V.6 N.3 4 1997

THE FIFTH COLUMN

THE CANADIAN STUDENT JOURNAL OF ARCHITECTURE / LA REVUE CANADIENNE DES ÉTUDIANTS EN ARCHITECTURE

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THE CANADIAN STUDENT JOURNAL OF ARCHITECTURE • LA REVUE CANADIENNE DES ETUDIANTS EN ARCHITECTURE

V.9-N.3/4
1997

Le titre de la revue canadienne des étudiants en architecture, THE FIFTH COLUMN, a pour but d'inviter le lecteur à l'interpréter à plusieurs niveaux. Le premier niveau suggère une référence architectonique, celle consistant à l'élaboration d'un ordre architectural contemporain à la fois respectueux d'un passé antique et répondant aux nouvelles conceptions de l'architecture. Sur un autre plan, THE FIFTH COLUMN rappelle son oriantation journalistique par sa connotation avec la "colonne" imprimée d'un texte. Enfin, "la cinquième colonne", c'est aussi, depuis Franco, le nom donné aux partisans clandestins sur lesquels chacun des deux adversaires peut compter dans les rangs de l'autre.

Ces trois références définissent dans son ensemble le rôle de THE FIFTH COLUMN. La revue a pour but de promouvoir l'étude de l'architecture au Canada, en terme de lien entre le passé et la futur. Elle tente également de stimuler et d'entretenir un sens aigu de la critque chez ses collaborateurs ainsi que chez ses lecteurs. Enfin, THE FIFTH COLUMN propose un forum où il est possible d'établir différents points de vue, non dans le seul but de les confronter mais plutôt de rendre possible leur évaluation objective.

Objectifs

Promouvoir l'étude et l'appréciation d'une architecture sensible à l'intérieur de la communauté architecturale ainsi qu'à de plus larges groupes, et par conséquent influencer le développement de l'architecture au Canada;

Promouvoir la constitution d'un forum dans le but d'encourager le diaglogue et les échanges d'idées entre les étudiants, les architectes et les individus intéressés de toute autre provence;

Offrir une alternative critique aux revues de type commercial, en publiant un périodique ayant ses racines à l'intérieur des Ecoles universitaires, traditionnellement pionnières dans l'évolution de la pensée architecturale.

Politiques éditoriales

1. Publier les articles d'étudiants, de membres du corps académique, de professionnels ainsi que d'autres groupes intéressés, qui autrement ne trouveraient que peu d'opportunités d'expression et de publication.
2. Publier une série d'articles dans chaque numéro explorant un thème spécifique qui contribuera à une compréhension approfondie et à une plus grande conscientisation de l'architecture contemporaire.
3. Publier des articles sur les diverses facettes de l'architecture canadienne dans le but de promouvoir la compréhension de ces différentes traditions locales et de leur influence sur la pensée architecturale contemporaire.
4. Publier des articles traitant des influences historiques sur le développement de l'architecture.
5. Publier les projets d'étudiants des différentes Ecoles dans le but de stimuler le débat architectural.
6. Publier des comptes rendus critiques de différentes oeuvres architecturales au Canada ainsi qu'à l'étranger afin de s'arrêter sur et d'influencer le développement de l'architecture au Canada.
7. Publier des comptes rendus critiques des différents événements, publications, conférences et expositions ayant quelque intérêt pour nos lecteurs.

THE FIFTH COLUMN (La revue canadienne des étudiants en architecture) publiée en printemps 1997.

The name of the Canadian Student Journal of Architecture, THE FIFTH COLUMN, is intended to be interpreted in a number of ways. First, there is an architectonic reference, the preoccupation with the development of a contemporary order of architecture that is at once respectful of antiquity and responsive to new conceptions of architecture. Second, there is a reference to journalism and the printed column of text. Finally, there is the twentieth century political connotation, an organized body sympathizing with and working for the enemy in a country at war.

These three references essentially define the role of THE FIFTH COLUMN. The magazine promotes the study of architecture in Canada at the present in terms of both the past and the future. It attempts to stimulate and foster a responsible, critical sensitivity in both its readers and its contributors. Finally, THE FIFTH COLUMN provides an alternative forum to established views not for the sake of opposing them, but to make it possible to objectively evaluate them.

Objectives

To promote the study and the appreciation of a sensitive architecture within the architectural community and general population, thereby positively influencing the development of architecture in Canada;

To promote a forum for and to encourage the dialogue between students, academics, professional architects and interested members of the 'lay' population;

To provide a critical alternative to the commercial trade magazines by publishing a journal that originates from the schools, traditionally the vanguard of architectural thought.

Editorial Policies

1. To publish articles by students, academics and professionals and by other interested parties that would otherwise find little opportunity for expression and publication.
2. To publish a series of articles in each issue exploring a specific and relevant theme which contributes to an understanding and a greater awareness of current architecture.
3. To publish articles on the diversity of Canadian architecture as a means of promoting an understanding of these local traditions and their influence on current architectural thought.
4. To publish articles discussing historical influences on the development of architecture.
5. To publish student projects from the various schools in order to stimulate architectural debate.
6. To publish critical reviews of current works of architecture in Canada, as well as outside the country, in order to reflect on and positively influence the development of architecture in Canada.
7. To publish critical reviews of activities, publications, lectures and exhibitions of interest to our readership.

THE FIFTH COLUMN (Canadian Student Journal of Architecture) published in spring 1997.

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Editorial

David Theodore

But the flowers that bloom in the spring, tra laa.

Ah, architecture. What's a student to do? The profession is thoroughly *quétaine* and the academy is, well, academic. Academic study of architecture has reverted to a seesaw between embryotomy and anastylosis. At least my recent foray into ivy covered ivory towers had all the markings of a David Lodge novel and none of the profits. Is architecture ailing? It's difficult to know. When I try to put my finger on the pulse of architecture I come to the same conclusion about my patient as Hackenbush in *A Day at the Races*: "Either he's dead or my watch has stopped" (go figure).

Anyway, I wanted to report to you a conversation I overheard in the Arms and Armor rooms of the Philadelphia Museum of Art. I was pondering the efficacy of carolignian armour after a weekend architecture conference/tournament at the Graduate School of Fine Arts, University of Pennsylvania (motto: "Laws without morals are useless") where it seemed all my steel-tipped lances were dulled, all my lambent jousts repelled, all my champions unseated by Unconquerable Indifference—or was it merely a "disinterested professorate?" Anyhow, I was wandering around imagining Jennifer Bloomer and Christine Boyer encased from sollerets to gorgets about to be hoisted onto surly mounts when suddenly I heard the sound of one hand clapping. A young man was talking and laughing with two young ladies. I remarked their Southern accents and listened vaguely to their conversation:

"Hey!"

"Hey what?"

"No, just hey!"

"No just hey what?"

"Be nice!"

"Be nice what?"

Looking out over the Schuylkill I saw myself as a creature driven and derided by vanity; and my eyes burned etc. Man, I hate it when that happens.

Ah, well, if you've read this far you're probably thinking I'm cynical, and you'd be correcto mundo. But it's justified, all right, well-founded and justified. Next issue we plan to feature the work of recent Québec design school graduates [subscribe now! ed.]. What are their prospects in a town chockful of good, imaginative, engaged (in the Sartrian sense) architects who have absolutely no work (disengaged in the Captain Picardian sense)? Well, they can teach! These young latterday Polyphilios (and fifty per cent Polyophilias) are finalists on *The Price is Right*—let's see what you could have won behind door number one—Beauty; door number three—Truth (ooh, aah); and what did you win behind the middle door number two? Congratulations! A tenure track position at an ivy league school! As quipster Jamie Smiley used to say: "Ha ha. Very funny."

As Freud used to say, dream on.

But I trust you won't find this cynicism distressing. I don't. I've merely adopted a new motto: whatever's worth doing is worth doing, period. And this issue, she's a-done. Cynics have the last laugh, the last word, and, at least in this case, they get to sing the finale.

You've had your share of tears and trouble
But every care will be a bubble
If you can face the setting sun and say
Tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow is another day.

Yo! Word up. Check this out.

You're hooked to the same crew that brought you Vol. 9.2. We would like to send a big shout out to Erica Goldstein, J. Kent Fitzsimons and Eric Majer, whose superhuman efforts smoothed out the administration and production of Vol. 9.2 allowing us to bring down the issue you have in your hands.

Even if we're always bigging up the idea of continuity, at the same time we've been kicking to new flavours, and new flavours make change. Make sure to let us know what you think. (Donations and comments are always welcome.) You keep it locked; we'll keep it flowing. It's all real.

Masqu'A.R.C.A.D.

Marc-André Plasse
Jean-MaximeDufresne
Emanuelle Lapointe
Louis Petrusiak
Jean-Francois Roy

Masqu'A.R.C.A.D. is a theatre camp located on an old farmstead in the Eastern Townships. It offers summer classes for youth age seven to seventeen. Its director asked for a protected practise area in the open fields to accommodate a group of students and teachers, and to serve as a stage set during public performances.

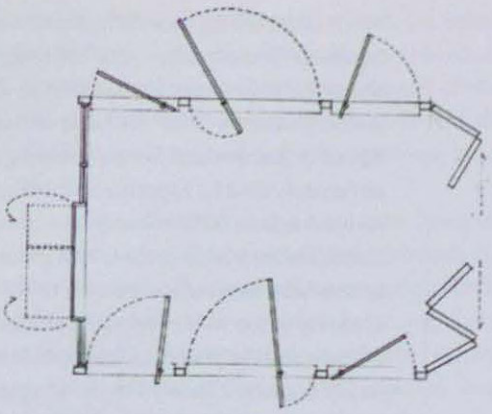
Following the spirit of the place, the project, nicknamed the "Chameleon," borrows the traditional forms of the barn. It is positioned at the intersection of a small clearing and an open field, 150m from the farmstead. One approaches the site along a narrow path which, through a predetermined scenography, choreographs the visitor's gradual discovery of the pavilion.

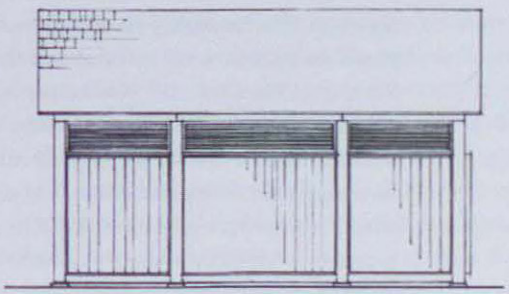
Because the construction budget was ridiculously low, we used recycled materials such as old barn wood and windows. The old materials are always framed or visually detached from the new structure, making a surreal collage of surfaces, textures, and impressions.

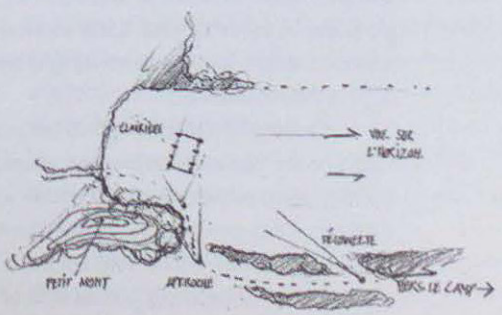
The Chameleon is made of movable parts that the actors can use to create a particular stage set. The side walls are composed of 6 frames that can swing inside the stage to become scenic walls, or outward to become wings. The back wall is composed of a mosaic of recycled windows. In the middle, two wooden panels covered with cedar shingles (named with affection the "French Fry Stand") can be opened to frame the actors and the scene. The front wall acts as a theatre curtain. Pieces of canvas are stretched between four wood frames. The curtain opens like an accordion.

Spectators can sit outside the pavilion and move around it to follow the scenes, or they can sit inside while the actors open the appropriate door to frame their scene.

The project will be completed in May 1997.






CLAIRIÈRE
VUE SUR L'HORIZON
PETIT MONT
ARTICULÉ
VERS LE CAMP

A Television but No Walls on the Outskirts of Paradise

Juliette Patterson

One evening I am at the top of a slope, drawing the settlement below and the virgin mountain across the highway. I am working in Zihuatanejo, Mexico, with six other students from the McGill School of Architecture. We are studying an informal settlement called La Esperanza, which has grown up on the outskirts of Zihuatanejo as a result of the demand for cheap labor in the tourist industry.[1] (Ixtapa is the nearby artificial tourist town which sustains the economy of the whole region.) A woman comes out of a neighboring shack, sits down beside me and studies my drawing critically. I'm racing against the short tropical sunset. "My neighbor told me that a group of you drew her house," she finally says. "Why didn't you come to mine?" I try to explain that hers isn't one of the fifty houses chosen at random, but don't know how to say it in Spanish. "It doesn't matter," she answers. "I did a few drawings of what I want my dream-house to look like. Could you look at them? My husband promised me he'd build us a new house when he comes back from Texas." By now there's not enough light to draw, so I close my sketchbook and walk over to her house.

She lives with her mother in a cedar plank house under a tar-soaked cardboard roof. Her husband has gone to work in Texas and they haven't heard from him since. Like most houses here, the single room is divided in two by a curtain; the back of the room holds a double bed; the front of the room is furnished with a table and chairs. I sit down at the table. She takes out a yellow pad and, after much hesitation, shows me a drawing of a concrete house with disproportionately large arches. "I want the arches to be closed in with glass." I look at her and wonder where she found her inspiration for this neo-colonial house, so far from everyday life. I prefer the soft cedar planks and pebbled floor of her present house. I tell her that according to my limited knowledge of construction such large panes would be very expensive, even in Canada. Why have window panes at all? You don't need them in this climate. In fact, not a single house in the settlement has a window pane. She tells me that she has seen a house in Ixtapa that had large arches of this kind.

I'm struck by the strength of her desire to own such a house. She's typical of many people here: they want a future outside of rural poverty and it is the strength of this desire which makes them overcome the many obstacles in their way. For in La Esperanza, any small initiative rapidly runs into obstacles: no

running water, no roads, no telephone, no money. Practical and reasonable desires lead you nowhere. The strength of their will and their dogged persistence can truly move mountains. I'm quite sure this young woman shall one day own that house of her dreams.

Down the street, Juana Chavarrìa-Torres and her husband recently completed their concrete house. They first built a house of *bajareque*, a simple timber frame with walls made of mud packed inside a frame of wood sticks. As soon as they could afford it, Juana and her husband started building concrete walls around the *bajareque* house. Eventually, they moved into the finished concrete house and tore down the *bajareque* one. *Bajareque* withstands the heat better than concrete; but a concrete house is considered secure and modern.

Juana is very proud of her concrete house. It has an entrance hall, a separate living-room, dining-room, kitchen, bedroom and...a *bathroom!* When I ask about the outhouse in order to locate it on the site plan, Juana tells me that they pulled it down when they finished the house. I nod, then realize the bathroom cannot be functional because there is no sewer in La Esperanza. The couple, betting on the sewer's imminent arrival, pulled down the septic tank; but since many things remain forever imminent in La Esperanza, in the mean time they must climb up the hill to the woods. They would rather have nothing at all than mar the perfection of their new house by keeping the outhouse. The things people do for social status! I think. Then I realize that my conception of a bathroom—a utilitarian room I forget about as soon as I close the door—is just my own. Practicality has little to do with her appreciation of a bathroom. So what if it doesn't work? It's a commitment to a modern future.

Other situations bring me up against my preconceptions about basic needs. For example, a house might lack running water and a water-proof roof, but it always has a colour TV. One of the houses we measured was primitive even by La Esperanza standards: a wood frame covered with two blankets, on the least desirable of all plots at the edge of the pine forest above the settlement. The room's furniture was a double bed, a few chairs, and the color television. The family sat on the bed, mesmerized by an animated cartoon.

Poverty in this coastal resort town is not a story about hunger, crime, or stultifying work. It's about complete boredom. Half of the community stays at home swinging in their hamacs. They watch us work in the heat. We do not see any books or magazines, although most people are literate. La Esperanza has a small school built by the Ford Foundation—a lovely new building of interlocking hexagonal classrooms. But its rooms are depressingly bare: no books, no drawings. Outside of the Saturday evening dance and other (albeit frequent) celebrations, television provides the sole entertainment. And since grandparents and other keepers-of-tradition have been left behind, it also provides an easy opportunity to anchor oneself, to connect to the community and to the world outside.

La Esperanza is a society in the process of defining its identity. Right now it is somewhere between the rural past of its inhabitants and the North-American suburbia of its future. I can't understand its enthusiastic adoption of cinderblock architecture and laissez-faire urban planning. Traditional building methods are disappearing, and the surrounding tropical forest is slated for development. But in an uprooted society where traditional values have been left behind in the search for a better life, modernization is the easiest or at least most obvious next move.

We are invited for lunch by Carlos, his wife Paula, their five daughters, and Paula's mother, who bore sixteen children and outlived twelve. We sit under a thatched roof in their garden (a tropical jungle, an oasis amidst the cardboard roofs and mud streets) eating a delicious salad of octopus, hot chili peppers and crackers. Carlos owns an apartment in the government-subsidized housing project but prefers to live in La Esperanza, without running water. "I don't want people living below me and above me," he argues. "I want my own house and garden." I've seen these housing projects. Europeans happily live in similar apartments all their life. The apartments are not big, but what's wrong with them?

Carlos is not alone; no-one here wants to live in a mid-rise building, buy their groceries on the ground floor, and walk to work. They would rather commute. It comes quite naturally from their rural background. They would have to give up their chickens and dogs and pigs to go into an apartment. Besides, unlike Europe, there still is a lot of undeveloped land in Mexico. Why shouldn't they build horizontally rather than vertically? Still, I can imagine this town in a few years: a congested, tentacular metropolis, a mini Mexico City.

One of the reasons we are here is to contest this vision. The neighbouring colony of CTM is on two opposing faces of a ravine; all houses therefore look towards its centre. It is much more tightly-knit and politically active than La Esperanza. La Esperanza developed on a slope along the highway which runs from downtown Zihuatanejo to the airport. All houses look towards the road rather than the community. To create a sense of identity, the residents wanted us to design a public space in an empty lot at the entrance to the community, optimistically called *la plaza* . The community wants a paved playground and perhaps a multipurpose building. "I see," a friend in Mexico City says later, "they want a *zòcalo*." Any self-respecting town in Mexico has a *zòcalo*, that is, a main square. At present, *la plaza* is a dumping ground for the president's wife's dishwater, which makes a muddy creek the pigs greatly enjoy.

We spend three days and a night making drawings and a model to show to the president of the housing and development corporation. Since the housing corporation owns the vacant lot, we are hoping they will lend their support to the project. After an unfortunate experiment with blueish paint in which La Esperanza became a snow-covered Inuit settlement, we are ready to go. We are ushered with great pomp through heavily guarded and air-conditioned precincts. Six or seven of the director's assistants arrive. After elaborate introductions, we sit down, and—wait. Finally the great man arrives, and after standing for more introductions, we sit and listen to his speech. He speaks convincingly of "justice for the *campesino*" and of the Mexican soul's deep-rooted desire for private land ownership. But he shows no signs of acting on his words. Afterwards, we take a group photo and go back to our apartment.

Any effort at organizing La Esperanza struggles against similar problems: public officials are not responsible to their constituents. Civic institutions, including those protecting basic property rights, or legal rights or even equal access to bureaucrats, are weak in Zihuatanejo. The one-party system is kept in place through bribes. For example, our stay in La Esperanza coincided with a municipal pre-election campaign. Suddenly, doctors were roaming up and down the slopes testing children for malaria. Construction workers and large trucks materialized in large numbers to install the much-awaited sewer.

Nevertheless, the issue of the square opened my eyes to the crucial role the square will play in the creation of civic-mindedness. Isn't it a necessary condition for the development of effective civic institutions? "We want a place where our children can play and weddings be celebrated," says Humberto, who lives in front of the *plaza*. Humberto is our great friend. Whenever we draw or measure near his house, he brings us chairs to sit on and mangoes to eat. Through these gestures Humberto inaugurates the square as a kind of agora, a specific civic space that encourages the exchange of goods and ideas. He draws us into the life of the community, civilizing us, making us see the place his way.

When it is built, the square in La Esperanza will provide a play area for children, a basketball court, and a shelter. But it will be much more than that; it will provide the opportunity for discussion and debate, and for communication and exchange, and for the grounding of the foundation of democratic institutions. It will be architecture at its best, visible as form and agent of social life.[2]

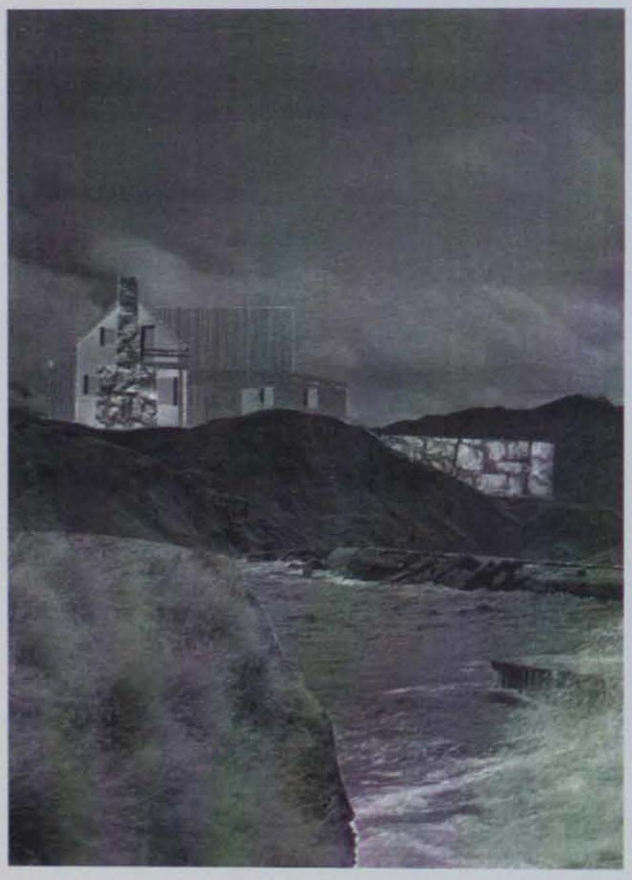
1. In the summer of 1996, six students of McGill University and I went to Zihuatanejo, Mexico, under the auspices of the RAIC-CIDA Youth Program. We surveyed the settlement and drew a geographic map of it, made measured drawings of 30 dwellings, and conducted a sociological study of the families they house. The six other students who went to La Esperanza, Mexico were Laurel Miles, Jean-Maxime Dufresne, Serge Gascon, Sukaina Kubba, Sandra Haefelfinger, and Aitor Itorralde. Our co-ordinators in the Minimum Cost Housing Graduate Program were Manuel Lara and Sarwat Viquar. In view of the square's potential to organize the community's political activity, I believe CIDA's continuing involvement is crucial. Canadian commitment is a necessary condition to the square's realization.

