Un bon maniérisme peut être décrit comme étant "une adhésion marquée ou excessive à une manière particulière ou inhabituelle surtout si elle est affectée." L'oeuvre de Philip Carter comprend plusieurs projects qui illustrent son intérêt pour le contextualisme dans l'architecture.

Sa bibliothèque à Markham a été conçue en tenant compte de l'arena adjacent et ainsi reconstitue la place publique qui existait déjà sur le site. Les éléments de l'architecture vernaculaire de Richmond Hill ont inspiré la forme de la bibliothèque Richvale tandis que la "Toronto Boys and Girls Library s'appuie sur le développement historique du site, tout en respectant chacun des fragments existants". En dernier lieu, son projet pour l'hôtel de ville à Edmonton tient compte des attitudes humaines élémentaires envers les édifices publiques et explore les possibilités en architecture de répondre à ces attitudes familières par le bâtiment, en particulier l'hôtel de ville."

Good Mannerism Makes Good Manors

by Philip Carter

Edmonton City Hall Competition

Since I was asked to write an article on 'Mannerism', I presumed that it was because it was thought that my buildings were mannered. I looked it up. There were 3 definitions and I chose the one I liked best; *"Marked or excessive adherence to an unusual or particular manner, especially if affected."* If it's the more classical definition you are interested in, stop here!

When I was in school the "word" was "functionalism". I had never heard of *Mannerism* and if I had, I would never have admitted to it. We believed in a brave new world of architecture with no reference to the past, only the future. Style was a word which, if uttered, meant instant chastisement and possibly, failure. *Process* was the important thing. If we could just follow the steps of a design process we had implicit faith that the building produced would be practical, functional and would produce an original aesthetic. We gravitated to process concepts of Christopher Alexander, Sym Van der Ryn, etc. There were linear processes, cyclical processes: there was analysis, synthesis and something called *design leap*. This process became the central focus of architectural education and still is, partly because it gives teachers something to teach.

This attitude was a product of the 50's and 60's industrial society best typified by I.B.M. and the Pentagon. It was the model of the way life ought to be; a brave new world of organization, hierarchy and efficiency. It dreamt of a city as a system and IBM words crept into the design vocabulary; feedback, networks, components, systems, analysis, movement systems, nodes, inter-relationship systems, modules, etc. If we could only find a way to understand these complex systems and fit them together a more efficient and better world would result.

Buildings were analysed, programmed and distilled in an organization of modules, cores, ducts, stairs and corridors. Vast program and analysis reports could however be distilled by the giants of our time, such that major buildings could be designed on placemats, envelope backs or paper serviettes on airline flights. But the buildings had a *look* of functionalism. How odd it was that, in our thesis class of 30 projects, all with different sites and programs, most had an uncanny resemblance to the then popular Boston City Hall which in turn resembled *La Tourette* by LeCorbusier. In short, functionalism was as mannered as the previous eclectic period we set out to destroy.

In the 70's people began to question our work not so much on functional grounds but in terms of neighbourliness — what it looked like in context. Architects at first were surprised and couldn't understand why people weren't begging for their *Radiant Cities*. Under pressure, they began to respond. Yet behind most of the now more polite walls lay the same functionalist plans. Hillingdon Town Hall cloaks a 60's plan of 45° grids, exposed ducts, open office landscape, atriums and other idioms of that planning in a polite friendly skin of brick. This politeness fails to properly address peoples concerns for a contextual architecture; one that responds to our roots and cultural heritage. Can there be a Canadian Architecture? It seems difficult when the attitude of Canadian schools is one of *"There's nothing in Canada worth seeing."* I do not mean to imply Canadiana — ah wilderness and the stuff of the 60's when Canadian architects borrowed Aalto's Saynatsalo Town Centre as the new idiom. No, I mean a cultural connection with urban Canada. If in this search one gets labelled mannerist, at least let it be from our own regional heritage rather than from Turin, Milan or Paris. In the buildings that follow there is an attempt to address the issue of a new regional architecture.

Markham Library & Village Green

Markham is a new suburb of Toronto. Originally it was a 19th century farm town which until a few years ago was largely intact. Now it is in danger of being swamped by the rapid onslaught of modern urbanity. That is an urbanity of sameness in every city of North America; an international style of McDonalds, regional shopping centres (the new prototype is Eaton Centre), international chains *("Our surprise is no surprise")*, arterial roads with barbecues peeking over carefully landscaped berms of "no man's land". Yet everyone in Markham moved there with the idea of living in a small Ontario town. They had a rather romantic notion that they could achieve some of the qualities of life that small towns offer not only socially but stylistically as well. What was provided physically failed to match up. Hence they gravitated where possible to the last physical vestiges of the 19th century town. Old buildings were restored and shops became *Shoppes*.

