, the garden, mediating the works of God and men, provides the *raison d'être* of the villa.

In other words, the villa performs four functions: rural, visual, physical and quasi-religious. Further these functions may all be defined according to their responses to the natural environment. That is: to be in, to see from and to be seen against, to be regulated by and to dominate nature. Further, in accordance with the behavior of its inhabitants, the villa itself performs both active and passive functions, and requires only the presence of nature in order to be self-sufficient.

From the seigneurial "Chateau des Messieurs de Saint-Sulpice" (ca. 1690) to the Victorian, Italianate "Ravenscrag" (1861-1863), all eight Montreal villas fulfil these four functional requirements, employing each time, however, widely divergent architectural vocabularies. The implication, then, is that while the idea of man's necessities has not changed (otherwise so would the functional requirements of the villa as type), man's conception of architectural form itself has, and that this conception is guided by its own necessity. If this is true, perhaps a fifth natural function should be added to the list. That is: each villa attempts to reveal, in its own way, the "nature" of architecture itself.

This becomes clearest in the second section of the exhibition, which presents historical material, in books, prints and drawings, illustrating stylistic permutations of the villa-type. These fluctuations in architectural taste, however, indicate more than whims of fashionable consciousness. Thus, Chiswick House (William Kent and Lord Burlington, c. 1725), while based on Palladian canons summarized in the Villa Rotunda (c. 1570), presents a fundamentally different appearance than the latter building. The "rationality" of Chiswick House, the motivation of which is an accordance with the dictates of pure geometry, precludes the existence of such visual harmony as exists in the Villa Rotunda. We know that Lord Burlington published an edition of Palladio in 1730, and that Pope's third epistle, now known as "On the Use of Riches", commemorates this occasion. In light of Burlington and Kent's divergence from the Palladian canon, are we to conclude that Pope's invective in this commemorative verse is directed against the new style (cf. opening quote)? Rather, Pope's verse seems to articulate a very real fear which has as its object the dissemination of the new style, and the consequent falsification of the (to Pope, Burlington and their circle) "true" (that is, Reasonable) nature of architecture.

The work of Karl Friedrich Schinkel (1781-1841), the leading architect of the Romantic era in Germany is particularly well-represented in this exhibition. In contrast to Burlington and Kent's rather ahistorical idea of architectural form (Chiswick House presents an image of architecture which is held to be a universal truth), Schinkel takes care to situate his work in a position which is fundamentally particular and explicitly historical. His reconstruction of the Laurentine Villa is clearly located in and responding to its natural environment. In it, the reciprocal, empathetic, dialogue of architecture and nature disrupts the artificial symmetry characteristic of a universalizing architectural impulses.

In a design for a fountain at the Tuscan Villa, Schinkel sets up the basin as a classical altar, marked by four columns carrying an entablature. There is no roof over the fountain. Instead, the

branches of four trees, one bound to each column, provide the necessary shade. Perhaps this gesture can be seen as an expression of the unity of nature and architecture. However, the oxymoronic combination of the two elements (if understood within the discursive precedent codified by Laugier's primitive hut) inaugurates a new type of discourse. In this new discourse architecture is freed from the proto-natural function postulated by Laugier, and is now set up as a kind of second nature, one which represents a static historical moment and is subject to no natural function but decay. In other words the "nature" of architecture is history.

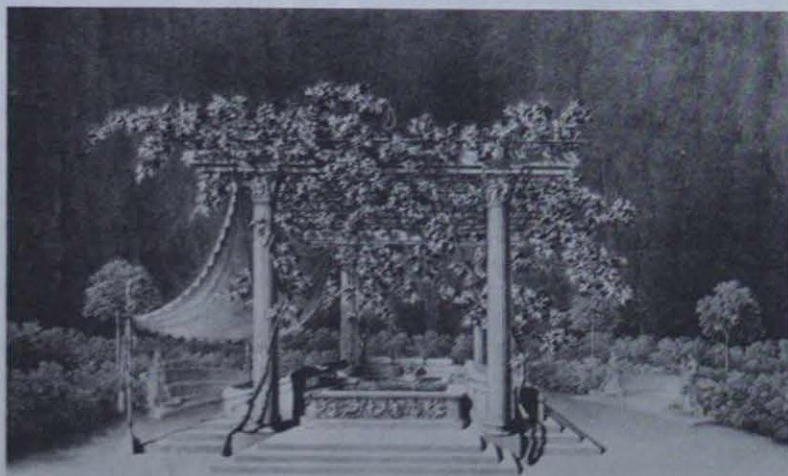
The ramifications of a basically literal misunderstanding of this attitude are best represented on the third section of the exhibition, which displays the results of the *concours* itself. In this section, every project, except for that of Leon Krier, deals uncomfortably with the mandatory reintroduction of historical form necessitated by the program of the emulation.