2. For more about our work in La Esperanza, see *Fingers of Hope* (Montreal: McGill School of Architecture, 1997).

Juliette Patterson, B.Arch McGill '96, is now working for the firm of Langlois, Smith, Vigeant in Montreal.

La Petite Maison
A Small Farmhouse
Bromont, Quebec

Mario Saia



Architectes	Saia et Barbarese, architectes
Conception	Mario Saia
Execution	Yvon Théoret et Robert Dionne
Dessins	Vladimir Topouzanov et Pierina Saia
Collages	Pierina Saia
Entrepreneur	Pro Construct, Glen Whitehead

In this region the hills descend gently to marshes and ponds against the silhouette of distant mountains. Of the numerous buildings which originally comprised this farm, only the house remains. Shifted downhill to find surer footing on new foundations, it still retains a strict alignment, as per custom, with the main road. Gardens have replaced the stables and other outbuildings which once nestled contrastingly with the irregular lay of the land, and within the house itself, new elements are whimsically shifted to recall this delicate imbalance.

The sobriety of the original structure with its steeply pitched roof, small unadorned windows, and one perpendicular wing fronted by a gallery, has been largely preserved; only the yellow-painted front and back façades stand in lively relief against the grey of the other surfaces. New aluminum roofing tiles, laid on angle, contribute to the house a sense of splendour and permanence previously reserved for less humble architecture.

The brilliance of metal also characterizes the entire surface of the volume which protrudes from the side, its misalignment suggesting both defiance and the possibility of a dialectic with tradition. This same treatment is also found over what was once the formal entry door.

In the back, a massive new fieldstore chimney anchors the house to the hill while at the same time shouldering a lightweight steel balcony. One ot the ground floor windows, while conforming to the rhythm and size of the original openings, is embedded in a larger picture window to accomodate the contemporary desire for light and views, again within the framework of a dialectic.

The interior responds to the simple lifestyle and refined taste of the new owners. All the partitions have been removed to create two large rooms. The dining area–an extension of the kitchen, is finished not with a traditional wallpaper, but rather with carefully buff-jointed plywood panels. This first axis, punctuated by waxed brushed steel columns, culminates at a stair with a matching steel guardrail.

A perpendicular axis is established by the entry hall and living room, barely distinguished one from the other by a gridded wood screen. Here, a recessed brickclad inglenook and fireplace terminate the sequence. The stairwell on the right pierces the wall at an angle and opens the livingroom up to mountain views and a flood of natural light. The entire room is banded by horizontal cherrywood paneling, with

each moulding strip continuing the line and profile of the stair nosings.

This small farmhouse is a studied response to the spirit of place which simple architectural forms inspire and which the landscape commands.

Sur le rang, à l'endroit de cette ferme, les pentes descendent vers les étangs, tandis qu'au loin se profilent les montagnes. Au hasard des buttes et de leurs creux s'étaient nichées les étables et toutes sortes de petites dépendances. Seule la maison s'alignait sur la route comme c'est la coutume et seule elle a traversé le temps. Elle a abondonné ses fondations désormais murs de soutènement pour se retrouver légèrement en contrebas sur des assises solides. Maintenant, elle conjugue en elle sa retenue propre a la fantaisie des angles qui était celle des constructions disparues.

On a conservé intacts le sobre bâtiment original avec son aile perpendiculaire et son appentis, les toits en pente, les ouvertures, le déclin de bois, la galerie. Cependant les facades avant et arrière s'égayent d'un premier plan peint en jaune qui entre en contraste avec le gris utilisé partout ailleurs. La toiture en carreaux de tôle d'aluminium disposés en angle confère à la maison une splendeur et une permanence autrefois réservées à des architectures moins humbles.

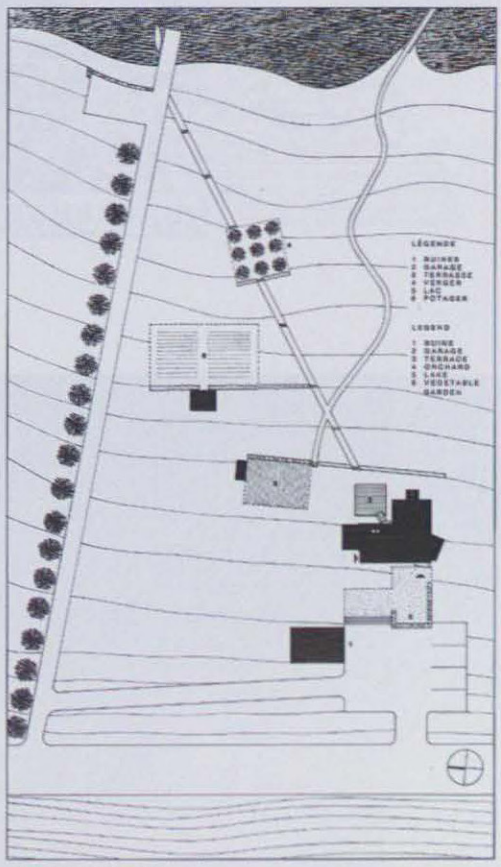
La brillance du métal s'étend à l'ensemble de l'important bloc qui vient se greffer en biais sur le mur gouttereau latéral comme défi à la tradition ou comme dialogue ouvert avec elle. De même, la forme irrégulière du toit de cet ajout se retrouve en auvent biscornu au dessus d'une porte jadis réservée à «la grande visite». A l'arrière, le nouveau foyer en pierre des champs étaye la maison de sa masse solide et l'ancre au flanc de la colline. Il épaule en même temps un léger balcon. L'une des fenêtres du rez-de-chaussée obéit au rythme régulier et au module des ouvertures originales mais se voit tout à coup imbriquée dans une autre fenêtre de facture contemporaine. Cela témoigne d'un goût actuel pour la beauté du paysage et de la lumière du jour.

L'intérieur répond au mode de vie simple et au goût raffiné des nouveaux propriétaires. Toutes cloisons supprimées, deux larges pièces s'ouvrent, perpendiculaires l'une par rapport à l'autre. La salle à dîner que prolonge la cuisine troque l'ancien papier peint pour des panneaux de contreplaqué finement moulurés, soigneusement découpés et agencés. Ce premier axe que des colonnes d'acier brossé et ciré ponctuent, s'achève sur l'escalier avec son garde-fou de même matériau.

D'autre part, le séjour et le hall d'entrée, en liaison directe l'un avec l'autre, à peine séparés par un écran à carreaux forment en réalité une seule pièce. Sur ce deuxième axe, le mur du fond met en évidence un court passage voûté entièrement revêtu de briques à feu qui donne accès au foyer profond. A droite, la cage d'escalier troue le mur latéral, contrecarre l'orthogonalité générale et offre des vues de la montagne et un riche éclairage naturel. Cet accident de la volumétrie exerce un impact sur l'espace du séjour. Tout autour, les boiseries prolongent chacune des marches monolithiques en bandes et en moulures pleines, toutes du même bois de merisier blond.

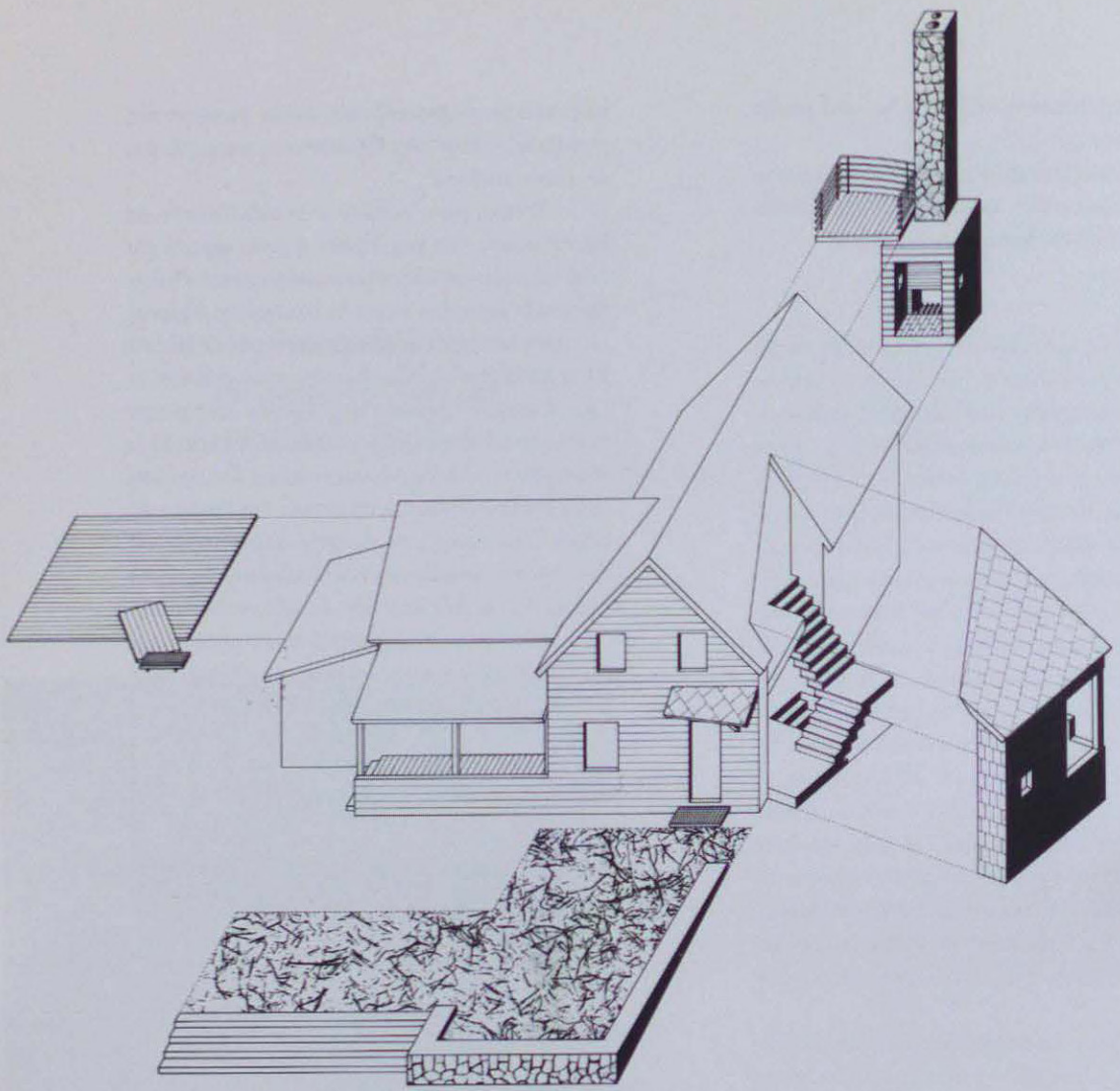
Cette petite maison résulte d'une recherche de l'esprit des lieux que des formes architecturales simples inspirent, que le paysage impose.

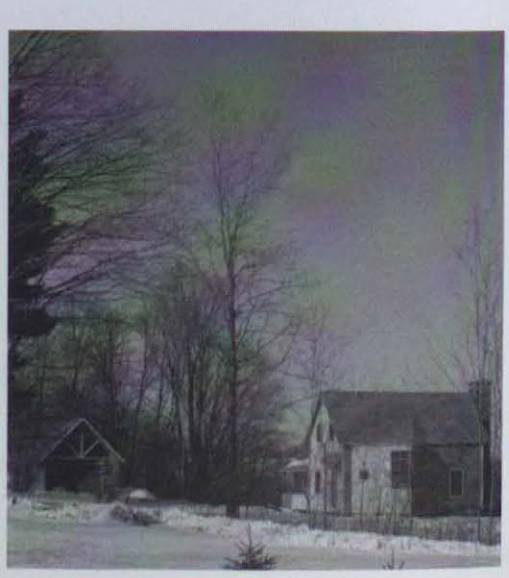
Mario Saia is a partner in the firm Saia et Barbarese, architectes, in Montreal.

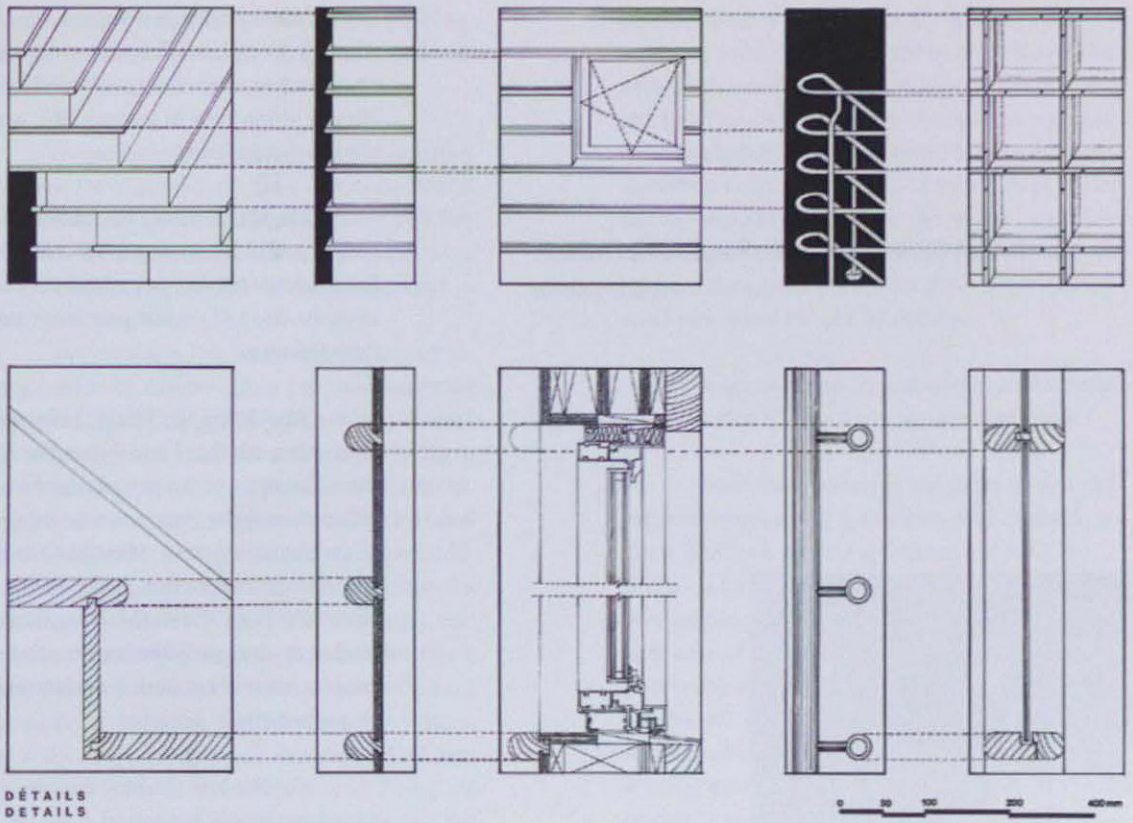


PLAN D'IMPLANTATION
SITE PLAN

La Petite Maison / A Small Farmhouse; Bromont, Quebec







DÉTAILS
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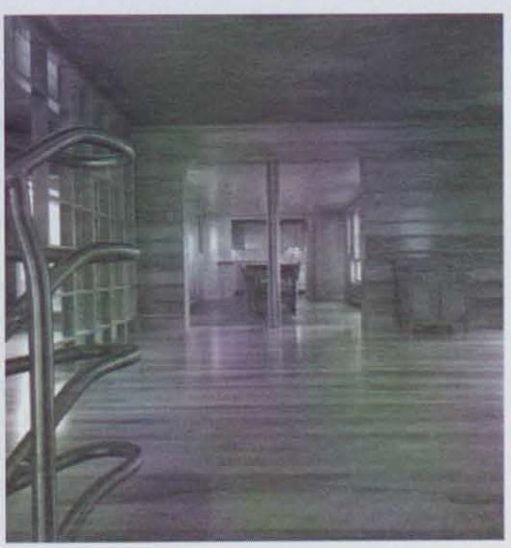
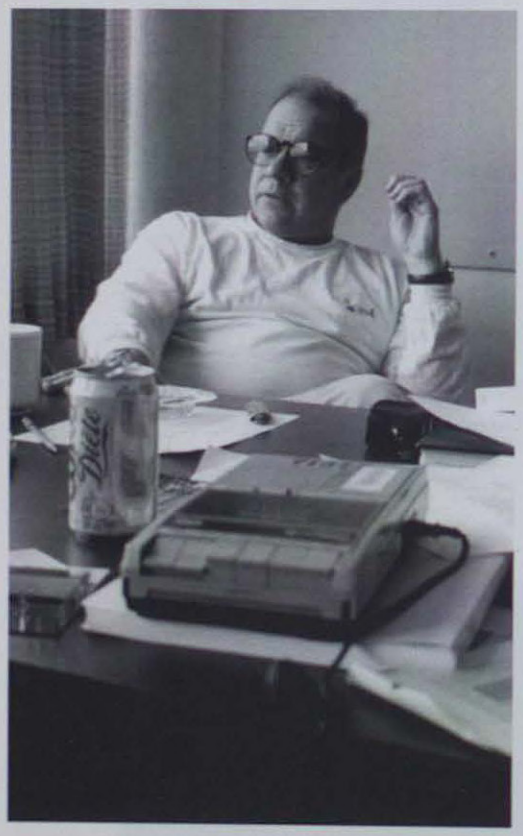


An Interview with Paul Schrader

Erica Goldstein



Paul Schrader is a screenwriter and director whose work includes *Taxi Driver, Raging Bull, American Gigolo, Mosquito Coast*, and, most recently, *Touch*. He was in Montreal in January 1997 working on his current film *Affliction*.

The Fifth Column: *The reason I'm here is because Anne Pritchard [Montreal production designer] suggested that you might like doing an interview for an architecture magazine. She told me that your house was designed by Peter Eisenman.*

Paul Schrader: [laughs] No, not my house. That was a loft that I had before the current apartment. I went through a period where I was following architecture closer than I am now. I was on a number of architectural juries, Michael Graves' class and Stanley Tigerman's class. I was coming back on the plane with Peter. We were talking about my loft. After that he designed this free-standing office in my loft. Like much of his work, it evolved and was driven by mathematics.

So that was the first time you met him? You weren't friends with him before?

I think I'd met him before. Actually, I sort of got involved and interested through an old friend of mine Kitty Hawkes, who was married to Michael Graves for a while.

Were you interested in what they were doing with architecture? Did you start getting into the architectural dialogue?

Oh, yeah, yeah. I don't have much to say on the subject at the moment because I'm not current. But at that time I was paying much more attention to what was being written and built.

I think the screenplay and the architectural drawing are very much related. A lot of architects draw on this connection–Rem Koolhaas, Steven Holl. There seems to be a correlation between architecture and film. Do you agree?

Well, obviously, it's graphic. But architecture is also drama. Grand architecture such as the Gothic church was built on the fore-notion of drama–taking people through a space that will induce certain emotional feeling. And in fact I remember discussing with

an architect about whether a person is the same if they stand under an arch or if they stand under a post and lintel. I think the person is somehow different.

Do you know that Eisenman said that he aspires to do what David Lynch does? There's an article entitled "The David Lynch of Architecture."[1] Eisenman feels that they both explore themes of alienation, anxiety and chaos. Can you compare yourself to an architect in that way?

Let me think. I've never thought in that direct a fashion. In different films I've been interested in different architectures. I did a film in Italy where I was fairly interested in Islamic architecture–trying to make Venice look eastern, make it look like Istanbul. Let me back up a little bit. I came from a background where the Christian reform church was Dutch Calvinist. In that background, ideas were considered a province of words. If you had something to say, you said it in words. It wasn't until I was an adult, this is when Charles Eames came into my life, and when I fell under his influence, that I learned that images, and in this context shapes, are also ideas. THAT was a revelation to me. It was a new way of seeing the world. And so my interest in architecture and the visual came from that point on.

And then a secondary influence came from a very brilliant production designer, a man named Nando or Ferdinando Scarfiotti who had been working with Bertolucci on *The Conformist* and *The Last Tango*. I brought him over to the US; we did *American Gigolo*. So what Eames had put into my head as a theory, Nando had put into my head as fact. He was a true visual artist; he had designed operas for La Scala. I once asked him why he was never tempted to go into architecture. He said he loved the idea that he could built these things, rooms, edifices, and then they would film them and tear them down. He said, "I love that. I would hate to be an architect who'd have to drive around and see my old ideas still standing" [laughter].

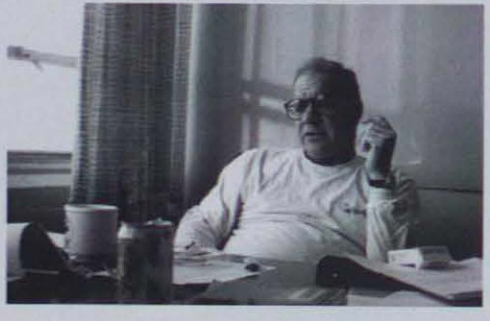
I read "Poetry of Ideas."[2] The article was written in 1970; you talked about what you admired in Eames' work. Do you think the article has fared well? Do you still think as highly of him now as you did then?

Well Charles had a number of things going for him besides being an architect. He was a very charismatic man, and he influenced a lot of people on a personal level. You couldn't really be around him for very long without being affected by him. He was also a renaissance man in that he was not only doing chairs and buildings, but he was also doing films and slide shows and photographs and toys. He had a fabulous workshop down in Venice, California, where it was just the world of visual ideas. The reason I stayed in his world is because my wife at the time ended up as his head designer. I knew a lot about the workshop and I was in and out of it all the time.

Do you think that, in your movies, you have tried to emulate some of those things that you admire most?