The site of the Markham Library was on the main corner of the town at the interface of the 19th century town and the 20th century city. It had formerly been the site of the Markham Fairgrounds, a famous country fair site for over a century. The Fair was an early fatality of the new urbanity and is now located in a pre-engineered metal building 3 miles out of town. An arena built on the site in the 60's was the only remnant of the rich history the site once had as the focus of civic life of the town.

There was an opportunity to claim what was left of the site (most of it was sold to a developer for tract housing), to reinstate the site as a public place and to rekindle the civic life that once took place there. The Library was seen as a kind of catalyst in this process since it represented one of the few municipal expenditures that was not an engineering work such as roads and sewers, but dealt with public activity serving a broad age group of the population. As a visible political statement this project was contentious from the beginning.

The Library was set back from the streets (6 lane highways designed by engineers to assure an efficient flow of traffic at 60 mph) but not the normal suburban setback required by the zoning. Instead the setbacks to the building were tripled to create a real park, not just a no man's land. This park was seen as a traditional 19th century town square with all the public activities we have come to associate with small town life; a cenotaph, a bandshell, gardens, fountains. The Library and the Arena form the walls of the Square. Announcement of this idea in the local press initiated a grass roots process which made the park happen. The local Legion demanded a new cenotaph in the park and the local theatre group, band and choirs demanded a theatre and a bandshell.

The Library design was obviously going to set the tone for the "place", together with the arena which could be encouraged to

be a more conducive partner to the square. Hence the Library had to be evocative of this small town imagery and it had to be readily identifiable as a library without undue signage. Furthermore it had to be a good neighbour to the square and the town as a whole.

It was a deliberate decision to try to create a romantic image of what a library was and should be in the life of a town. Not just a repository for books, nor a supermarket or part of a civic centre within a mall but an old fashioned library, a focus of cultural life in the community. The clock tower is probably the oldest form of civic identification and so it was re-used. Town libraries most often had sloped roofs probably because of the many Carnegie libraries built during the late 19th century at the height of Richardson and the Shingle Style. This combined with a love for 19th century residential elements such as lattice work porches, dormers, attics led to a style of building which owes much to the imagery of the past.

The large roof is the central idea of the building. It creates the form of the spaces, the imagery of the building and a protection from the elements. All the elements of the building are exaggerated partly to deal with a new urban scale of highways and partly to create a new context for these elements consistent with modern concepts of library planning and building technology.

The plan of the building is old; a simple centre hall containing a grand main stair with an open well. Upon entering, the entire building is understandable and reads as you might have expected from the exterior. A huge vaulted space reconfirms the roof and creates a reading room reminiscent of the great 19th century libraries. This is not just a 60's library with a more polite skin.