A typical example of the unresolved dialectic of modern and "historical" material is by Fernando Montes. Here, a free-style, almost deco-ish, classicism is rendered in Aztec red, blue and pink. The dubious historical content of the reconstruction is emphasized by a tennis court which abuts against a hippodrome (unintentionally recalling the Jacobean figure, whose historical attitude it shares, that "we are the tennis balls of fate").

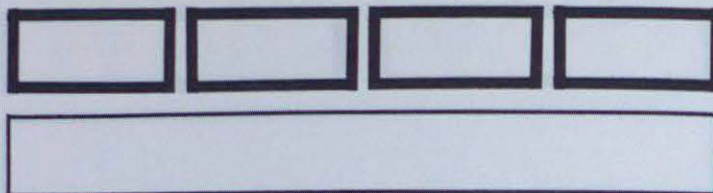
Justin Solsona's work goes even farther, simply enclosing ideas of ruins within the glass shells of modern architecture which become their tombs, though the same coding is extended to the actual living area of the villa. Here, too, the architectural foundations are already, literally, cracked, thus anticipating the future encroachment of nature as history.

Paolo Farina reconstructs not only the villa, but also an eleventh century abbey said to have been built on its foundations. By simultaneously reconstructing two fragments, one of which is already a reconstruction, and doing so in a style which self-consciously refers to the stripped classicism of the 1960's, Farina mediates what should be our immediate grasp of the historical quality of the reconstruction.

The attitude of unease, manifested by the explicitness of historical reference which mitigates our true understanding of the historicity of architecture as an art is corrected by the work of Leon Krier and Melvin Charney. Krier's reconstruction eschews all modernist forms and, through this negation, recaptures both the superficial ambience of a Roman villa and the historical quality of the emulation itself. By eliminating the negative historical attitudes of modernism, and through that elimination, Krier allows the deep structure of architecture as a historical activity to foreground itself.



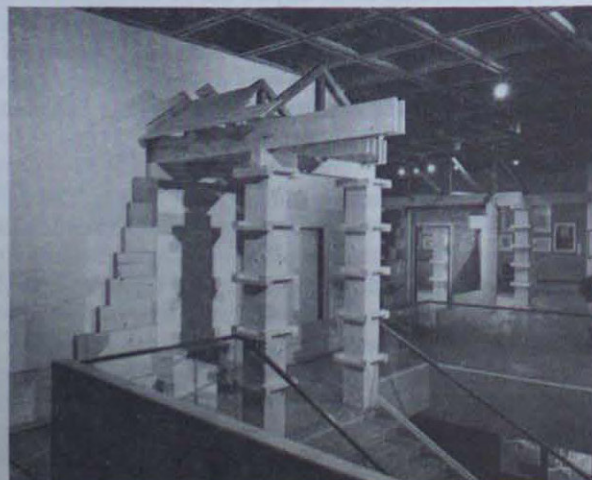
K.F. Schinkel: Fountain for a Tuscan Villa



Melvin Charney's massive timber post and lintel constructions entitled *Pliny on my Mind 1 and 2*, are the first objects encountered by the visitor, as well as the last. *Pliny 1* is the more explicitly classical of the two, it is a large blank portico at the top of the stairs leading to the Museum's uppermost gallery. The stairs are continued in the construction and disappear into the wall behind. *Pliny 2* refers more specifically to rustic shacks. Its wall and three-columns support a half pediment which may also be seen as a vernacular sloping roof. Physically distinct, but visually connected by both material and technique, these two constructions demonstrate, with great visual flair, the communality all architecture receives through originary resonances. Further, with an intensely historical and a not drily historicist consciousness, Charney has succinctly located the post-modern moment. By conjuring spectres of ruins and shades of unbuilt or unfinished fragments, Charney establishes this moment not just as one of de-construction (through analytical and descriptive archaeology) but also re-construction (regeneration) and construction (both physically and philosophically: we "construct" ideas as well as architectural forms). In this work, the dialectic between ruins and fragment, the past and the yet unbuilt future, is resolved through sheer architectural *presence* now rescued from the architectural *absence* of Pliny's letters.

As one leaves the exhibition, the eye is drawn to a small wall outside the main exhibition area. This corollary to the exhibition contains photographs of both public and private buildings in Montreal, concentrating on the portico as a classicising element which is also a normative part of the urban experience. In its prevalence, the classical portico fulfills a function in the collective memory of a street or a city. The function it fulfills is itself memory. As an envoi to the exhibition, this group of photographs makes its message clear: the history of architecture in general, and in its particular manifestations, is never again to be dismissed.

Mitchell Merling is a part-time student at the School of Architecture of McGill University. He has received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Architecture History from Vassar College.



Melvin Charney: Pliny on My Mind No. 1