Well, the clean-ness, the pristine-ness, the value of shapes which is a volume over clutter. In so many films you see, the set decorators think that if you put a lot of junk in a room, somehow, it's better or more real. It's probably more real; people do live with a lot of visual clutter in their lives. This room [motioning around] is full of visual clutter and the eye doesn't know what to do with this room. But when you film you have to instruct the eye, you have to teach the eye what's right. You can create visual worlds by instructing the eye in shot after shot, location after location, on what to look at. So the volume of the room is very important, and the placement of critical shapes so that the eye is trained to appreciate the sort of symmetry you're after, or the asymmetry you're after. Often this just means less of everything. You just put enough things in the room so that people aren't taken aback that the room is just so bare. Sometimes you see a movie and the set is so bare that you are knocked out of the scene because you realize that no one can actually live like that. You have to put enough in there so that people buy into the illusion that it is real life they're watching, but not so much that their eye doesn't know what to do. The moment you see a scene, you should instruct the eye just like a painter instructs the eye where to look first, same with an image. Then when you splice, the eye... lets say I have directed your eye here, you counter balance up there somewhere. When I lay the splice, I know that's where your eye is going to be; so that you should be able to pick up and follow through on that so that it seems harmonious.

It's not conscious, you do it, and that's what makes your movies flow?



I think that's what makes all good movies flow. The master of all of this was Antonioni, who used actors as architecture.

I also read your article about Robert Bresson and Pickpocket.[3] *Bresson is in complete control. You just talked about how Antonioni uses actors as architecture. How about Bresson?*

Bresson, in many ways thought of actors as objects in which he would invest his deep feelings, by the cadence of the imagery. I don't have the temperament or perhaps the talent to do that. I believe in actors more than Antonioni or Bresson. They are too aesthetic for my taste or for my abilities.

You praised Pickpocket *to an extreme; you really loved it. Have your tastes changed?*

No. My critical taste is not necessarily what I am best at. The critic was headed one way, and the filmaker went slightly off on another way. I didn't make films to follow up on any critical theories I had. I made films to explore certain emotional and psychological dilemmas.

I have some questions about film versus architecture. How is architectural space rendered in your movies? I was thinking about Taxi Driver *and* Mosquito Coast *as two movies where specifically...*

I can't really take credit for, I didn't direct either of those films.

But you wrote the scripts...

When you write you don't write architecture. All you do when you write is you write theme, character, dialogue, plot. There's nothing visual, I do not think visually.

When you wrote Taxi Driver, *the way I see it, inherent in the script are ideas about urban evil.*

Those are all seen from a character's point of view, they are not visualized, those are literary ideas. If I were to direct that, then I would have to sit down and find the visual equivalent of that, which Scorsese did. The film *The Comfort of Strangers* is from a novel by Ian McEwan. Harold Pinter wrote the script and I

directed. That was an attempt to take a story, a rather perverse story, and very spare kind of dialogue, Harold Pinter dialogue, and find an architecture to make that work. I was presented with a very rotten piece of apple and the goal was to shine it up and make it look like a religious apple so that the hero would be tempted to bite in and find himself with a mouthful of worms. That was a case where architecture was very important. Also the film *Mishima*, set in Japan, is all about architecture. It's about a hyper-designed man with a hyper-designed life, where the intellect is creating all these compartments. [As a screenwriter] I really don't think visually.

But when you direct, you do think visually.

Yes.

Which movies did you direct, other than The Comfort of Strangers, *in which you felt the importance of the visual imagery?*

Well, *American Gigolo* was the first film that I directed in which image was primary. I did two films before that which were just illustrated stories, *Blue Collar* and *Hard Core*. When I came to do *American Gigolo*, what the characters wore, how they stood, the shape of the room, and the colour of the palette were as important or maybe more important than the scenes. The film is just driven by visuals. That was the start of my thinking in those terms.

So that's how you control, being a director you feel you have more control over the visual aspect than the screenwriter.

Screenwriter, the visuals really aren't any of his business. When I write, even for myself, I never bother with visuals.

It's just writing a story.

You just say "interior, living room, day." Boom, write the scene. You don't think about what that room's going to look like. You're just writing character, you're just writing drama. Then, when you come to it visually, you say "what's this room going to look like?" Sometimes I put little directions in the script just to make it seem a little more real. The production designer reads the script and thinks somehow I meant that seriously. And I say "no, don't take any of that seriously!" For the one we're doing right now [*Affliction*], it starts in Scandinavia. The Scandinavian aesthetic, that's where the research lay, trying to create a kind of world with that framework. The idea for *Touch*, which comes out the 14th [of February, 1997], was to do a kind of pop ballad, a muted pop ballad; colour planes and hard edges.

Between directing and screenwriting, which do you prefer? Are they just different?

Yes.

And when you do both at the same time, do you have conflicts?

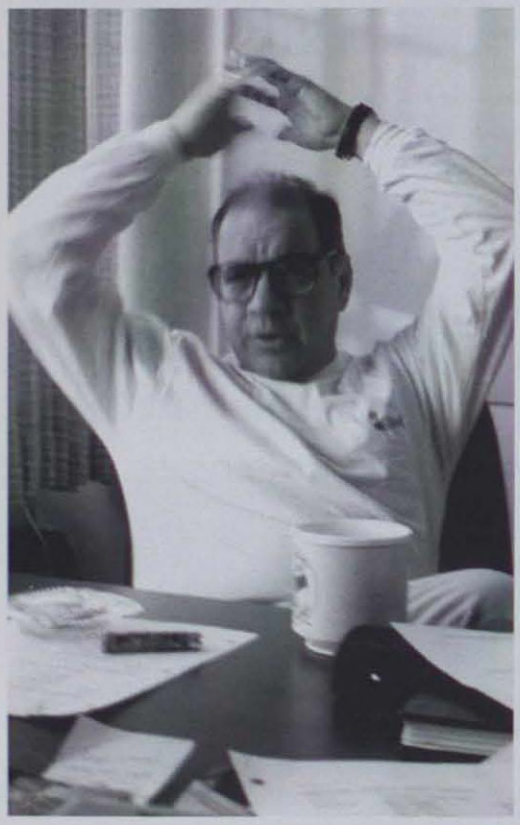
Well, you have to be careful. The writer always lies to the director and vice versa. And so when you are both, it's a problem because the writer is lying to the director. The writer is saying, "you can pick this as a director." And the director is saying, "I can pick this." And it's true, because he's the director. There's a trap in doing both jobs.

You were talking about the movie you're doing now, Affliction. *Where is it set?*

New Hampshire.

I was thinking about how architecture is related to site. Even though the architect tries to deny it sometimes, it's hard to deny, its somehow related to site. How do you then reconcile shooting a movie in Montreal which is set in New Hampshire? Is the movie not tied to New Hampshire?

The reason I'm up here in Montreal is threefold. One is it's a snow picture. I get about a guaranteed month more of snow. I was shooting with a separate unit in New Hampshire on Saturday and there wasn't much snow out there. I need this extra protection of latitude so that I don't get caught. So originally I decided to come up here so that I could have a guarantee of another month of snow. Secondly, there's something called the zone in films which is the area which you can shoot from the film-making centre, that the crew lives at home and pays their own room and board. You go outside the zone, you house them, you feed them. So that if I shot in New Hampshire, I



would bring an entire crew to New Hampshire and I would put them up and we would shoot the movie. That's a very expensive proposition, and for this story the budget wasn't there. So by going out to the end of the zone here, which in this case is St. Hillaire, Howick, Blainville, I can get suitable locations. By judiciously selecting angles and sites, I can emulate the mountainous country in New Hampshire and still be in the zone.

There's no conflict then, shooting in Montreal and pretending it's New Hampshire.

Well, you're always pretending at some base level. Everything about a movie is pretend. Everything you see on a screen is pretend. The clothes are pretend, the props are pretend. Everything is fake. And everything is designed and chosen. People who aren't involved in films are always sort of shocked when they find out that every little thing in a film, from the fray on the edge of a cuff to where the ashtray sits on a table is a decision. Everything is a decision, nothing is ever found, everything is always placed and decided upon. So you create a reality wherever you shoot. Often you're shooting interiors and exteriors. You shoot the exterior in one place. The character walks inside–cut; you're in another location for the interior. Movies are a mishmash of images that are held together by an over-riding visual principle, so that faking Beloeil for a small town in New Hampshire is not that big a stretch.

Are you shooting anything in the city of Montreal at all?

I think the interior of a town hall, where we found a church that has a good auditorium. We're shooting the school as the exterior of the town hall, and then we're shooting the interior of the church as the auditorium.

I never noticed that interiors and exteriors don't match. I'll have to look out for that in the future.

We go to great pains to try to make that all match. The window treatment and all that. Sometimes you have to hang curtains to hide the fact that the windows aren't matching the outside. Often the volumes are a little bit different.

Can I switch topic to technology? Eisenman is quoted as saying that "children grow up as instant replay junkies,"[4] and, "how can you make contact with an individual in a mediated culture in which every message gets faxed? How can you make architecture relevant to reality?"[5]. My question is how do make YOUR art relevant in this reality?

That's a good question, sometimes you don't [make art relevant]. We live in a kind of cuisinart world in which everything is thrown into the blender and spun around together. Following the old principles of art, the hierarchy is drawn. The notion that wood is somehow more valuable than formica, the notion that the handmade is more valuable than the machine-made, the notion that the classics have more primacy than pop-art, all these things are being called into question. In fact, the very linear-ness of art has been called into question with the primitive being tooth and jowl with the classic. What seems to matter now in the arts is not so much an historical, linear imperative, but just how things are thrown together at any given moment. In that way, art has become ironic rather that existential. Movies are now into the irony of art. The thing that is called deconstruction in architecture is called ironic art, in movies it's retro. The template of it all was *Pulp Fiction* where everything was in quotation marks. My feet are still somewhat in the 19th century, or more maybe in the 20th century. The existential hero of our century, he was born at the end of the 19th century with Dostoyevsky and has carried pretty much through until very recently. He's starting to die off now. I don't know quite what replaces the existential man. I'm not convinced that ironic art or deconstructed art is really that satisfying and really can replace the existential art. The question of existential art is "should I exist?" The question of ironic art is "who cares?" I'm not at all convinced that art is condemned to this whole ironic world, that there aren't some values that keep circling back and around.

You just want to keep doing what you're doing.

Yeah, try and keep things rooted to character. The visual world is another world. You can do that in a kind of hip, ironic way. *Touch* is a very ironic film. [The visuals are] very hip and contemporary. *Affliction* is an existential film. I'm on the bridge between these trends; I don't know where I feel most at home.

Even retro film is sort of past. Tarantino hasn't made a successful film since Pulp Fiction. *He can't do it again, he can't put everything in quotation marks because it won't work anymore.*

Right. Others have done it about a dozen times since. But you can see it's already worn thin.

Do you think that they'll ever be another Pickpocket, *anything like* Pickpocket*? Do you think audiences can take that now?*

Will the existential hero make a comeback? Certainly not in that old-fashioned way. Not anymore.

Did you ever want to do that type of film? Bresson or Tarkovsky or Cassavetes, because they were independent, they weren't relying on anything, they were able to do whatever they wanted.

There is a kind of patronage system which is harder and harder to come by. Tarkovsky and Bresson are very odd examples because they were outside the constraints of commercial cinema. There is almost no one left today that is outside the constraints of commercial cinema. Maybe Kubrick.

Those directors were not concerned that their movies would be seen.

That's a luxury that's very hard to find anymore.

You want to talk to people.

Well first of all, it's a mass media. Why get involved in a mass medium if you don't respect mass communication? Even in the lower budget films, a lot of people see those movies, millions and millions and millions of people. You are speaking to a mass audience. Why pretend you're not? I suppose if you have the luxury, if you're independently wealthy and you can just make.... I suppose if an architect wants to spend ten million dollars of his own money building a fabulous building...

Philip Johnson!

...no one's going to stop him. If you can afford to, you can work that way.

So how do you define your art? Do you feel that your movies are purely entertainment or do you aspire to something greater? How do you distinguish making a movie from just making money?

Basically it comes down to boredom. I just get so bored with most art. Most movies are boring, most books are boring, most everything is boring. If something keeps my interest, it usually has some quality, has something to say, some fresh approach to problems. Because I think that art is problem solving. That was one of the first things I think I learned from Charles Eames. Problem solving. When you come at an artistic challenge, come at it as problem solving. What's the problem? I need to make a chair. Ok, how big are people's butts? What is a person's posture? Let's think of it as the problem, and out of solving the problem, the aesthetic arises. The same thing with film, if you can get an interesting problem to solve, a thematic or psychological problem to solve, the aesthetic is all about that. I think that one of the things that happens when an artist dies is that they stop solving problems and they just start repeating the aesthetic. The truth is that most artists have a short creative life. Ten, fifteen years is a good, healthy stretch. Yet they keep being artists. The rare artist can re-invent himself and have several creative lifetimes in one lifespan. But mostly, an artist is sort of hot, in the right space at the right time, for maybe seven, eight years and then another buffer of six, seven years after that. And then he starts faking it.

Do you think you're faking it now?

Well, I think that's a valid question. The movie I just did I adapted from a book. The movie I'm doing now I adapted from a book. Why am I adapting these books? Maybe it's because I don't have anything new to say myself. Maybe that's why I'm using other people's themes and problems.

So the problem solving is now directing.

Yes, it's the screenwriting and directing.

Do you think there is anything new to say?

There's always something new to say. The thing is that once you've said it yourself, how do you reconfigure your situation so that it becomes fresh? You can't just say the same thing over again.

1. John Seabrook, "The David Lynch of Architecture," *Vanity Fair* 54.1 (January 1990): 74-9, 125-9.

2. Paul Schrader, "Poetry of Ideas: the Films of Charles Eames," *Film Quarterly* (spring 1970); rpt. *Schrader on Schrader and Other Writings*. ed. Kevin Jackson (London: Faber & Faber, 1990): 94-107.

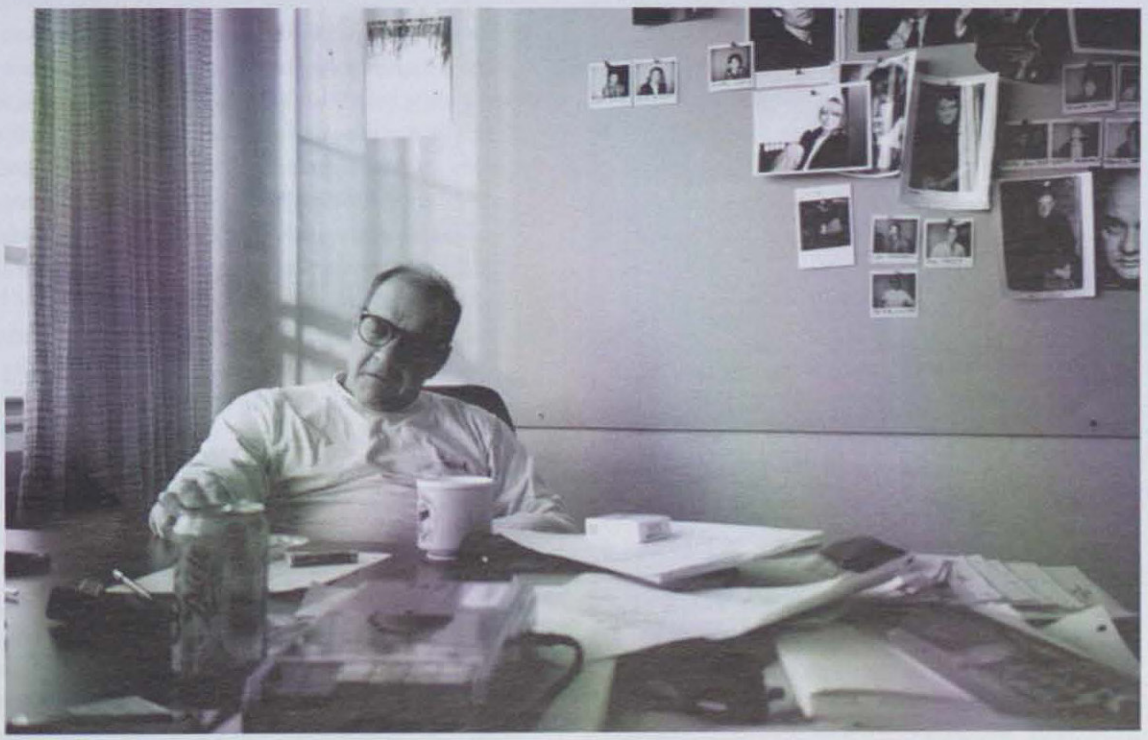
3. Paul Schrader, "Pickpocket I," *LA Free Press* (April 25, 1969), "Pickpocket II," *LA Free Press* (May 2, 1969); rpt. *Schrader on Schrader and Other Writings*: 38-45.

4. Peter Eisenman, "Strong Form, Weak Form," *Re: Working Eisenman*. (London: Academy Editions, 1993): 51-53.

5. Herbert Muschamp, "Moral Fiber," *Interview* 11.4 (April 1991): 51.

Erica Goldstein, B.Arch McGill '96, is presently fulfilling her dreams working alongside Nicolas Cage in a new Brian de Palma film Snake Eyes, *scheduled to be released in Summer 1998.*

Much thanks to Daisy Goldstein for organisizing the photos, and to Anne Pritchard for suggesting that life goes on after Cronenberg.



Why Joseph Mallord William Turner Should Be Better Known to Architects

Gavin Affleck


CANADA'S NATIONAL NEWSPAPER

THE GLOBE AND MAIL

Season's Greetings

Agreement on Hebron likely today

Holiday Edition

Woman cleared in shooting of unborn with pellet gun

Judge's refusal to extend legal rights of a person to fetus based on case law

Western cold to push east

Where to find it

Political jousting begins for mantle of famed nun

Money denied to man treated in womb

figure 1.

On the day before Christmas last year, the front page of Canada's national newspaper the *Globe and Mail* featured a reproduction of a painting of a modest group of farm buildings set among snow-covered hills (fig.1). The idea was to transform a newspaper into a greeting card for the holiday season; it was easy to avoid considering why this particular image was selected. But how is it that some old barns behind a broken fence were used to convey such a complex idea as the altruism of the holiday season? And how is it that popular understanding of the symbolism of such scenes is so firmly entrenched that the message came across as directly as if it were a scene of the Virgin and Child?

Even the most banal of landscape subjects, when set in pleasant surroundings and agreeably rendered, can elicit sentiments of a type usually reserved for fluffy kittens. In a process verging on alchemy, the rude materiality of the land is transformed into something cuddly: puffy pillows of snow on the rooves of barns are expressed at the expense of the eaves, topography becomes as gentle and curved as maternal physiognomy, and the very absence of any trace of the construction of fences and buildings completes their transformation into rounded, unobtrusive objects. The overall effect is striking in its homogeneity. There is little difference beween the roof of a barn, the rise of a hill or the rail of a fence: all are rendered in a sympathetic arabesque. And there is something else as well, something greater than the palatable rendering of the common-place: the spatial orientation generated by the sky, the horizon and the lay of the land.

The full colour and large format of the *Globe*'s front page was a provocative reminder of the ubiquity of symbolic scenery: the landscape image is among the most widely understood and accepted of our symbols. And if it is easy to dismiss the painting in the *Globe* as *quétaine*,[1] still landscape crosses boundaries between popular culture and high art with surprising ease. From the most commercial sugar shack art, through glossy travel brochures and adventure magazines, to the most oblique contemporary art, landscape embraces a wide spectrum of meanings. Two groups located like bookends at the extremes of this spectrum have devoted the most serious thought to the idea of landscape: geographers and environmentalists on the one hand and art historians on the other. This essay proposes that architects recuperate the middle ground: the creative applica-

tion of landscape as a conceptual model is an opportunity to reaffirm the primacy of space as the essential medium of the art of architecture.

Landscape's two bookends have set up a pendulum between a scientific and an aesthetic approach to their subject. Geographers and environmentalists see landscape as habitat, with ecology as an organizing principle; they have a weakness for moralizing: "We are destroying the environment!" Art historians bring to bear a cultural bias that values the perception of nature and are wont to stray from reality in their pursuit of ideal models of beauty. Taking little initiative, architects content themselves with a mirroring of the environmentalist-aesthete pendulum: it is assumed that practitioners interested in the environment are preoccupied by technical details and are not interested in design; conversely, those attracted by the art of architecture display a lack of respect for concerns that are not glamourous in an artistic sense.

As a discussion of landscape as a repository of multiple meanings, an essay by geographer D.W. Meinig entitled "The Beholding Eye: Ten Visions of the Same Scene" puts the environmentalist-aesthete pendulum in perspective. Meinig shows how landscape, as both a pleasant word in common speech and a technical term in special professions, may be considered variously as nature, as habitat, as artifact, as system, as problem, as wealth, as ideology, as history, as place, or as aesthetic.[2] A powerful and irrevocable fact, landscape obliges all points of view to locate themselves within its frame of reference, generating a broad and largely unexplored conceptual territory. Understanding the bookends remains, however, the most effective means of gaining access to these unexplored territories. Since much has already been written about the effects of science on the shaping of our built environment,[3] this essay will concern itself instead with the aestheticization of the physical world and the bias of architects for a particular reading of the landscape that it has fostered. An examination of the work of two English landscape painters, J.M.W. Turner and John Constable, will show how a parallel thread of pragmatism, quite distinct from the dominant aesthetic attitude, runs through the history of landscape. The presentation of three case studies will show how this pragmatic approach to landscape may be used to structure the creation of architectural space.

The idea of landscape as a conceptual model is a surprisingly late development in Western culture.[4] The new idea first appeared in two distinct guises: both romantic and pragmatic visions of human interaction with nature were to be found among the early manifestations of landscape as cultural expression. The romantic sensibility ultimately prevailed at the expense of the pragmatic: the nineteenth century paradigm of landscape as aesthetic experience has remained the status quo for the twentieth century. While we can trace the origins of landscape myths such as the fertility rites of the Nile or the legends of Arcadia to ancient or antique times, the crystalization of landscape as an independent concept and the consequent appearance of a word to describe it date to much later. The word landscape entered the English language as a Dutch import only at the end of the sixteenth century. Its original meaning was anything but romantic: in Holland, the word *landschap* was used to describe areas of the great coastal flood-plain reclaimed from the sea. A *landschap* was as much a work of human engineering as a scene of beauty to be depicted.[5] In the paintings of Brueghel, constructions on a territorial scale such as dikes, roads and canals combine with buildings and the traces of agriculture to create inhabited environments that are totally integrated with nature. Human activity of a common, every-day variety pervades these images, penetrating space to appear as a far-away ship or advancing into the foreground as a solitary figure absorbed in manual labour. Human work and its connection to the land is the story of these pictures; work is not an isolated event but rather a way of life and a method of occupying space. The timeless quality we sense in a Brueghel painting is tied to the expression of an ongoing relationship: we shape the land and the land shapes us.