The Markham Library and Village Green as it is called, have caught on and the square is used constantly in the ways in which it was envisioned. Wedding parties go there, bands play there, the legionaires march there, skating parties are held there and major town events are scheduled there. So I plead guilty to mannerism on this project but it is well mannered.
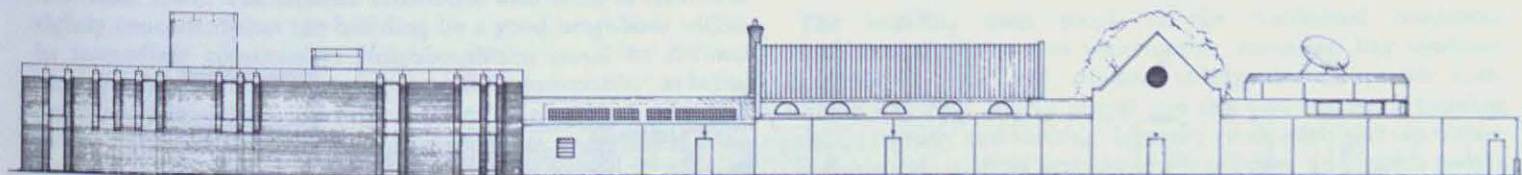
Boys & Girls House Library   north elevation
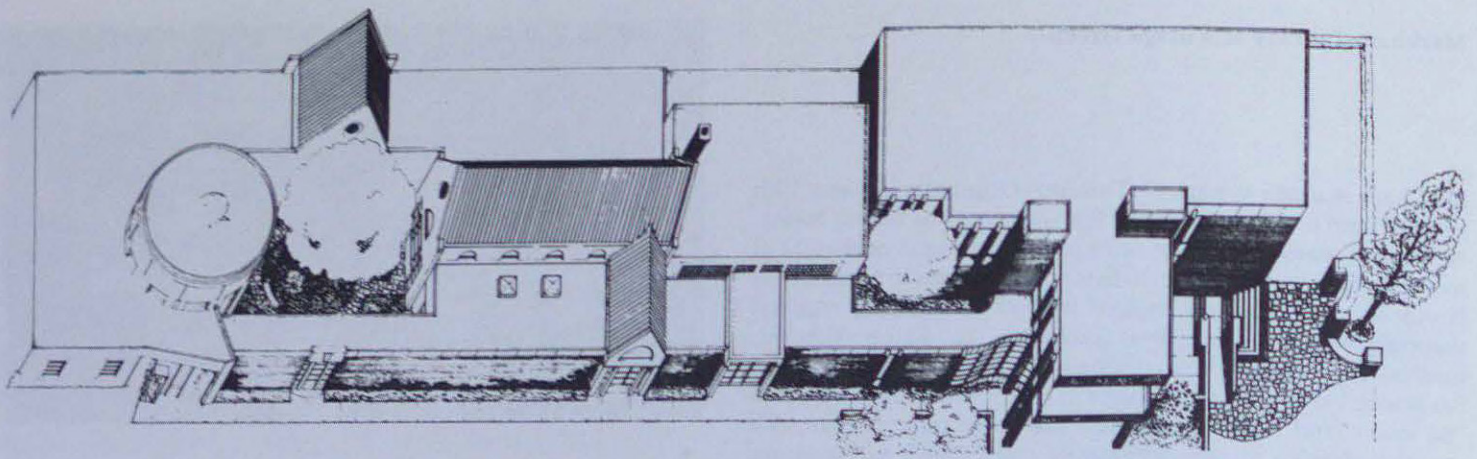
Boys & Girls House Library

This current project is on a very constricted site in the heart of the University of Toronto campus. It is a public library fighting to maintain its identity within a precinct of the city dominated by the University. The history of the site's development was the key to its further development. The site once had a house dedicated to boys' and girls' books and as such inherited a marvellous collection of rare children's literature. An addition was added in the 50's and in the 60's, the original Victorian House was torn down and replaced with a modern building. The collections expanded a collection of science fiction books was added called the *Spaced Out Library*. The problem was to

remarkable example of this period of architecture. We felt, however, that these buildings were as integral to the development of the building as were more romantic concerns of the new *houses*. The scheme builds on the historic development of the site respecting each of the remaining pieces, but adding new buildings in a style sympathetic to the serious yet fantastic nature of the collections to be housed. The Children's collections are located in a house-like structure which evokes images of castles, dragons, and fairy tales. The *Spaced Out* collection, also fantasy, comes out of similar approach and creates a magical form within the rigid grid of planning logic. it has overtones of Stonehenge, occult geometry and science fiction aesthetics.

Between the rare collections is a courtyard containing one simple, *messy* (according to city planners) chestnut tree, evoking