The sixteenth century Dutch idea of a landscape as a natural territory restructured for practical purposes is representative of a type of realism left behind in the wake of Romanticism. There is in fact more in common between the Classical vision of Arcadia and the nineteenth century Romantic landscape than either idea shares with the lost tradition of pragmatism. While the pragmatic landscape seeks a symbiosis between human life and nature, what the Classical and Romantic landscapes have in common is a mechanism for their separation. In the pastoral tableaux of Poussin, Arcadia situates itself in the bucolic idyll of the Mediterranean *parerga*, with its leafy shadows and golden fields. The *pererga* is a manicured and controlled environment, clearly shaped by human hands, but as opposed to the scenes of Brueghel, the evidence of work in progress is notably absent. Nature is ideal,

pristine, and unchanging. Whatever modifications it may have undergone are limited to the benign and nurturing function of agriculture. Common folk are replaced by gods and Arcadia serves as a backdrop for the enactment of the Classical myths The space in these pictures is the space of theatre, the classical narrative the script and the actors collected at stage centre. The formal arrangement foreground figures predominates, leaving the landscape neither inhabited nor engaged.

Seeking a clean break from the generalizing tendencies of Arcadia, the Romantic landscapes of the nineteenth century emphasized personal experience and emotion. The appearance of artistic depictions of natural settings as sublime retreats coincided with the rapid expansion of Europe's industrial cities and their problems of crowding and poor sanitation. It is under these conditions that landscape painting as a distinct artistic genre flourished for the first time. Ironically, the new approach never quite eclipsed the reductionism it set out to criticize. The sanctification of nature focused greater attention on the qualities of the outdoors, but it also pushed the natural world out of reach. By framing the landscape as a sacred object the Romantics created a new distance between city and country, civilisation and nature.

There is no better example of the contrast between romantic and pragmatic visions of the landscape than the parallel careers of two Englishmen, Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775-1851) and John Constable (1776-1837). As the most important figures in the development of modern English landscape painting, the artistic approaches of the two men were nontheless radically different. A gifted artist, Turner was also an extremely successful professional. He began selling paintings at an early age and remained a commercial success throughout his life. He was a member of all the important academies of his time, more often than not the president. He travelled widely, maintaining an urbane and cosmopolitain life style. Energetically embracing the idea of the sublime, Turner's work was celebrated as the most daring and innovative of his time, yet he took pains to respect the boundaries of popular taste. Constable, somewhat of a misfit, sold only fifteen pictures during his life and remained largely unknown.[6] Perceived by his contemporaries as a conservative, Constable's project was, in its own quiet way, far more radical than Turner's. While the spirit of the times obliged landscape painters to celebrate the dramatic and the spectacular, Constable sought instead to clarify and dignify the common. Going against the grain meant that public acceptance did not come easily, nor was it particularly important to Constable: he stayed close to home in his native Dedham County, making a habit of painting and repainting the same scenes. If few artists were more firmly rooted in their historic context than Turner, few were more suspicious of the spirit of their times than Constable. His work bridges history in fascinating ways, representing simultaneously a link back in time to the realism of Dutch marine landscapes and a link forward to an emerging post-romantic landscape.

Conceiving of nature as a retreat from harsh realities or a sublimely powerful force are forms of escapism, and few artists took this escapism to more dizzying heights than Turner. Preoccupied with the picturesque, Turner was a master of landscape composition, doing more to aestheticize the landscape than any artist since. His early pictures were composed to be "beautiful," but he soon learned to organize his imagery to elicit a wide variety of emotions (fig. 2). His fascination with natural disasters led to the creation of pictures of "sublime catastrophes," including such scenes as an avalanche, a typhoon and a fire at sea. In these pictures, Turner uses artistic devices to project a predetermined emotional agenda on the landscape.

John Constable had little patience with what he perceived as the posturing and straining after effects of Turner and other popular artists of his time. He was not convinced that the grandiose neccessarily made for quality in art.[7] What he proposed instead was an almost seamless union of the human and the natural: in his pictures sky, land and vegetation are bound together and the horizon, rather than dividing, creates a hierarchy between two components of a greater whole (fig. 3). Constable's unique genius was the ability to communicate a direct human experience of natural phenomena without imposing an emotional point of view. A Constable painting is shaped by the structure of land and cloud: form and mass described in tone, shade and shadow are the foundations of his art. In the highly materialistic context of early industrial society, Constable succeeded in making something out of nothing: invoking a completely integrated experience of outdoor space, he proposes landscape as gestalt.

But what does a comparison of two nineteenth century English landscape painters have to do with

figure 2.

figure 3.

the challenges of making architecture today? Absorbing the contributions of both artists is essential to an understanding of the present situation, particularly since each established such distinct positions of lasting influence. Turner should be better known to architects because he played an important role in shaping the attitudes to outdoor space that dominated the twentieth century. The aesthetic bias of the picturesque left landscape to be treated as a figure apart from the practical problems of construction. If buildings did not always have to be beautiful, the landscape did. The two were rarely considered together: while the building as object and its interior space were the subject of great experiment during the various Modernisms of the twentieth century, outdoor space remained constrained by sentimentality and nostalgia. As the first great manipulator of the emotional content of nature, Turner opened the door to a type of artistic strip-mining that has inhibited the capacity of the landscape to set its own emotional tenor. The resulting alienation of people from their surroundings has found architectural expression in the separation of the building as artifact from its natural or spatial context, the pursuit of formal effects, and an abdication of the responsibility of studying place. Even during periods of reflection when contextual urbanism has been reconsidered (such as during the Post-Modern critique of the 1970s), architects have remained primarily interested in buildings as objects. Moving from an interest in one's own built creation to include those surrounding it is progress, but context still means other buildings. Where are the sky and the ground, the space in which the object exists, the horizon? Somewhere along the way an amnesia developed regarding the basic spatial orientations specific to inhabiting the surface of a small planet. While nineteenth century artists threw themselves with great energy into this debate, their tradition, lacking rejuvenation, has degenerated into a type of mysticism that devalues the very things it holds sacred.[8]

Constable should be better known to architects because his gestalt vision of landscape was prescient of many currently emerging concerns. As we spend more and more time interacting with fields of information, a new awareness of the greater spatial field in which we live is gradually replacing the romantic approach to landscape. Perspective and its fixed point of view are being superceded by electronic simultaneity, and few ideas will be better served by this change than the concept of landscape. Conceiving of a field in this way allows us to understand landscape space as continuous from inside buildings to outside. Architectural space is but a subset of landscape space and as such is part of a larger field that embraces geographic, social and historic space. This new view is close to Augustin Berque's vision of landscape as a sensual and symbolic medium that negotiates the relationship between the social and the natural.[9] Berque's reading locates landscape in McLuhanesque territory: scenery is no longer only a physical or an aesthetic fact, but also a medium of communication, a language with the capacity to link isolated realities. Considered in this way, landscape is at once locally complex and generally diffuse: a medium wholly appropriate to the twenty-first century.

For architects, then, landscape is a spatial model that unifies the natural and the constructed, the social and the physical, the small scale and the large scale, outdoors and indoors. As an architectural discourse it prefers space-transition to object-position, and re-establishes the city and urban design as the focus of debate. Vittorio Gregotti, in his book *The Territory of Architecture*, suggests how an architect might learn to work with the land:

> If geography is therefore the way in which the signs of history solidify and are superimposed in a form, the architectural project has the task of drawing attention to the essence of the environmental context through the transformation of form.... I have attempted, for instance, to understand what one could conclude from reflecting on the idea of landscape and nature as the sum total of all things and of their past configurations. Nature, in this sense, is not seen as an indifferent, inscrutable force or a divine cycle of creation, but rather as a collection of material things whose reasons and relations architecture has the task of revealing. We must therefore modify, redouble, measure, situate and utilise the landscape in order to know and meet the environment as a geographic totality of concrete things which are inseperable from their historical organisation. [10]

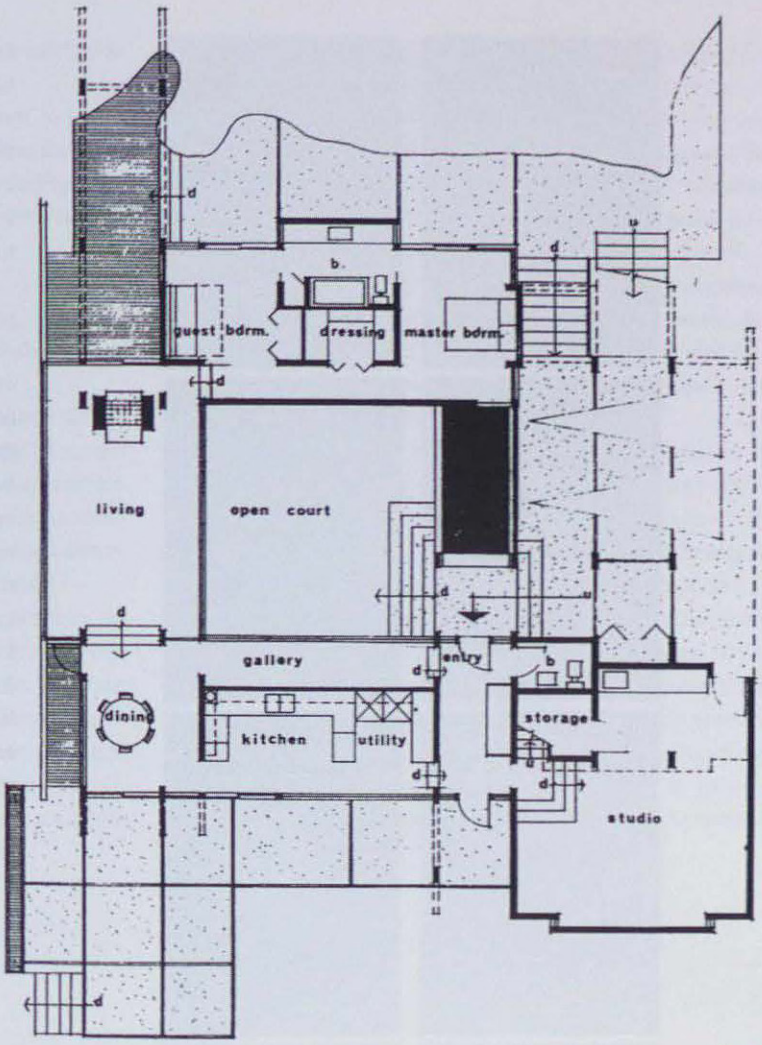


figure 4.

Case-studies:

Smith House, Arthur Erickson, Architect, West Vancouver, British Columbia (1974)

Built on a rocky and wooded ocean-front site, the Smith House is a remarkable synthesis of place and structure, interior space and landscape. Organized as an ascending spiral around an interior courtyard, the house's insistent horizontality creates a striking contrast with the verticality of the surrounding rain forest (fig. 4). Describing his design intentions, Erickson has written: "I wanted the Smith House to reveal the site in the same way that I found it revealed to me when I first walked onto it. Through the forest clearing I discovered the fern-covered rift between the rocks; then, at the end, the distant sea view through the vertical stems of the young firs."[11]

The Smith House is an excellent illustration of the potential of even the smallest of architectural interventions to project and control surrounding space on a much larger scale. Conceived as a glass bridge, the living room allows the courtyard to spill out towards the view of the sea, creating an ambiguity between the stasis of containment and the dynamics of movement. The condensation of landscape space into the building and the projection of interior space onto the landscape are rendered virtually transparent by the extensive use of glass.

One of the most striking features of the Smith House is the dissolution of its formal aspects through the sensual medium of landscape. While the style of the house is emphatically Modern, the strength of its design is not directly related to its formal expression. The dramatic horizontals of the post and beam structure are ultimately but a support for the revelation of a landscape.

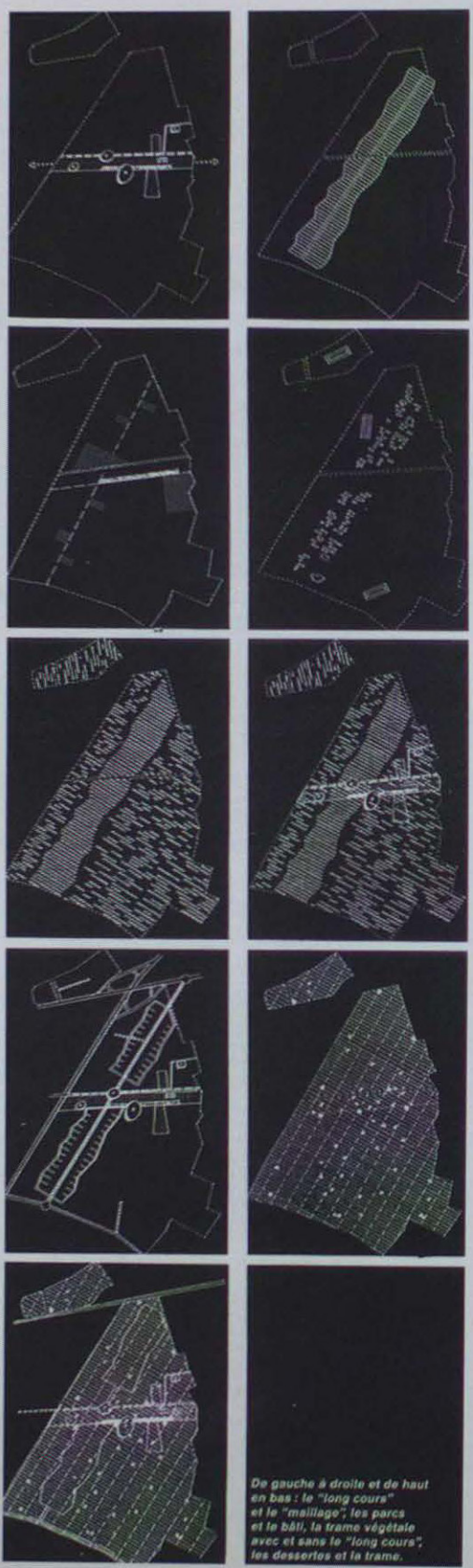


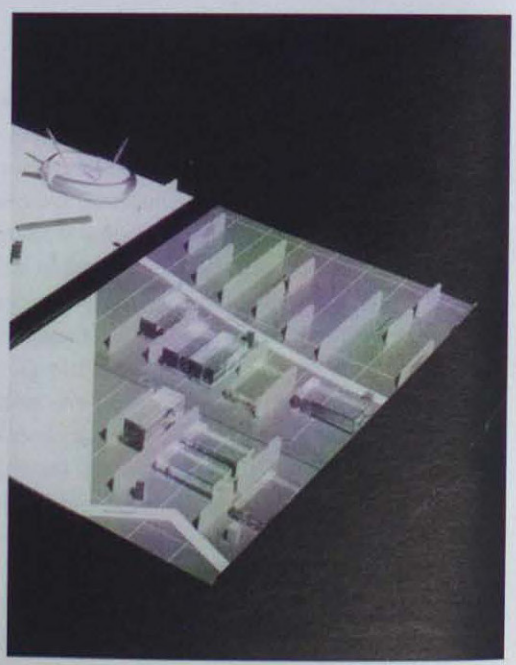
figure 5a.

De gauche à droite et de haut en bas : le "long cours" et le "maillage"; les parcs et le bâti, la trame végétale avec et sans le "long cours", les dessertes et la trame.

Le Jardin d'Entreprises, Bernard Tschumi, Architect, Chartres, France (1991)

This prize-winning competition entry located on the fringe of the historic town of Chartres uses landscape in a novel manner to structure a master plan for a 220 hectare site previously devoted to agriculture (fig. 5a, 5b).

The Jardin d'Entreprises is a sophisticated example of the use of a landscape field to generate architectural relationships. Tschumi creates a dense grid of vegetation to provide identity and coherence to a high technology industrial park. This strategy links the site simultaneously to its agricultural past and to the post-industrial future. Identifying the band of buildings and vegetation that traverse the site as a *maillage* or weave, he provides contrast with the *long cours* (long yard), an oblique axis tied to the historic town that contains public and recreational facilities. Defined by rows of trees, parcels in the *maillage* are dimensioned to suit the requirements of light industry; buildings are free to develop their own forms within the grid. The rows of trees provide texture and climatic control on the micro scale and territorial identity on the macro scale. Service and public movement



5b.

systems are carefully controlled to further emphasize the experience of the vegetation weave.

By using landscape as a mediator, le Jardin d'Entreprises successfully connects itself to the existing fabric on the edge of Chartres. It proposes a complex, multi-functional landscape that operates on both practical and symbolic levels.

The Three Garden House, Affleck + de la Riva Architects (1997)

This semi-detached house occupies an infill site in Notre-Dame de Grace, an inner-city Montreal neighbourhood. At 170 feet, the lots on the street are among the deepest in the city, but maintain standard widths at 25 feet (fig. 6). The resulting urban distortion offers a unique architectural opportunity.

The house occupies its long, narrow site by organizing itself around three successive gardens created by the fragmention of its built form. Invoking images of territory and geography, exploration and discovery on a miniature scale allows the architects to reveal the unique characteristics of the site (fig. 7). This strategy of miniaturization borrows conceptually from the Japanese Bonzai tradition. Entering the house one passes from the front yard or first garden up a series of shallow steps to the interior courtyard or second garden. This entry promenade suggests the process of discovery of "going up river": domestic space as a territory is gradually revealed as one penetrates the site. A collector of roof water and a source for the "river": the second garden, while an outdoor space, is the most important room in the house. Access to the third garden or back yard is provided by a circulation spine that traverses the length of the building along the mitoyen wall.

The Three Garden House seeks to dissolve its formal expression through the revelation of a particular urban landscape. Where the house faces its immediate neighbours, planar brick walls recall the importance of the mitoyen wall as a basic component of high-density housing. In contrast, lateral walls opening directly on gardens are generously glazed. An exposed wooden structure marks the two parallel circulation spines, expressing itself alternately as an exterior pergola and an interior ceiling. Roof slopes and building masses are conceived in order to provide maximum contrast between the intimate character of

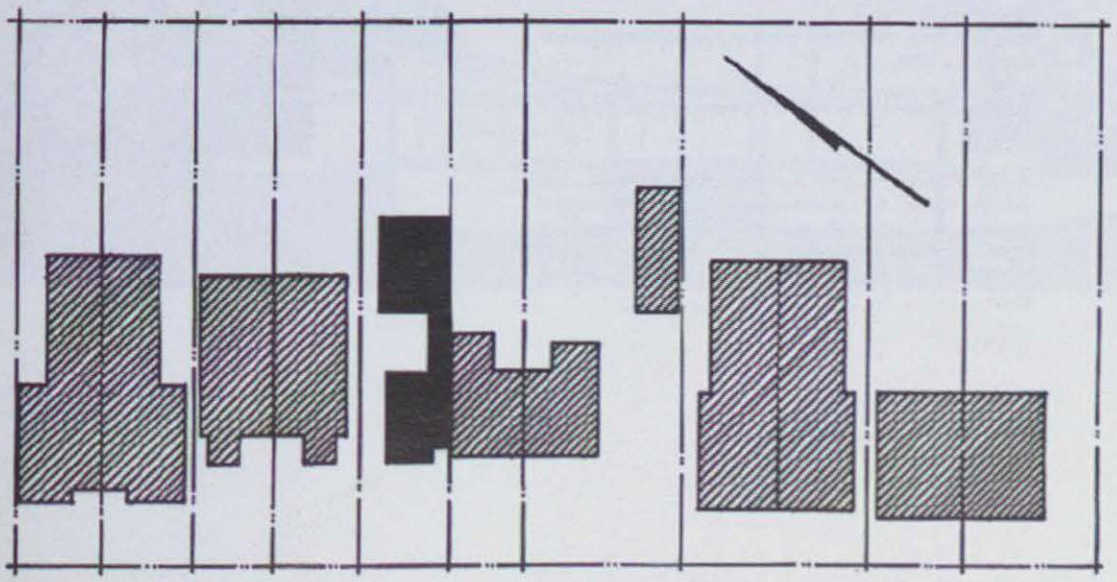


figure 6.

the interior courtyard and the more open spaces of the front and back yards.

By reinventing domestic space as a garden, the Three Garden House structures a series of transitions between public, semi-private and private domains. Playing with perceptions of scale, the house reveals itself in layers that stratify space accross the depth of the site. The courtyard typology condenses the landscape of a high density urban neighbourhood into the central organizing space of a small house.

1. Quêtaine is a Quebec French word meaning popular, vulgar or corny. It is in wide use verbally in English in Quebec and is richer and more descriptive than those synonyms.

2. D.W. Meinig, "The Beholding Eye: Ten Visions of the Same Scene," *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes: Geographical Essays* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979): 33.

3. There is no better discussion of the effect of science on architecture than Alberto Perez-Gomez's *Architecture and the Crisis of Modern Science* (Boston: MIT Press, 1984).

4. Meinig, 46.

5. Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (Toronto: Random House, 1995): 10. For a further discussion of the etymology of the word landscape see J.B. Jackson, *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984).

6. Michel Le Bris, *Romantics and Romanticism* (New York: Rizzoli, 1981): 115.

7. Le Bris, 115.

8. Alexander Wilson, *The Culture of Nature: North American Landscape from Disney to the Exxon Valdez* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1991).

9. Augustin Berque, *Médiance de milieux en paysages* (Montpelier: Editions Reclus, 1990).

10. Vittorio Gregotti, *Le Territoire de l'Architecture* (Paris: L'Equerre, 1982).

11. *The Architecture of Arthur Erickson* Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1988): 51. For an excellent appraisal of the Smith House in the format of an exhibition catalogue, see Graham Livesey (with Michael McMordie and Geoffrey Simmins), *Twelve Modern Houses 1945-1985* (Calgary: Aris Press and University of Calgary Press, 1995): 40-43.

Gavin Affleck is a partner in the Montreal-based firm Affleck + de la Riva Architects.

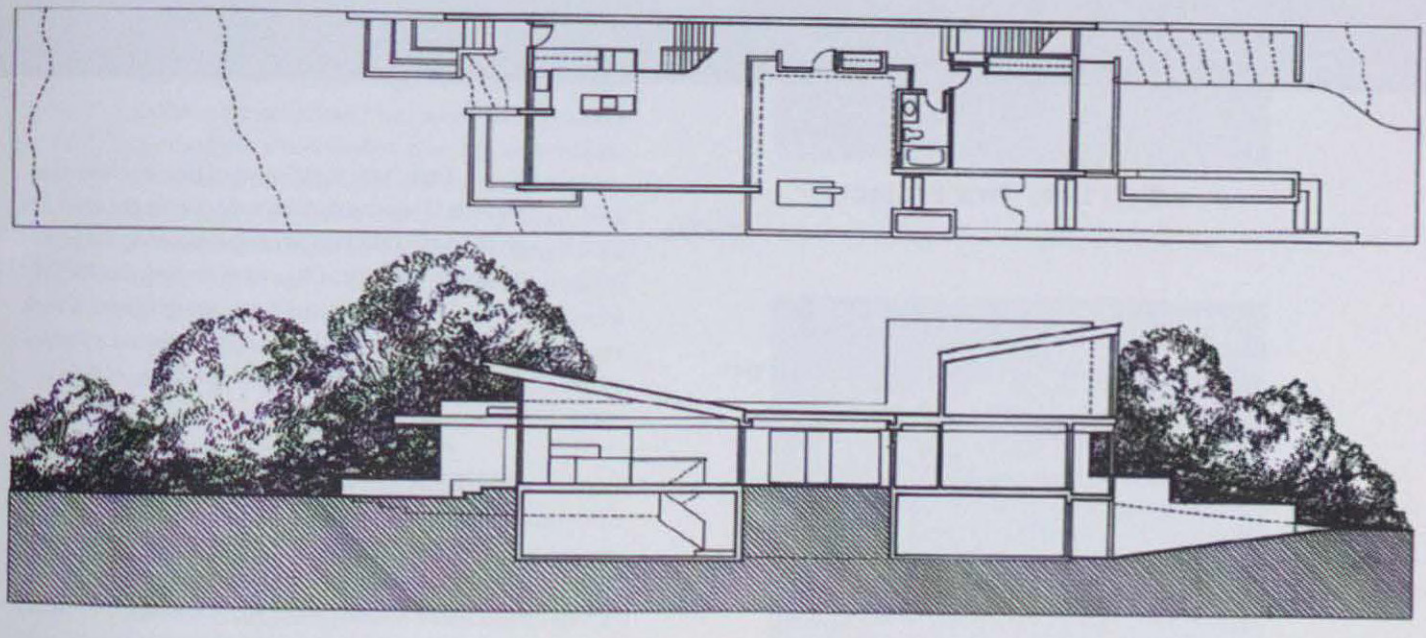


figure 7.

Wen Lee: Two Projects

Wen Lee

1. Communism as a Fetish or The Aesthetic of Asceticism

Truth is the significance of fact. It is hence reasonable to assume that the truth of even the most objectivist of works may be contaminated by subjectivity and romanticism. One may even think that the very motor behind objectivistic modern movements such as the Neue Sachlichkeit or communism is a romantic and fetishistic obsession for the "idea" of objectivity.

In September 1995, Mr. C. Y. Chang, general manager of the Chia Tai Group International's plant in Lianyungang, invited me over to spend some time in China and to plan a housing project. He had made available a fund to build subsidized housing for workers. When we first talked about the idea few month earlier, I was still in Paris, and obviously, I mentioned François Mitterrand, who really seemed to have turned him on. He is a generous philanthropist and a great fan of André Gide. At the very moment of the collapse of communism in China, this romantic capitalist from Taiwan sports the virtue of generosity and fetishizes the idea of communism. He is also an amateur of modern art. When he was still a university student, he had a summer job in my father's design studio translating Mies Van der Rohe into Chinese.

Lianyungang is an important industrial harbour in northern China. It is a linear city of a soviet clarity. The city is defined by a railway and a harbour. The railway goes all the way to Munich, Germany. The arrival to the city is absolutely spectacular. I was haunted by the phantasmagoric images of the brutally modern utilitarian buildings along the railway. These Neue Sachlichkeit buildings were summarily built and are now in various states of decay. Set against the rising sun, this extreme repetition of concrete, steel, and glass poisoned my imagination. I was intoxicated by their terrifying beauty. Suddenly, communism became the object of my fetish.

The basic housing type there is that of a linear building. Because the city is situated in a severe earthquake zone, the length of building is limited to 60 meters. These linear buildings are all oriented towards the south in response to the northern climate. This project is no exception. It is a six storey 55 meter linear point-bloc oriented towards the south. The planning is reminiscent of the Mies Van der Rohe housing in Weissenhof Siedlung. It is a recurring motif in modern housing. Each staircase services 2 units per floor. And there are 48 units in total. 42 units have 2 bedrooms and 6 units have 3 bedrooms. Each unit has a standard pin-wheel modern plan, but some concessions had to be made to respond to the structural requirements of the severe earthquake condition: *la vie a toujours raison*. The south side of the building is filled with a wall of winter gardens in direct response to the northern climate. Quartz sand is an industrial waste in that region, so we mixed concrete with quartz sand to give a naturally white surface. The finishes are minimal and all the pipes are exposed in the kitchen and WC.

The entire design was completed in a trance of religious fervour of rationalization, optimization and standardization. Objectivity was the cult, and asceticism was the aesthetic. To complete the experience, I donated all my commission to a local charity fund as a totally selfish act. It was better than sex.

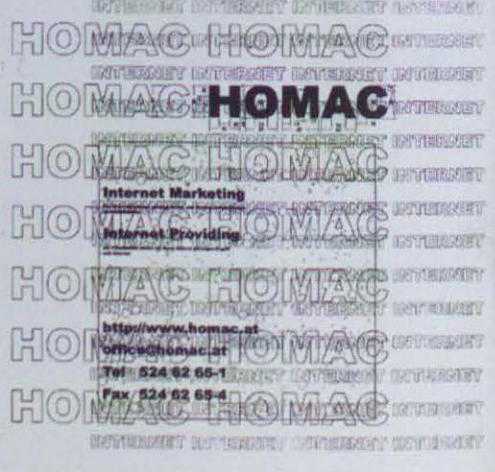
2. Homac Internet Provider/ Internet Marketing Office

Burggasse 68/2 Vienna, Austria
office@homac.at
Client: *Karl Michael Winter*
Georg Holba

In the summer of 1996, I lived in Vienna on Burggasse 71/10. Across the street, there was an enigmatic neighbour. It looked like a shop front, but it didn't seem to display anything. There was no sign. And there were always two young men sitting outside and drinking beer. One of them had a hippy hairdo, and the other had fluorescent green hair. They always listened to very loud techno music. In short, they were cool.

One day, I couldn't contain my curiosity. I walked over and struck up a conversation. They turned out to be two young men starting an internet provider office. We had a couple of drinks, and I proposed to do a shop-front for them. "Cool!" they said. They also told me that they had an exploded monitor, and asked me if I could make use of it. The budget was tiny, but the whole thing was supposed to be cheap and nasty anyway.

The façade is composed of a series of squares that relates to the neoclassical architecture of the building, a series of standard A1 plotter outputs on mylar, and an exploded monitor. The electric wire that was supposed to be connected to a neon sign is simply left exposed, dangling, *branché*.



Wen Lee, provocateur, is working on another building for Lianyungang and private commissions in Montreal.


HOMAC

Collisions Printing Co-operative

Caroline Noteboom

The Collisions Printing Co-operative is planned for a site on the south side of Ontario Street between St. Andre and Labreque in Montreal. The program includes meeting rooms, studio workspaces, a cafe, an exhibition space and printing rooms. This building is a gathering space based on a modified version of the bourgeois idea of the public space. It is a forum where confrontation, collision, debate and sharing of ideas take place prior to or in reaction to publication.

Building can actively affect the physical, political and social structure of a city. Program and building image can strengthen a political ideal. In this case, in the Montreal of today, the goal is to make pluralistic democracy more effective. This social printing station calls upon groups and individuals to make public-to publicize-their ideas. and to promote their cultures. Confrontations are integral to the idea of democracy. Acknowledging and accepting the existence of contradictions and collisions is a vital step towards an effective democracy.

The questions are:

1. Can a new building type affect the physical/social/political structure of the city?

2. Does architecture always strengthen an ideal, whether conscious or not on the part of the creators?

3. Can the language of "constructivism," so closely intertwined with heroic Soviet communism, be transplanted to a contemprary Montreal kitchen-table press?

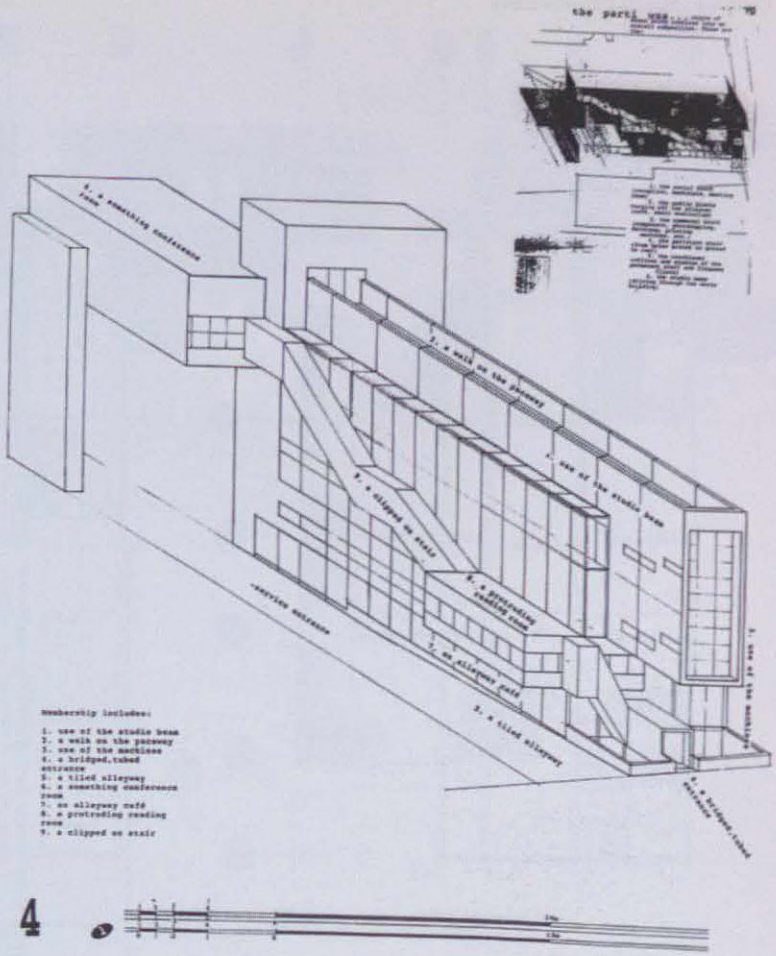
4. Can a building be dynamic in the sense that it takes on the task of causing people to participate within this new and improved sphere of discourse?

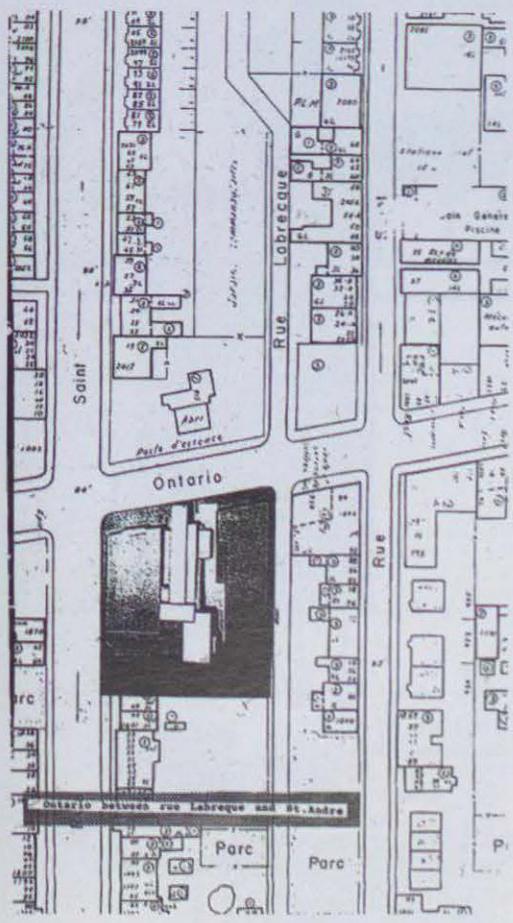
5. What is informative architecture?

To participate actively, and to call upon the people, the building must be dynamic. It has the task of "arousing an upsurge of energetic activity."[1] Colliding or interlocking program elements, multiple bridged entrances, colour, staircases, large, informative signs, and glazing to expose the interior to the bypasser are just some of the elements of energy which are integrated into a dynamic whole. "A sense of pluralistic vitality"is "fused into the whole building" and "communicated to the public outside."[2]

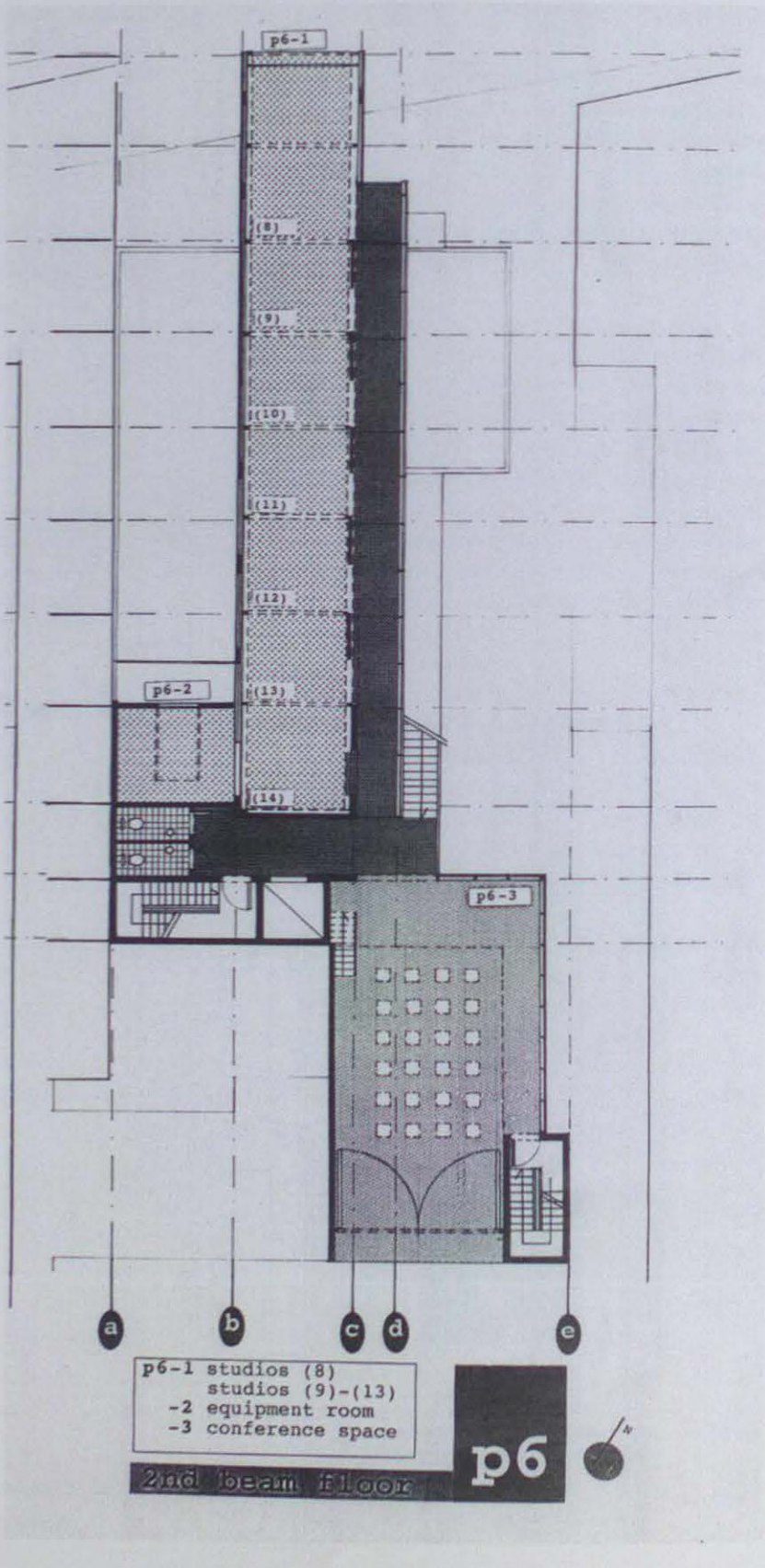
1. Alexander Vesnin, "Credo," in *The Avant-garde: Russian Architecture in the Twenties*, ed. Andreas C. Papadakis (London: Academy Editions, 1991): 46.

2. S. Frederick Starr, *Melnikov: Solo Architect in a Mass Society* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978): 72.