Key

1. Branch Library-Children
2. Branch Library-Adults
3. Bagshaw Collection
4. Multi-purpose Room
5. Osborne Reading Room
6. Courtyard
7. Spaced-Out Reading Room
8. Book Stacks
9. Workroom
10. Office
11. Kitchen
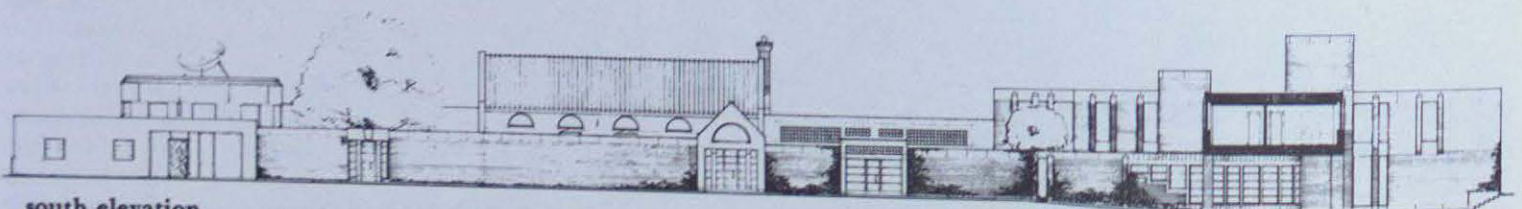12. Staff Lounge
13. Storage
14. Mechanical
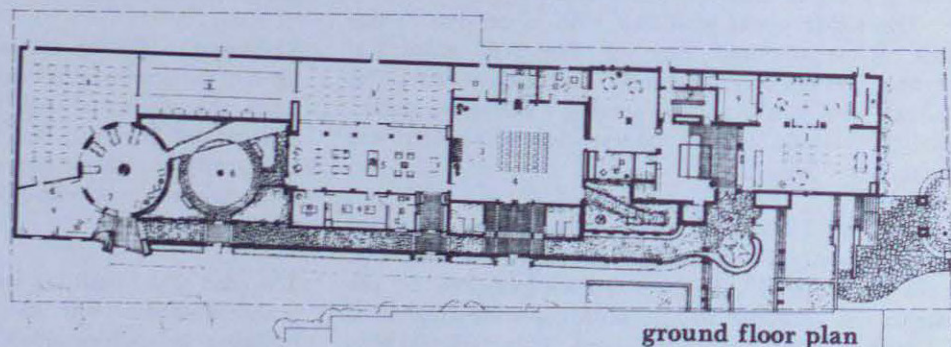
ground floor plan

provide facilities on the site to properly house these rare books and to provide a branch lending library on the site.

The solution was to add two new *houses* to the site and link them with existing buildings by means of a colonnade. The idiom for the colonnade was a garden wall providing protection from the hostilities of the surrounding buildings (a parking garage, a steam plant, and maintenance buildings).
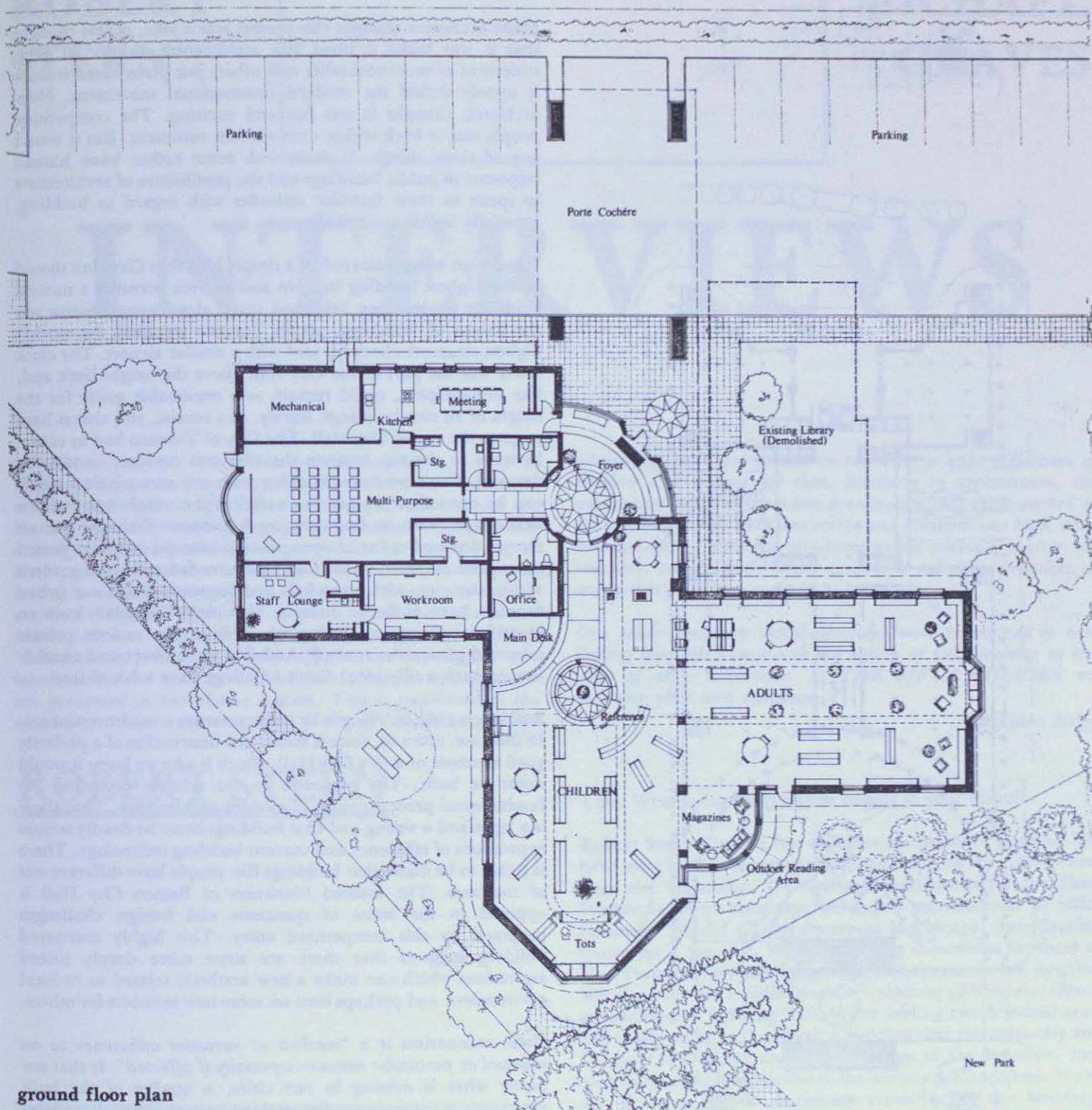
The 60's building is a good example of architecture of its time, but it is a period not particularly popular these days. Few people were concerned with its preservation. The 50's building was not a

a rather simple fantasy. The 50's building was preserved as a multi-purpose room (can't we invent a new word for this — its a hall, an open space, an indoor courtyard). We have renovated this structure in a 50's idiom using such signals as glass block, colour and trim to accentuate its place in history. The 60's building becomes the lending Library and was preserved and renovated. Again the idiom for the renovations was to re-instate good 60's architecture. Hence each of the houses speaks to not only what it houses, but to the period of architecture in which it was built. This is indeed a mannered approach, yet it makes good 'manors'.

south elevation

ground floor plan

Labels in plan: Parking, Porte Cochère, Parking, Mechanical, Kitchen, Meeting, Stg., Multi-Purpose, Stg., Foyer, Existing Library (Demolished), Staff Lounge, Workroom, Office, Main Desk, Reference, ADULTS, CHILDREN, Magazines, Outdoor Reading Area, Tots, New Park

Richvale Branch Library

This project is more recent and has much to do with good manners. the site is in the midst of a 1950's suburb of one storey bungalows, winding streets and odd shaped lots. Yet the overall context is Richmond Hill, a 19th century farm town now in the clutches of relentless suburbia. To draw on this heritage seemed a valid connection to make to help relate this satellite suburb to its mother town. The citizens' committee who acted as client was rightly concerned that the building be a good neighbour within its immediate community. Neighbourliness could be defined here as achieving a scale consistent with the community, as being generous in bringing some improvement to the community and as any good neighbour inviting people to use its facilities. Like any good local library it should also be a place to find comfort and fun in the company of books.

The building was divided into four wings, each being roughly the size of neighbouring houses. They were developed in a cross axial plan which solved a difficult site situation and building plan. The plan form of the wings is really an old concept of building organization yet together the wings create a plan that is immediately comprehensible as you enter. Unlike Markham, you cannot see all four wings from any single vantage point outside. Instead, it tends to unfold only as you progress through a sequence of entries.

The building owes much to the traditional residential architecture of the area with turrets, rotundas, bay windows, articulated brick work, vaulted ceilings and decorative trim. These elements are whimsical and fun and suggest a building that is friendly and inviting. Like any good neighbour the library is respectful; it offers gestures of friendliness, and invites people in. These are good manners.