Caroline Noteboom, B.Arch McGill '96, is an S2 buildings specialist with Lew + Elbaz architects in Montreal.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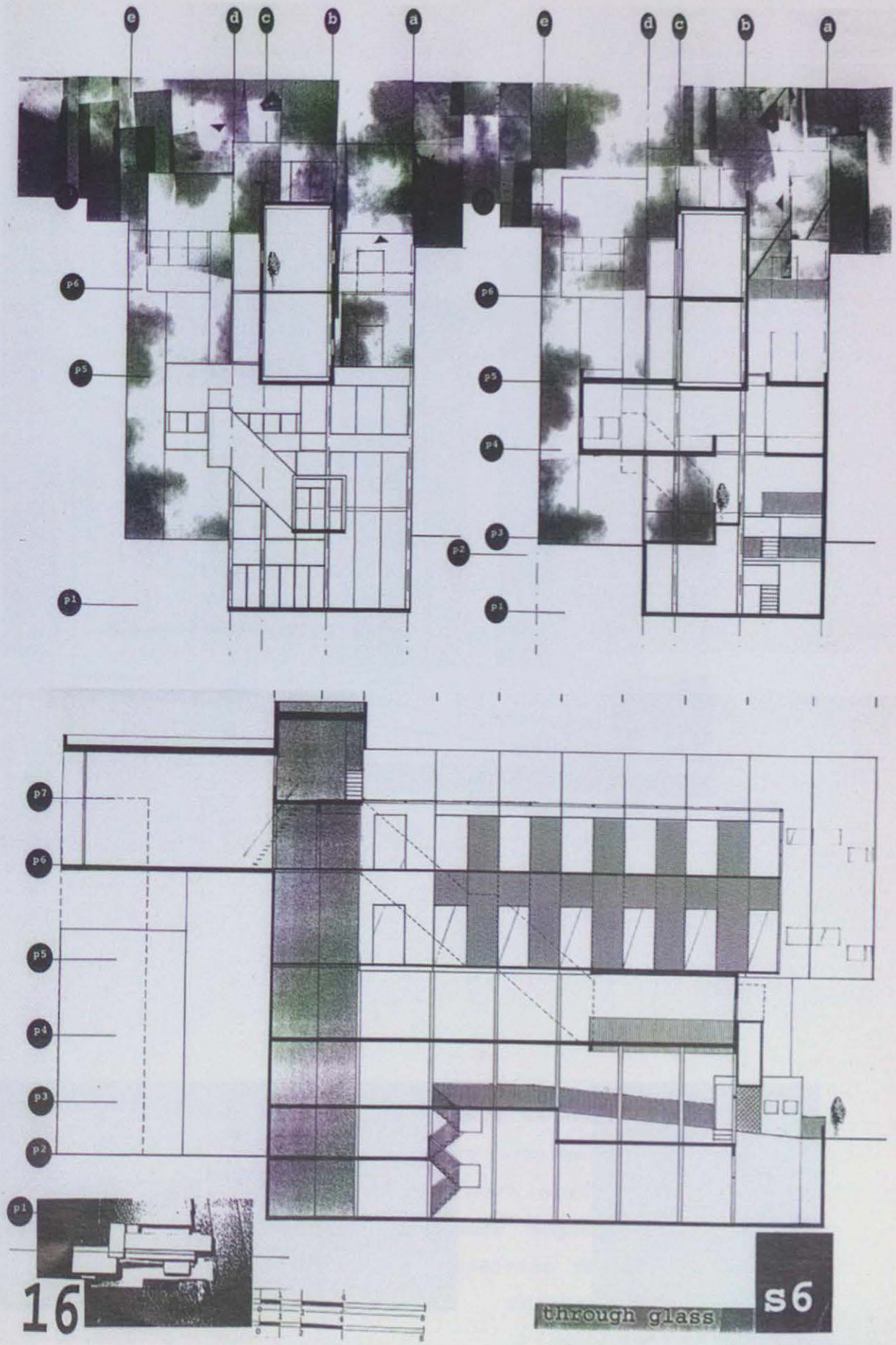
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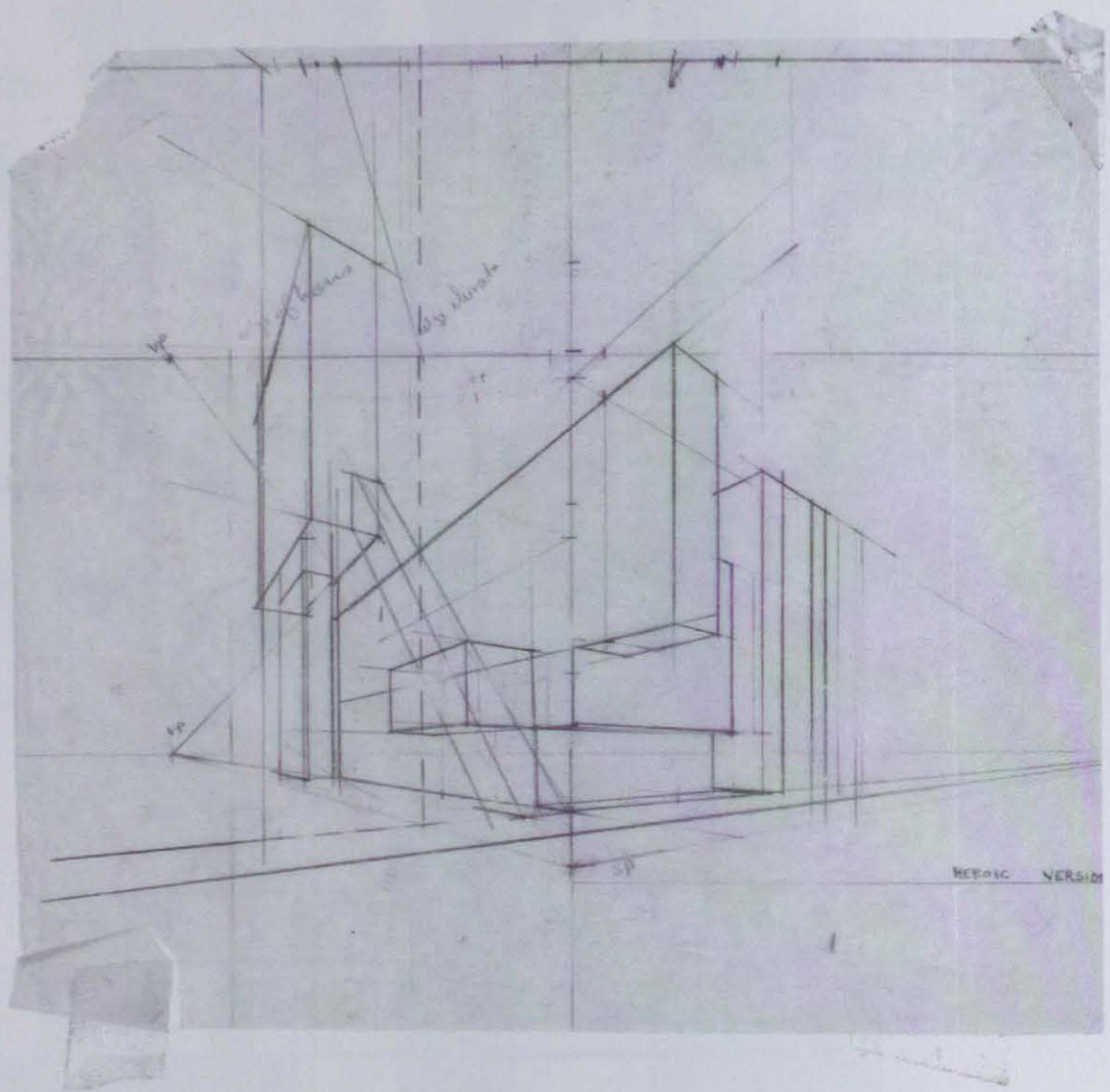
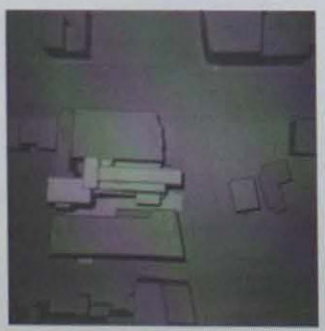
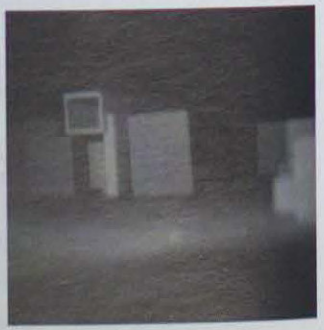
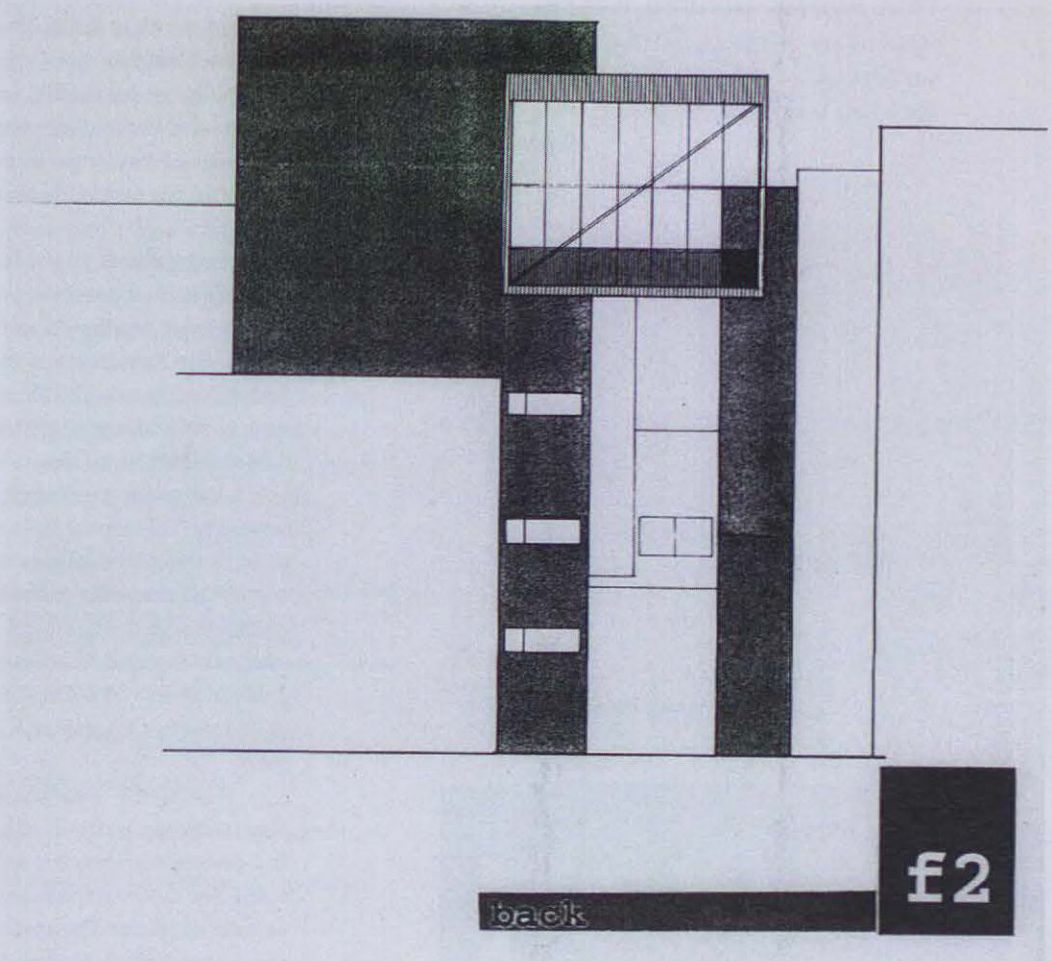
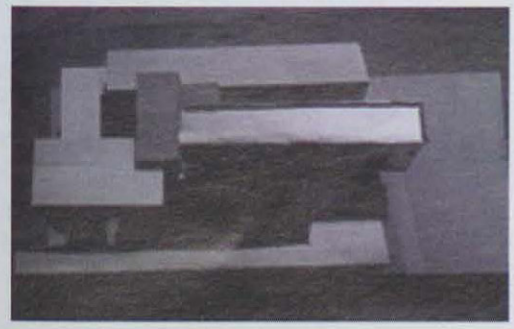










More public than the public sphere of discourse

More unknown people

More exciting

More democratic

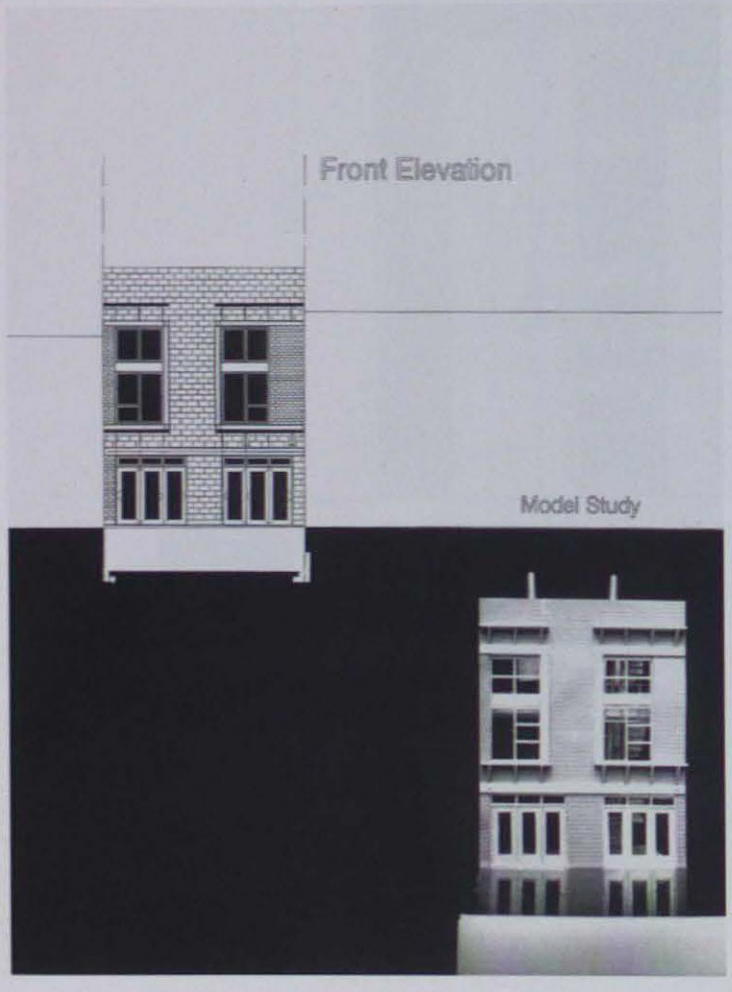
More critisism for the buck

Cheaper

Thin House, Divided House

4646-4648 ave. de L'Hotel-de-Ville
Montréal, QC
Roo + Carr Design

Michael Carroll



Prolect Team:	Michael Carroll, Danita Rooyakkers
Structural:	Mario Gendron
Contractor:	BOSSES Construction
Completed:	May, 1996
Size:	3,400 sq. ft. (total)
Photographs:	Mathu Manikowski

The Thin House occupies a narrow mid-block lot in Plateau Mont-Royal. The project challenges the traditional Montreal typology. The duplex offers another prototype for the City and makes an argument for a thinner, leaner, more urbane architecture where design is a critical component of the urban equation. Implicit in this project, then, is an experiment—how thin is thin?

Each unit is 11'-0" wide and 56'-0" long. Divided vertically into six levels and a 35'-0" atrium, each section contains a garage/storefront atelier, two bedrooms, two bathrooms, a mezzanine, living and kitchen/dining area. The Thin House is thus two thin vertical "lofts" designed with an emphasis on natural light and flexibility of space.

The project is contemporary in its architectural sensibility. The exterior has an industrial edge tempered by the contextual cues of the street and domestic scale of a house. For example, the cladding is brick combined with concrete block and galvanized metal sections with a folded metal cornice. The garage/front door can operate as a single door, or the three doors can act together to create an 8'-0" wide opening to the street.

The interior of the house is a play between exposed softwood and finished hardwoods, translucent and opaque surfaces, and industrial and domestic scales. The design emphasizes section over plan and volume over area.The spaces are choreographed within a maximized envelope dictated by City bylaws. At every scale the design works to be direct but considered, practical with a poetic sensibility, and thin.

INFRAthin City

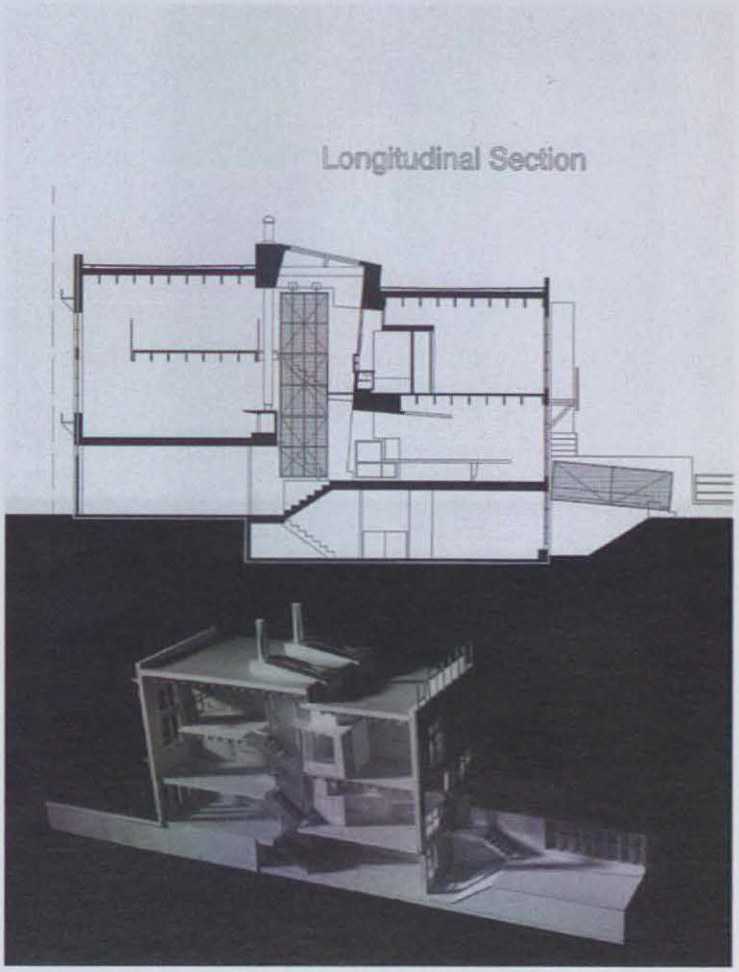
The Thin House is part of a polemic for InfrathinCity.[1] Paper thin architecture is the key strategy of Infrathin City. Infrathin City is piecemeal, a collection of slim volumes of fiction. Its infinitesimal architecture can only be viewed obliquely.

How do you get from Montreal to Infrathin City? Just head out of Collage City,[2] turn right at Metropolis,[3] drive straight on through Invisible Cities[4] and Delirious New York.[5] It is about 20 miles west of Alphaville.[6] There it is, a figment shimmering on the horizon, a mirage, a hybrid of cities experienced: Lima, Tangiers, Marrakech, London, Florence, Amsterdam, Berlin, Rio de Janeiro, New York. Venice is quintessentially Infrathin, L.A. is not. Infrathin City is the most urbane place on earth.

The economy of Infrathin City is aggressive. Land prices soar. Every crevice that holds promise is mined. Real space collapses to become slimmer, leaner, more imaginative. Land again is as precious as it was inside the walls of a Medieval town. Infrathin city is an experiment that takes the strategy of urban infill as its starting point and extends it to its limit. Marginal architecture in a vein of gold. Concentrated urbanity. Infrathin City exists in every city, in the interstitial spaces of the city, in its gaps and crevices. It is vertical, a soaring Gothic city.

Infrathin City is a micro-organism and the architect is an urban surgeon. The scalpel is as sharp as the tip of an angel's wing. Buildings as slight as those wings soar and plummet 100 feet below the earth.

Infrathin City is a new fact of *city*life.



1. The term infrathin was invented by Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968) in 1967. It first appeared in his third box of notes (New York: Cordler and Ekstorm Gallery, 1967). Infrathin denotes Duchamp's preoccupation with the infintesimal and visceral qualities of the physical world. Will a sheet of copper always be opaque?

2. Colin Rowe (Basel: Birkhauser Verlag, 1984).

3. Fritz Lang, B/W film (Germany, 1926).

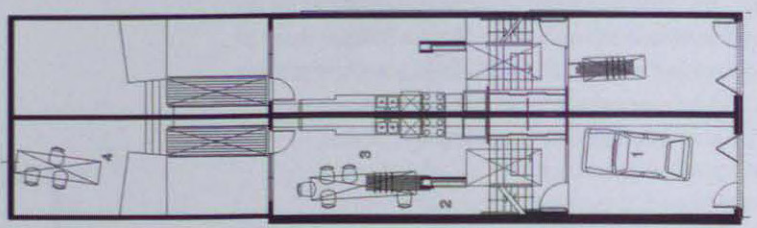
4. Italo Calvino (New York: Harcourt Bruce Jovanovich,1974).

5. Rem Koolhass (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978).

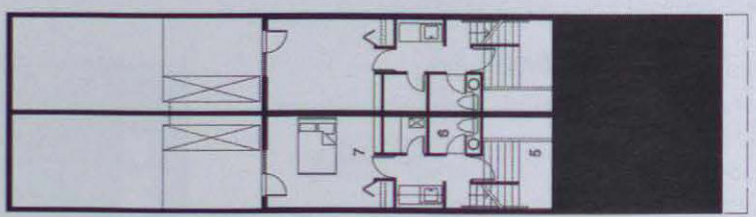
6. Jean Luc Godard, film (France, 1965).

Roo + Carr Design are building two more projects in Montreal. Michael Carroll is also completing his Master's Thesis in the History and Theory Program at the McGill School of Architecture.

Upper Floor/Mezzanine Plan



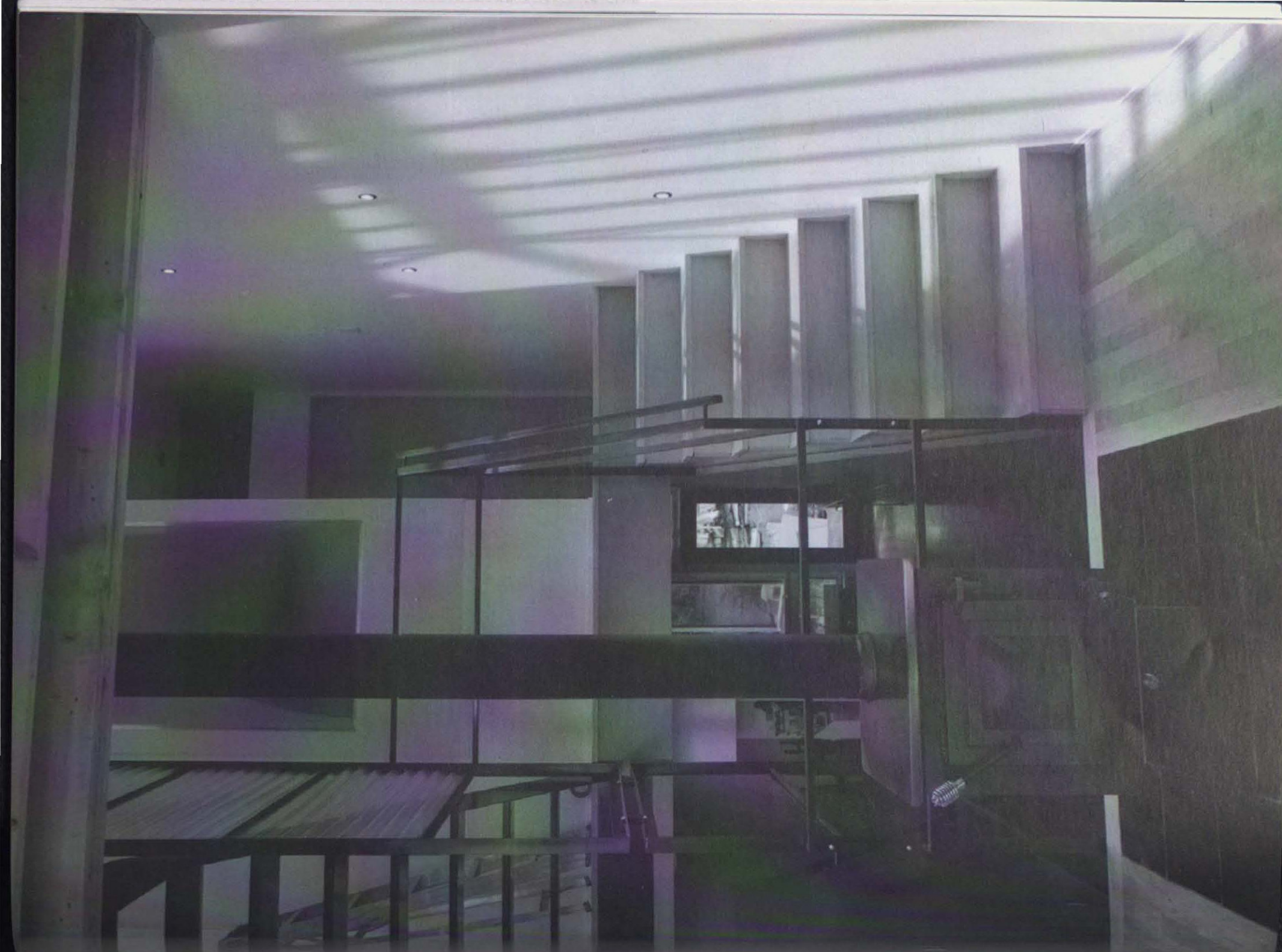
Ground Floor Plan



Lower Level Plan

Legend

1. Garage/Studio
2. Library
3. Kitchen/Dining
4. Garden
5. Storage
6. Bath
7. Bedroom
8. Living
9. Bath
10. Bedroom
11. Balcony
12. Atrium
13. Mezzanine
14. Open to Below



Jean-Baptiste Resther, entrepreneur et architecte (1830-1910)

Julie Elizabeth Gagnon

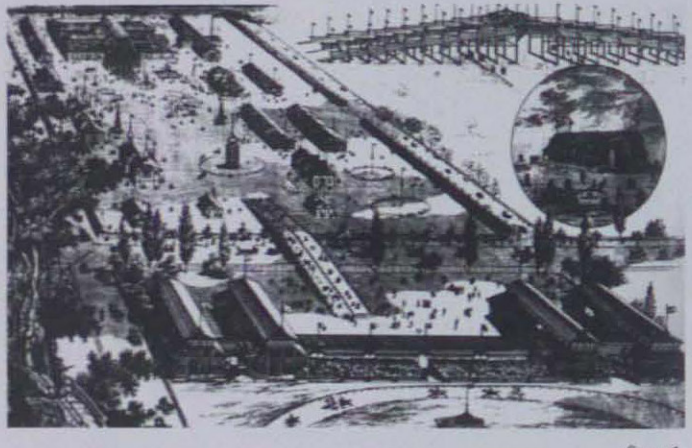


figure 1.

Cet article retrace la trajectoire sociale et professionnelle d'une famille d'entrepreneurs et d'architectes montréalais du dix-neuvième siècle, les Resther.[1] Bien qu'aujourd'hui méconnus, Jean-Baptiste (1830-1896) et Jean-Zéphyrin Resther (1857-1910) auront non seulement enrichi le patrimoine bâti de Montréal, mais aussi contribué à la mise sur pied de l'Association des architectes de la province de Québec, l'AAPQ, fondée en 1890. Sur trois générations, de père en fils, les Resther se transmettent en définitive non seulement un savoir technique, mais aussi un bagage culturel des plus déterminant en ce qui a trait à la réalisation de leur trajectoire socio-professionnelle.

Jean-Baptiste Resther, le fils de Ignace Resther, menuisier et entrepreneur en construction, est né à Montréal en 1830. Il aurait reçu une éducation élémentaire auprès des Frères de la Doctrine Chrétienne.[2] Sans doute découvre-t-il sa véritable vocation lorsqu'il assiste son père à la supervision des travaux du marché Bonsecours, autour de 1844.[3]

Entre 1847 et 1868, on retrouve la famille Resther établie à Saint-Hyacinthe. Au cours de cette période, Ignace (1797-?) et son fils Jean-Baptiste Resther travaillent le plus souvent en association familiale. On leur connaît peu de réalisations architecturales, mis à part la supervision des travaux du Collège de Saint-Hyacinthe en 1849[4] ainsi que la supervision d'un important projet de construction de gares ferroviaires pour la compagnie de chemin de fer du *Grand Trunk* en 1859.[5] Il s'agit alors de construire, en douze mois, 45 bâtiments entre les villages de Saint-Thomas-de-Montmagny et de Rivière-du-Loup.[6]

Au cours de ses années à Saint-Hyacinthe, Jean-Baptiste Resther s'adonne à une variété d'occupations. Il est à la fois meublier, fabricant de pièces de machinerie agricole, employé salarié, expert et entrepreneur.

En 1868, Jean-Baptiste Resther et sa seconde épouse, Cordélia Desforges, déménagent à Montréal. Au cours de ses premières années dans cette ville, Jean-Baptiste tient un atelier sur la rue Sainte-Catherine et effectue divers travaux à titre d'entrepreneur, notamment pour l'architecte anglais William Footner, auteur des plans du Marché Bonsecours.[7] Il obtient cette même année un contrat pour la construction des bâtiments pour l'Exposition agricole provinciale tenue sur les flancs du Mont-Royal à partir de 1876 (fig. 1).[8]

C'est seulement à partir de 1874, date à laquelle il s'associe avec Victor Roy (1836?-1902), architecte montréalais déjà bien établi, que Jean-Baptiste Resther est publiquement reconnu comme architecte. En effet, ses inscriptions au *Lovell's Montreal Directory* avant cette date ne l'identifient pas en tant qu'architecte: le Répertoire *Lovell* le qualifie en 1868 de poseur de briques, alors que les années suivantes et jusqu'en 1873 on le retrouve inscrit en tant qu'entrepreneur.[9] À partir de 1874, Resther est finalement inscrit comme architecte, titre qu'il utilisera jusqu'à sa mort.

En 1878, après la dissolution de son partenariat avec Roy, Jean-Baptiste s'associe à son fils Jean-Zéphyrin, avec qui il travaillera plusieurs années sous la raison sociale J.B. Resther et fils, architectes. Jean-Zéphyrin avait fait ses études à l'Académie commerciale catholique de Montréal et au Collège Sainte-Marie, où il fut promu en 1873.[10] Il aurait également fait une cléricature auprès de George Browne, architecte d'origine anglaise bien connu, avant de passer sous la tutelle de Victor Roy, l'ancien associé de son père.[11]

La production architecturale de la firme J.B. Resther et fils se compose principalement de résidences et d'édifices commerciaux mineurs. Quelques bâtiments institutionnels et religieux viennent s'ajouter à ce bilan, dont certains projets plus prestigieux comme le pensionnat du Mont-Saint-Louis sur la rue Sherbrooke en 1887-1888 (fig. 2) et l'ensemble conventuel des Pères du Très-Saint-Sacrement sur l'avenue du Mont-Royal en 1892-1897 (fig. 3). Ces deux ensembles seront classés monuments historiques par le ministère des Affaires culturelles du Québec. Les Resther sont aussi les auteurs des plans du pensionnat Saint-Basile (1895) des Religieuses de Sainte-Croix, également situé sur l'avenue du Mont-Royal, et du couvent (1892) et de la chapelle inférieure (1893) des Pères Franciscains sur le boulevard Dorchester.

Après la mort de Jean-Baptiste en 1896, Jean-Zéphyrin poursuivra seul les activités de la firme. Il réalisera plusieurs projets au cours de ces années, dont le pensionnat Saint-Nom-de-Marie (1903-1905) à Outremont ainsi que la manufacture de cigares pour L.O. Gröthe sur le boulevard Saint-Laurent en 1907, également classé monument historique.

La carrière architecturale de Jean-Baptiste Resther prend donc son essor à partir du moment où il s'associe avec l'architecte Victor Roy. Cette période correspond à la fin de ses activités d'entrepreneur et à l'adoption définitive du titre d'architecte. Au cours de

figure 2.

figure 3.

sa carrière, Jean-Baptiste Resther semble avoir atteint un niveau appréciable de reconnaissance sociale et professionnelle. Déjà à Saint-Hyacinthe, il avait été conseiller municipal pendant quelques années.[12] Une fois à Montréal, Jean-Baptiste s'implique dans la Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste et est élu le premier vice-président de la Société en 1884.[13] En 1887, Jean-Baptiste Resther est nommé à titre d'arbitre officiel de la province de Québec, nomination qui ne manquera pas d'ajouter à sa reconnaissance professionnelle.[14] Tout au long de sa carrière, Jean-Baptiste Resther est activement sollicité en qualité d'arbitre et d'expert, souvent en association avec d'autres architectes montréalais.

D'entrepreneur à architecte, Jean-Baptiste Resther gravit les échelons sociaux. L'ascension au rang d'architecte à partir d'un métier de la construction est courante au dix-neuvième siècle, comme les structures sociales sont encore assez souples à l'époque pour accommoder le passage d'un groupe social à un autre.[15] De plus, comme il n'existe aucune structure formelle d'encadrement et de consécration des architectes, la reconnaissance professionnelle dont jouit Resther semble fortement liée à la reconnaissance de son statut social en tant que membre des professions libérales. Sa démarche professionnelle est cohérente avec le développement de la profession architecturale au Québec, alors que son ascension sociale illustre l'accession de la profession d'architecte au rang des professions libérales.

Jean-Baptiste et son fils Jean-Zéphyrin participeront aussi à la fondation de l'Association des architectes de la province de Québec en 1890, alors que ce dernier deviendra trésorier de l'Association en 1894 puis président en 1909-1910.[16] De ce fait, les architectes Resther contribuent à la mise en place d'un des éléments structuraux essentiels à l'émergence d'un champ de l'architecture au Québec.

Jean-Zéphyrin Resther jouit par ailleurs d'un prestige social enviable. Il sera l'administrateur de la succession de feu son ami J.A. Massue,[17] qui possède de nombreuses terres dans le comté de Richelieu ainsi que plus de cinq cents lots à bâtir dans les villages de Côte-Saint-Louis et de Saint-Jean-Baptiste.[18] Architecte et homme d'affaires, Jean-Zéphyrin s'implique aussi au niveau de la politique municipale. En 1909, il est élu conseiller municipal du quartier Centre en remplacement de l'échevin W.E. Mount, décédé subitement cette même année.[19]

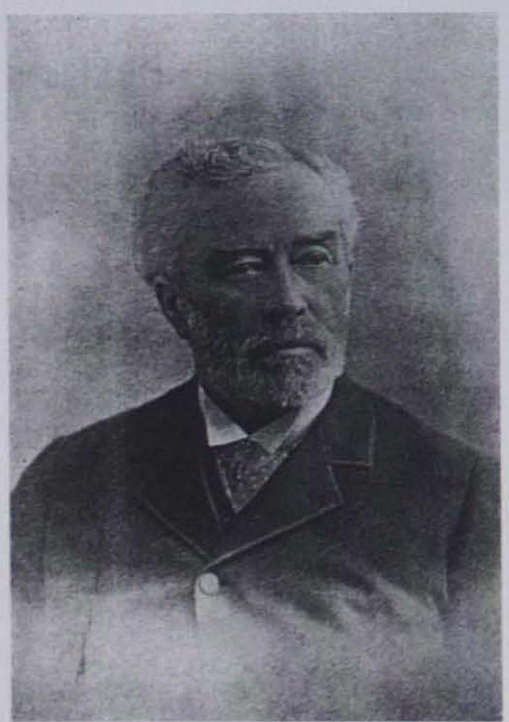


figure 4.

Jean-Zéphyrin Resther, comme son père Jean-Baptiste, évolue au sein du groupe social privilégié que représente la petite bourgeoisie montréalaise (fig. 4). Son implication au niveau de la scène politique municipale et dans la mise sur pied de l'AAPQ traduit de plus un pouvoir politique généralement associé à la petite bourgeoisie. De ce fait, Jean-Zéphyrin fait partie de la dernière génération d'architectes professionnels non-académiques, descendants d'une tradition qui s'éteint à l'aube du vingtième siècle.

1. Cet article est tiré du mémoire de maîtrise de l'auteure intitulé *Les Resther, entrepreneurs et architectes de la région de Montréal (1830-1910)*, déposé au département d'histoire de l'art de l'Université du Québec à Montréal en septembre 1996.

2. "Biographie de Jean-Baptiste Resther," *Souvenir Maisonneuve illustré* (Montréal: Compagnie de publication Maisonneuve, 1894): 134.

3. Guy Pinard, *Montréal, son histoire, son architecture*, tome III (Montréal: Éditions du Méridien/La Presse, 1989): 114.

4. "Biographie de Jean-Baptiste Resther," 134.

5. "Avis de Dissolution de Société," *Le Courrier de Saint-Hyacinthe* (22 novembre 1859): 2.

6. ANQM, greffe H. Saint-Germain, 14 décembre 1858, no. 1395, Engagement de Olivier Lussier et al. à Ignace Resther et Cie.

7. ANQM, greffe A. Archambault, 9 mars 1869, no. 3688, Transport par W. Footner, arch., à J.-B. Resther.

8. *La Minerve* (26 juin 187): 3, *L'Opinion Publique* (6 avril 1876): 166 et (7 septembre 1876): 398, *Canadian Illustrated News* (2 septembre 1876): 124-6 et "Biographie de Jean-Baptiste Resther," 134.

9. *Lovell's Montreal Directory* (Montreal: John Lovell and Sons, 1869 à 1873). Les termes exactes sont Bricklayer pour 1868, Undertaker pour 1869-70, Contractor pour 1871-1872.

10. Adrien Leblond de Brumath, 165, et *Souvenir des fêtes jubilaires du Collège Sainte-Marie de Montréal 1848-1898* (Montréal: Imprimerie Desbarats, 1898): 243.

11. "Biographie de Jean-Zéphyrin Resther," *Souvenir Maisonneuve illustré* (Montréal: Compagnie de publication Maisonneuve, 1894): 134.

12. Groupe de recherche sur les bâtiments en pierre grise de Montréal, sous la direction de Phyllis Lambert, appendice I: "Biographie de Jean-Baptiste Resther,"*Le Mont-Saint-Louis, histoire, relevé et analyse* (Québec: Ministère des Affaires culturelles, juin 1978).

13. "Biographie de Jean-Baptiste Resther," 134.

14. *Le Journal de Québec* (8 août 1887): 2.

15. Paul-André Linteau, René Durocher et Jean-Claude Robert, *Histoire du Québec contemporain, tome I: de la confédération à la crise (1867-1929)*, 2ème éd. (Montréal: Boréal compact, 1989): 184-92.

16. Linteau et al., 184-92, ainsi que Association des architectes de la province de Québec, *AAPQ. Yearbook 1912* (Montréal: AAPQ, 1912): pages préliminaires.

17. ANQM, greffe D.G.V. Lamarche, 1er septembre 1891, no. 1891, Déclaration par Jean-Zéphyrin Resther à la succession Massue.

18. ANQM, greffe D.G.V. Lamarche, 1er septembre 1891, no. 1891, Déclaration par Jean-Zéphyrin Resther à la succession Massue.

19. "Biographie de Jean-Zéphyrin Resther," 134.

Julie Elizabeth Gagnon is a PhD candidate in Urban Studies at the Université du Québec à Montréal.

Les Habitations St-Ambroise

Daniel Pearl

L'office de l'Eclectisme Urbain et Fonctionnel (L'O.E.U.F.) Enrg. project team: Daniel Pearl and Mark Poddubiuk architectes, Bernard Olivier, stagière.

The Eclectic Nature of Practise

The practise of architecture, of building, and of urban housing in particular, even in the most optimistic of circumstances, is a complex and fragile process which requires the collaboration of many individuals with different types and degrees of skill and expertise. Eclecticism is the philosophical position that enables such collaboration—freely choosing and reconciling diverse points of view.

Introduction

Les Habitations St-Ambroise is a four unit housing project built on a vacant lot in St-Henri, a traditional working-class neighbourhood in Montreal. The site is located at the south end of an unusual triangular block with a street frontage on three sides facing the Atwater Market to the east, the Lachine Canal to the south and a typical residential street to the west.

This project forms a part of our ongoing preoccupation with urban housing previously explored in a variety of theoretical, academic and otherwise

aborted projects. Working directly in tandem with the developers of the project, we initiated the conception of the project, participated in arranging the financing, prepared the design, supervised the construction, marketed the units and were principal players in the final sale of the units.

The conception of the project is largely based upon a process of "hybridization" resulting from the reconciliation of conflicting circumstances, impulses and objectives. The hybrid arises out of a process of design that addresses three areas of concern: the urban project (physical circumstances), the domestic environment (market impulses) and the sustainability of residential construction (economic, technical and environmental objectives).

The Urban Project

The project is at once "fabric"—a complementary part of the surrounding residential context of St-Henri—and "figure"—a freestanding object marking the corner of both the block and the neighbourhood, responding to the public nature of the surrounding urban landscape of Atwater Market and the Lachine Canal.

This hybrid condition of "figure/fabric" is expressed architecturally in the two distinct orientations present in the plan. Taken literally from the triangular form of the block and then translated into the reflection of a broader urban condition, each geometry corresponds to a pair of units that share common programmes and architectural characteristics—spatial, sectional, elevational and organizational strategies.

The "figure" is a shear wall with generous fenestration and a sculpted roofline facing the Market. The two units contained therein are first lifted off the street level to create a studio and garage below, and then lifted again placing the principal living spaces on the top floor and roof terraces above, benefiting from the exaggerated height of this space as well as the panoramic view of Mount Royal and the city skyline in the distance.

The "fabric" is expressed in the more diminutive scale of the block facing the residential street to the west. These two units are carefully scaled in profile to the traditional housing of the neighbourhood and share a common sectional relationship to the street. The gap created on the sidestreet consciously recalls the traditional *tête d'ilôt* condition, transforming it into an entrance garden for two of the units.

The hybridization of these two conditions and their corresponding house types is expressed not as a collage of their distinctions, but as a true hybrid—a new entity that emerges out of there particular circumstances. The hybrid is expressed in the singular expression of materials for the whole (brick base and white stucco) as well as a common approach to details and fenestration (green and red metal).

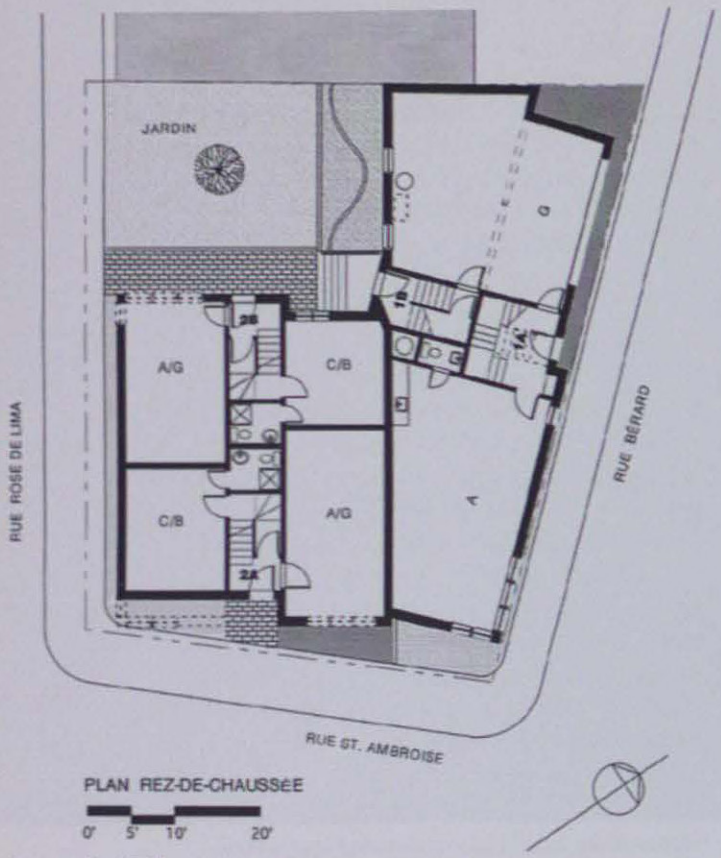
The Domestic Environment

The conventional duplex and triplex abundantly available in the city, for all their benefits, dictate both a certain degree of repetition in plan and demand a degree of tolerance acoustically between neighbours. As a domestic environment, we were anxious to realize a unit type that provided the greatest possible autonomy and flexibility for the individual resident's lifestyle within a dense urban environment. The project is based upon a symbiotic relationship between the expression of the whole and the autonomy of the individual units; between the urban and domestic characters of the project.

The urban project gave rise to the creation of two paired units with distinct characteristics. The conception of the individual units is based upon a vertical organization of the domestic programme that is similar for each of the paired units. Living and sleeping spaces are organized on seperate levels. In one case, the living spaces are above to take advantage of the view and stairs are isolated in order to maintain privacy of the sleeping spaces. In the other, the living spaces are located below to benefit from a ground relationship, and the stair becomes a freestanding screen delimiting spaces.

In order to broaden the definition of the domestic programme, we decided to elevate both the living and sleeping spaces above the ground plane. The ground floor, clad consistently in brick, is typically composed of one large space with a high ceiling and smaller rooms in a split level relationship to that room. The intention was to provide for the possibility of a variety of situations; a home studio/office in one scenario; a separate appartment for an extended family or rental in another; or simply a garage and a guest room.

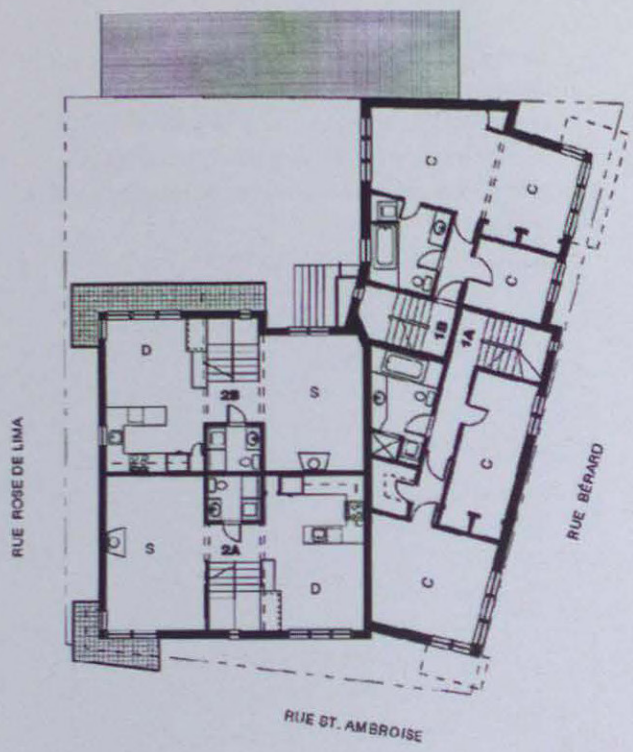
Each unit is intended to give the impression of a freestanding house. This autonomy is expressed in the individuality and remoteness of each of the entrances as well as the emphasis on corner windows



PLAN REZ-DE-CHAUSSÉE

0' 5' 10' 20'

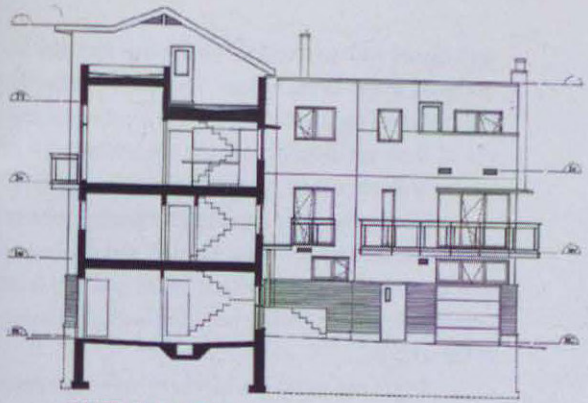
A ATELIER
G GARAGE
A/G ATELIER / GARAGE
C/B CHAMBRE / BUREAU



PLAN PREMIER ÉTAGE

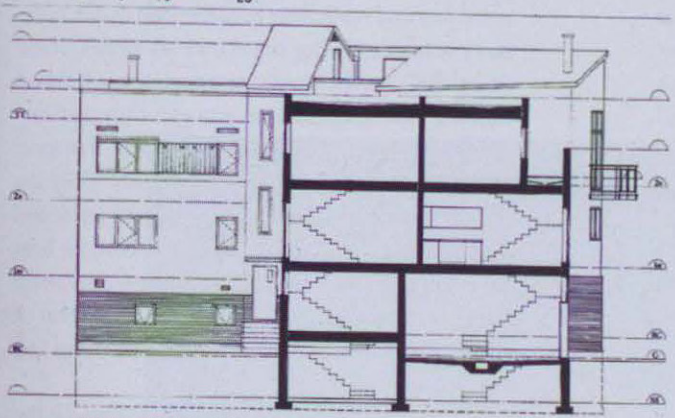
0' 5' 10' 20'

D SALLE A DINER
S SALON
C CHAMBRE



COUPE EST - OUEST

0' 5' 10' 20'



COUPE NORD - SUD

0' 5' 10' 20'

and corner balconies, giving a broad perspective out of the unit to the urban landscape.

Sustainability of Residential Construction

In order to develop a project within a depressed residential market, we were acutely aware throughout the process of the need to satisfy a demand for affordable, innovative, efficient and sustainable housing. The method of construction and the choice of materials and systems were based upon reconciling financial and market considerations with sound environmental practise.

In order to maintain the affordability of the product, the project is based upon conventional wood frame construction. With the introduction of OSB joists and rafters, as well as steel and exposed heavy timber members at certain specific locations, we were able to nearly eliminate the need for any lumber larger than 2X4 throughout the construction.

Exterior cladding consists of a combination of brick and acrylic stucco on expanded polystyrene insulation over an exterior grade recycled cellulose/gypsum sheathing. Roof terraces are finished with a recycled plastic and wood fibre decking.

The project is built to R2000 standards for energy efficiency. A sophisticated system of controls for humidity, temperature, fresh air, recirculation, exhaust and lighting has been integrated (to different degrees) into all of the units. Given the air tightness of such construction, particular attention has been paid to three areas of concern.