Edmonton City Hall Competition Entry
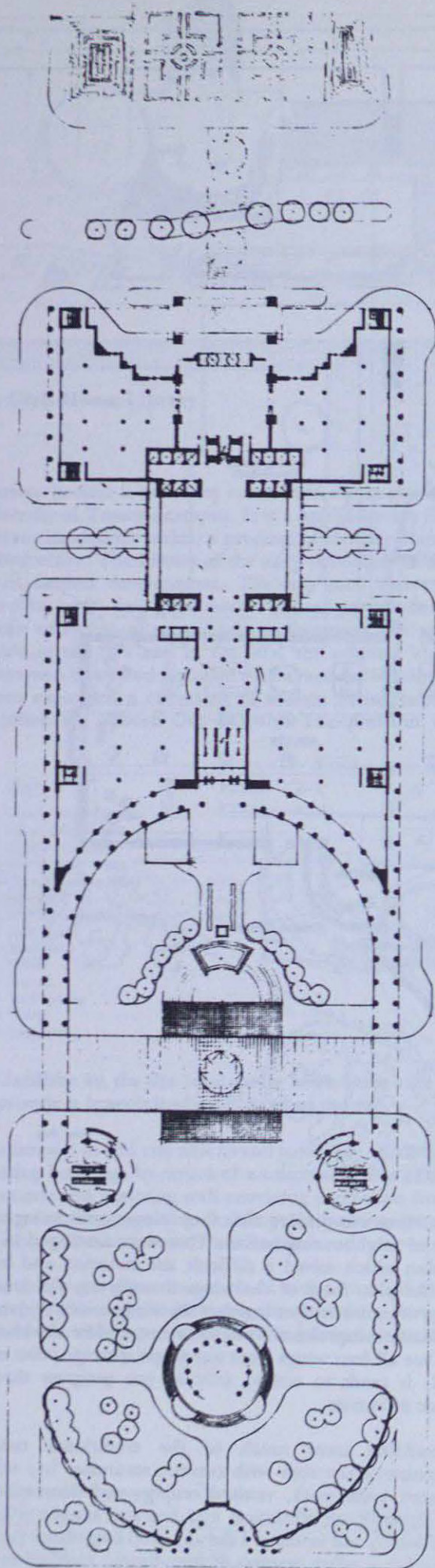
Many architects thought this project was a joke, others thought that it was badly cribbed 30's architecture, others an over-statement of monumentality and others just plain hated it since it openly defied the modern international movement. Non-architects thought it was fun and exciting. The competition people sent it back within days without comment. But it wasn't any of those things. It dealt with some rather basic human responses to public buildings and the possibilities of architecture to speak to these familiar attitudes with regard to building, especially building city halls.

The design was predicated on a simple idea that City Hall should be the highest building in town and as such becomes a natural guideline for building height. A small airport nearby now sets the height of buildings, yet in Toronto we have the world's highest structure cheek-by-jowl with a similar airport. The clock tower was the part of the City Hall above the height limit and, like Philadelphia, could remain as a reasonable guide for the height of all new buildings. Surely, as a tourist, you always have to go to the top of City Hall. The City of Toronto had to cancel its tours to the top because the elevators couldn't handle the demand. Can't we have an office with our own window which can be opened so we can see and feel the weather and throw ticker tape down on homecoming Edmonton Eskimos? Are we forever destined to live in open office landscape with fake potted palms and carpeted walls? Can't we have fantastic roof gardens within the city, with waterfalls and vegetation? Do our urban canyons have to be so barren? Shouldn't City Hall h'ave an identifiable form, to distinguish it from the various private mirrored glass slabs around? And is a clock tower and weather beacon such a silly idea? Can't buildings have a bit of fun?

Building a civic building is by its very nature a controversial act. In this case, more so, since it meant the destruction of a perfectly good example of a 60's City Hall, which is why we knew it would never be built. The responses to the scheme underline the fundamental preoccupation of modern architecture. That there is a right and a wrong and that buildings must be deadly serious expressions of efficiency and current building technology. There is a case to be made that buildings like people have different sets of manners. The assured blankness of Boston City Hall is opposed in the series of questions and benign challenges proposed by this competition entry. This highly mannered building suggests that there are some more deeply rooted aspirations which can make a new aesthetic related to its local environment and perhaps even set some new manners for others.

Good mannerism is a *"marked or excessive adherence to an unusual or particular manner especially if affected"*. Is that not partly what is missing in our cities, a quality of the built environment coming out of something unique about that place. Does Toronto have to look like Dallas or Denver or Singapore? Do we forever have to bring in foreign giants to design our cities or can our cities develop a personal style which talks to our history, our culture and our aspirations? if this is mannerism, then mannerism makes better *manors*.

Philip Carter is a practising architect in Toronto. He has taught at the University of Toronto and Ryerson Polytechnical Institute and has been a visiting studio critic at the University of Waterloo. Current and recent projects include a number of Toronto area libraries. The Markham Library in particular has been shown in a wide variety of publications.