First of all, off-gasing of toxic contaminants to the interior of the units over time has been reduced or eliminated by a careful selection and specification of building and finishing materials including exterior sheathing (recycled cellulose/gypsum panels), insulation (mineral wool), paint (zero VOC latex and acrylic epoxy), flooring (linoleum installed with a non toxic glue) and cabinetry (formaldehyde reduced [0.015%] composite wood panels and non-toxic glues for assembly).

Secondly, fresh air is supplied and stale air is exhausted through the use of a heat recovery ventilator (HRV). In one of the units the system introduces fresh air pre-heated through a *solarwall* panel (during heating season) integrated into the courtyard elevation and through a second cooler inlet (during summer months). Before bathroom exhaust air is removed, the heat energy is recovered to preheat the incoming air. The fresh air is then dehumidified when necessary, mixed with recirculated air, filtered and then introduced to the living spaces. The result of combining a *solarwall* panel with an HRV is a continuous supply of fresh air even during the coldest months of winter with almost no energy cost.

Finally, the planning of units reflects a concern to contain specific zones for heating and cooling as well as to isolate spaces located below grade to limit potential air contamination resulting from off-gassing of the soil.

Bright red metal sun blockers have been used to control solar heat gain at certain windows. Large glazed surfaces opening towards particular views oriented east and north have been justified by the proximity of high efficiency cereal burning stoves. These 54,000 BTU stoves, similar in appearance to wood burning stoves, operate on automatically fed low grade cereal grain available at the cost of transport and packaging, utilizing reject stock only. They are the principal source of heat in two of the units and are integrated with the recirculation branch of the heat recovery ventilator system to balance heating throughout the unit. A low cost back up system of electric baseboards has been provided for extreme low temperature conditions.

Conservation of resources was addressed in the selection of water saving toilets and energy efficient light sources—high pressure sodium for the exterior and a combination of compact fluorescent and halogen ALR for the interior.

Conclusion

While attempting to develop our own niche, we have chosen to learn by trial-and-error versus the more traditional academic routes. *Social Activism* has been our vehicle of preference to explore a language of architecture that is capable of embracing social and political issues. As collaborators and fellow professionals, we both share a concern for the fabric of housing and its role in the evolution and daily rituals of urban experience. As both a conscious and subconscious act, housing is the ideal reflection, in architectural terms, of the values and aspirations of a culture. Our work over the years has attempted to embrace this vision.

In 1992 Daniel Pearl and Mark Poddubiuk co-founded L'O.E.U.F. The office works principally in the field of urban housing, residential and commercial renovation, but we are also deeply involved in research, teaching, criticism, theory and civic activism.

Godivelle part 1: Deuxième chronique de la Godi-ville

Bordures et effets: les deux natures du lieu

Gilles Marty

Quelques notes sur les notions de lieu, de nature et d'architecture, rédigées à partir des projets des étudiants de l'Ecole d'Architecture de Clermont-Ferrand qui ont participé à la semaine atelier du 7 au 14 Février 1997 à la Godivelle (Auvergne) sur le thème des "Machines écologique5" et des conférences sur le paysage données à l'EACF par Julia Bourke et Ricardo Castro, enseignants invités de l'Ecole d'Architecture McGill de Montréal.

Lieu: ce qui existe avant l'architecture et désigne déjà de l'architecture.

Dans la nature, un lieu peut avoir plusieurs sens. Mais au regard des sites retenus pour implanter les machines écologiques on comprend qu'un lieu prédisposé à l'architecture est toujours un *entre~eux*. Et ceci de deux manières possibles: dans l'espace ou dans le temps.

Entre-deux dans l'espace, le lieu marque une limite: l'orée d'un bois, les berges d'un lac, la chute d'une falaise. Dans ce cas, l'évidence du lieu s'affirme dans la transition ou le passage qu'il marque d'une configuration naturelle à une autre: limite entre une étendue boisée et une prairie, seuil entre terre et eau, rupture entre terre et ciel. On pourra appeler les entre-deux dans l'espace*lieux-bordures*, puisqu'ils expriment la limite entre deux formes naturelles. On constate que les *lieux-bordures* sont relativement fixes et constituent depuis toujours les espaces privilégiés de l'architecture: promontoires, rives, lisières, escarpements.

L idée d'un entre-deux dans le temps est plus subtile car elle fait intervenir un autre élément, non présent sur le site, qui pourtant crée le lieu: par exemple l'effet du soleil au travers des arbres qui marque dans une forêt un emplacement ephémère ou les figures géométriques tracées par les sillons réguliers que dessinent un tracteur. Dans ce cas, le lieu n'est plus espace à proprement parler mais trace ou empreinte d'un élément sur un autre, il indique une action non une transition, une variation plus qu'un passage. Ce second type de lieu peut apparaître au coeur d'une forêt, au beau milieu d'un champ ou d'un lac, car il ne requiert pas de rupture physique pour exister, juste un éclaircissement, un assombrissement, un réchauffement, un changement d'état ou de surface dans la continuité des choses, à un moment donné du jour ou de la nuit.

On appellera les entre-deux dans le temps *lieux-effets* car ils manifestent l'action passagère d'un élément sur un autre : le soleil sur la glace, l'eau

souterraine d'une tourbière qui rend le sol instable, le vent qui couche les hautes herbes formant un tapis végétal mordoré saisi par le gel. Ces *lieux-effets* sont apparemment moins disponibles pour l'architecture mais bien plus frappants pour l'imagination. Ils sont d'autant plus fascinants qu'insaisissables dans la durée. Ils requièrent pour exister l'action d'un autre élément qui n'appartient pas forcément au lieu, n'y apparaît pas explicitement ou ne s'y trouve plus présent physiquement. Ces *lieux-effets* reposent sur des indices ou des traces de quelque chose d'absent et de non permanent dans le site. On dit qu'ils sont entre-deux dans le temps, et se distinguent des bordures qui apparaissent dans l'espace, dans le sens où le lieu peut retourner à son état de neutralité initiale d'où l'effet l'a tiré de manière précaire le soleil n'éclaire plus le lieu dans la forêt qui s'obscurcit à nouveau, le champ n'est plus cultivé et redevient prairie.

En fait les deux sortes de lieux sont souvent présents dans un même site et, considérées à une autre échelle de temps, les bordures peuvent être vues comme des effets de plasticité des éléments naturels sur une grande durée: inversion du relief volcanique, comblement progressif d'une tourbière. D'autre part, effets et bordures ne cessent de se combiner à différentes échelles dans de nouvelles associations de temps et d'espace qui créent à leur tour de nouveaux lieux: les pierres accumulées sur le bord du lac, chauffées par le soleil d'hiver, font fondre la glace sur une mince bande créant ainsi une nouvelle bordure, sorte d'apparition diurne, double fugace de la berge, lieu instable et pourtant visuellement plus présent que la berge elle-même.

Pour ces deux types de lieux, il est difficile de débrouiller le naturel de l'artificiel, l'action de l'homme de celle de la nature: la lisière de la forêt sera d'autant plus frappante que la plantation des arbres suivra une géométrie régulière, la sensation de durée sera d'autant plus saisissante qu'elle évoquera un vestige humain, un tumulus ou la trace laissée au sol par une fortification disparue. Ainsi on pourrait distinguer plusieurs sortes de bordures, lignes (berges, rives, lisières) ou étendues (clairières, cirques naturels) et plusieurs types d'effets, empreintes (soleil, vent, pluie) ou traces (vestiges, ruines). Cependant tous ces lieux, *lieux- bordures, lieux effets*, ont un caractère commun: l'apparition de combinaisons naturelles, perceptibles à l'échelle humaine, avec

lesquelles, à son tour, l'architecture cherchera à se composer.

Pour l'architecture, les *lieux-bordures*, clairières, lacs, cirques, falaises, évoquent déjà des sentiments d'action ou de repos: s'ouvrir sur une vaste étendue, être en attente, être abrité, se mettre en mouvement. Ces lieux sont naturellement disponibles pour l'architecture car ils marquent une limite concrète, produisent un seuil et créent un espace constitué de "limites solides" sur lesquelles s'appuie l'architecture. Parcequ'ils offrent un support à nos mouvements, on dira qu'ils *préparent* l'architecture.

A l'inverse les *lieux-effets* créent une apparition fugitive qui ne pousse pas forcément à l'action. Ils se réfèrent plutôt à notre nature sensorielle, dans la mesure où les combinaisons infinies des éléments naturels, eau, terre, air, feu, d'habitudes imperceptibles, forment ici un espace mouvant qui ne dépend que de notre perception physique dans l'instant: je suis tout à coup réchauffé par le soleil, le sol craque légèrement sous mes pieds et se dérobe. En ce sens ce sont des "pré-architectures" qui indiquent de pures sensations d'espaces, d'ambiances ou de matières, à l'image des fontaines et des jardins, dont on dira qu'elles *provoquent* l'architecture par l'imagination.

Bien sûr l'apparition de l'architecture crée en elle-même toute sortes d'effets, bordures, limites, clôtures, seuils et lieux qui lui sont propres et apparaissent comme dissociés de la nature et du lieu. Mais nous entrons là dans un autre domaine où les éléments changent de statut. En effet, en architecture le soleil fait plus qu'indiquer un lieu, creuser un espace ou réchauffer la pierre, sa lumière devient tantôt luminosité enveloppante de l'objet, tantôt transparence révélatrice de la structure géométrique des corps dans l'espace. Non plus des jeux d'ombre et de lumière, mais la lumière pour elle même, renvoyée à elle même. Mais de ceci nous aurons l'occasion d'en reparler.

Pour conclure provisoirement, on pourrait dire qu'il y a deux logiques. D'une part, celle des lieux: "bordures" et "effets" qui rendent perceptibles à échelle humaine les combinaisons infiniment mêlées des éléments naturels dans des compositions spatiales fixes ou passagères. De l'autre, la logique de l'architecture qui tend à donner existence aux états infiniment changeants des sensations humaines, regards, bruits, odeurs, perceptions d'espace, sensations colorées ou lumineuses, impressions de froid ou de chaleur. Pour l'homme, un lieu devient "vivable" ou à vivre" dès lors que ces deux logiques se rejoignent pour former une notion commune nature-architecture. La distinction nature-architecture n'est donc plus déterminante lorsqu'ils s'agit de lieux. En fait il s'agit d'un même univers ou se tissent sans cesse les liens qui franchissent le vide qui sépare le monde humain du monde non-humain.

Gilles Marty est professeur à l'Ecole d'Architecture de Clermont-Ferrand en France.

La Godivelle part 2: À propos d'une expérience dans la deuxième nature

Julia Bourke et Ricardo L. Castro

À quelques 50 kilomètres au nord-est de la Godivelle se situe Clermont-Ferrand, la capitale de l'Auvergne et à quelque kilomètres au sud de Clermont se situe Gergovie où Vercingérotix a battu Jules César en l'an 52 av. J.-C. Ici, le fameux "Vini, vidi, vici" de César n'a pu avoir la résonance qu'il avait eu en l'Asie Mineure. De plus, nous sommes dans la Gaule, et dans une certaine mesure, dans le paysage mythique d'Astérix où des événements extraordinaires deviennent communs.

C'est la région du fameux fromage Cantal. Les vaches Salerns qui fournissent le lait sont brunes, colorées comme la terre de ce paysage. Pendant l'hiver les vaches sont absentes des champs, elles sont dans les étables, à l'abri des intempéries et des conditions inclémentes de cette région. Néanmoins, leur présence est tacite partout. Leur fumier, très fécond, donne de l'épongité aux champs et quelque fois nous l'expérimentons sous nos pieds. Au cou de chaque vache Salern pend une cloche. Malheureusement nous ne pouvons pas entendre le son harmonique de ces cloches qui donnent une certaine qualité acoustique à ce domaine de tourbières, de lacs, de volcans éteints, d'immenses collines sans fin, et des morceaux de forêts de conifères plantés avec une précision

cartésienne. L'hiver a fait exception lors de notre passage, du moins nous l'imaginons, puisque que nous avons bénéficié de conditions printanières prématurées. Nous sommes reçues, nous les professeurs invités afin de nous joindre au projet proposé aux 17 étudiants et étudiantes des années supérieures de l'EACF par les professeurs Gilles Marty et Yves Morin.

La Godivelle (nous l'appelons affectueusement Goodiville) se trouve encaissée entre deux lacs, connues sous les noms de "Lac d'en haut" et "Lac d'en bas." Le premier a été formé dans la caldeira d'un volcan éteint. Ses pentes intérieures forment un amphithéâtre naturel gigantesque où le son voyage avec la même grâce et éloquence qu'à Épidaure. La présence humaine, nos corps, serviront à une véritable répétition du sens théâtral du lieu.

Dans cette "seconde nature," comme l'a définit le théoricien anglo-américain John Dixon Hunt, nous trouvons un collage incomplet des systèmes de production. Son mystère réside dans les juxtapositions. Par exemple: les limites des forêts cartésiennes qui forment des lignes droites parfaites avec la disséction aléatoire faite par les racines des arbres morts. Ici et là, dispersées sur les champs, des machines et des structures agricoles abandonnées pourraient bien faire partie d'un répertoire du design contemporain.

Nous découvrons le potentiel immanent du paysage avec nos corps. Dans l'amphithéâtre naturel du "lac d'en haut," vingt d'entre nous, en ligne, separés proportionnellement, commençons à examiner un sens particulier de l'échelle. Avec le son produit de nos conversations, le mystère de l'amplification sonore apparaît. Nous créons alors une vraie chorégraphie dans le paysage avec nos corps. Ainsi, nous trouvons que l'espace délimité par une clôture qui protège le lieu où une croix est plantée et qui sert de signe, peut tous nous accuellir. La clôture sert à protéger la croix des incursions des vaches. Elle définit un espace vraiment minimal: 1,5m x 2,0m. Nous découvrons le sens de la verticalité en sautant à pieds joints sur des bottes de foin solidement pactées avec du plastique renforcé. Parallèlement, nous découvrons la verticalité dans le milieu de la forêt dont ses mille troncs érigés avec précision forment une salle hypostyle naturelle.

Une clairière dans la forêt, à première vue vaste et sans intérêt, révèle parcimonieusement son potentiel au fur et à mesure que le mouvement de nos corps nous permettent d'explorer quelques particularités locales: un petit arbre planté solitairement au milieu de l'espace qui définit un lieu et le ruisseau qui traverse la clairière qui dirige notre vision vers le ciel comme le fil d'eau dans le projet du Salk Institute de Louis Kahn à La Jolla, Californie.

Ceci n'est pas l"alterum rerum," comme Cicéron avait appelé la première nature. Ceci est le paysage de la deuxième nature, où la présence humaine est évidente à travers le travail, le mouvement et la récolte. La plasticité de ce paysage est le résultat d'une intervention continuelle depuis des milliers d'années. Contrairement au caractère indéfini des lieux sauvages que définit la première nature, nous avons ici des limites claires: clôtures, forêts, chemins, et ruisseaux. Chacun de ces éléments acquiert une identité particulière qui peut être nommée et par conséquence possedée conceptuellement, le tout accompagné par des utilisations particulières: montagnes, collines, lacs, ruisseaux, tourbières et forêts. Ici, il n'y a pas de troisième nature, soit le jardin proprement dit.

Dans la distance de ces immenses collines, les champs nous semblent secs. En nous rapprochant nous découvrons, d'abord la mélodie de l'eau partout, et après, sa présence visuelle à mesure qu'elle coule sur les pentes des collines comme celui du dégel de la neige. Comme Sartre, qui a trouvé au début des années 40 le vrai sens de la distance en expérimentant la proximité continuelle des *autres* lors de deux mois d'emprisonnement, nous avons trouvé ici, avec une liberté sans égale, le sens de la proximité à travers l'expérience continuelle de la distance entre nos corps dans ces vastes espaces. Nous avons aussi compris que l'opposition distance/proximité est inséparable et elle est aussi indispensable pour toute compréhension spatiale.

Avec ce projet nous avons pu examiner cinq concepts portant sur: le seuil, le corps, le sens du lieu, le sens du projet et la recherche d'un processus du design compréhensif cependant sélectif. Le but consistait à trouver des stratégies afin d'enrichir une location particulière avec le sens du lieu.

Notre voyage a été une vraie excursion dans la deuxième nature. Au contraire de César, chacun de nous deux peut, modestement, résumer ce séjour avec l'expression: "Vini, vidi, amati."

Julia Bourke, Professeure adjointe, Ricardo L. Castro, Professeur agrégé, École d'architecture, Université McGill, Montréal. La Godivelle (Goodiville), Printemps 1997.

Reviews

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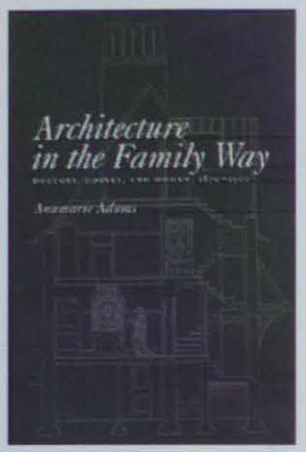


Annmarie Adams
Architecture In The Family Way
Doctors, Houses and Women, 1870-1900.

Montreal:
McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996.

Kent Fitzsimons

It is never surprising to read histories of architecture that celebrate the important place of professional architects in the creation of our material and cultural heritage. Usually focusing on the heroic struggles of our most esteemed forbears, these stories render colourful images of the relationship between our profession and society at large. Given our great love for bound volumes of Corbu's *Oeuvres Complètes* and the satisfaction we derive from uttering the name "Imhotep," we, as proud architects, must feel uneasy when faced with the stories presented in *Architecture in the Family Way*.

In her first book, Annmarie Adams, Associate Professor of Architecture at McGill University, maps the common ground in the histories of Victorian feminism, health reform and architecture. Using the English middle-class house as both a point of reference and a tool for analysis, Adams questions usual conceptions of the limits of feminine power, the division between domestic and public social issues, and the role that architects play in social reform. Putting aside the progressive image of architectural culture in late 19th century England, the book presents women and doctors as the main players in political and professional debates played out on what is usually considered the architect's turf. Drawing from sources almost never found on a design student's reading list, Adams deftly demonstrates how misconceptions about hygiene, unabashed grabs for power and outright inter-profession squabbling made architecture, and in particular the Victorian middle-class house, not a vehicle for reform, but a battlefield.

This is where the uneasiness sets in. It comes from what the book says about how our hermetic pro-

fession sees its past and present. Adams's keen eye reveals gross misconceptions about the role that architecture plays in social change and, perhaps more disturbingly, how architects may or may not participate in this process. From the start, the idea that architects and architecture play an active, predictable role in cultural evolution is abandoned. Rather than asking, for example, how the design of houses hindered or promoted the emancipation of women in the late Victorian period, Adams wants to know how women used ideas about the home in advancing a feminist agenda. She sees architecture not as a prescriptive force, but as a way to measure the process by which various groups pursued political and social projects. The evidence suggests that architects did not always make the grade.

Adams presents her argument with an engaging walk-through style in five independent essays, each developing a theme around Victorian bodies and space. The rise of Sanitary Science and its focus on the link between the built environment and the public's health is explored in a clever narrative reconstruction of London's 1884 International Health Exhibition. The second essay, "Doctors as Architects," documents the medical profession's foray into the domain of the master-builder, linking the origins of the Modern application of rational principles and scientific objectivity in the fields of health and architecture. The contradictory roles of women as both victims and sources of disease in the home are juxtaposed in two separate chapters. These two essays weaken the feminist "separate sphere" argument while laying bare problems that will occupy feminist thought in the next century: the first demonstrates how the casting of women as regulators of family health brought both power and blame into the female-gendered home, and the second shows how the dangers associated with childbirth at home were central in the struggle between women and physicians for the control of reproduction—a struggle that gave way to the professional objectification of the female body.

Finally, Adams explores domestic architecture as an instrument of Victorian feminism, placing emphasis on the role of domestic ideology in the emancipation process.

Central to the book's success in elaborating this unique look at architecture is its approach to the documentary and physical record. By consciously favouring sources ignored in traditional architectural histories, Adams hopes to avoid the bias of the Architect Historian. Placing herself outside of the advocate role, she looks at buildings as pieces of a material culture rather than as objects of belief. The difference is critical: society makes buildings; the reverse is only rhetoric. People express their conception of the order of things through the material world, but this physical manifestation is anything but absolute. With this in mind, Adams scrutinizes the architectural canon: reading Ruskin and sketching Villa Savoye won't tell you much about how domestic science established itself as a legitimate field through a spatial surrogate. Or, for a non-architectural yet contemporary example, if you want to know how expensive cigars are used as symbols of Hollywood savvy among the minimum-wage members of the Microsoft generation, the memoirs of the city's premier tobacconist alone won't be of much use. What would be fruitful would be a study of *Entertainment Tonight's* archives and the kinds of magazines that put a material-girl sporting an *Hecho en Habana* on the cover. And you must also abandon the idea that the cigar itself enforces conservative behaviour; in certain situations the smoker, if she wishes, can be exceptionnally subversive. As a piece of material culture, a building is like a cigar: while you may find it useful or even enjoyable, it doesn't necessarily make you either.

This approach to architecture, whereby a building is considered an object open to multiple forms of appropriation rather than the locus of predictable modes of behaviour, requires that *Architecture in the Family Way* use the built environment as a means of exploring social change while constantly checking itself against the danger of cause-effect explanations. It is difficult to fall into clichés when drawing from sources as diverse as women's advice books, the minutes of sanitation movement meetings, speeches given by doctors at public fairs, furniture catalogues, advertisements, medical texts and illustrations, plumbing manuals and trade catalogues. Bypassing Rizzoli coffee-table books can allow surprisingly complex relationships between doctors, women and architecture to surface.

The main casualty of this project is the accepted conclusion that the Victorian middle-class house constituted a separate sphere, neutral in terms of social power because of its physical and functional remoteness from "the world of science, politics, and men." Domestic Sanitation Movement records disclose an almost obsessive concern with the physical environment, due mostly to misconceptions about the

effects of urbanization and the spread of disease. Model houses at the International Health Exhibition in 1884, for example, dwelled on fears stemming from pre-bacteriological explanations of disease transmission, and the proposed remedies located the blame for sickness in the physical realm by placing great emphasis on ventilation and drainage. So powerful was the rhetoric of "dangerous plumbing" that doctors, in their crusade for public health, were able to cast architects as villains. By applying "scientific principles" in the analysis of a house's health, the "building doctor" created the illusion of technical negligence on the part of the architect. With this in mind, a plumbing guide written by Harriette M. Plunkett in 1885 appears to be a call for woman to enlarge and strengthen their "separate sphere." Inspecting the connection of the house to the municipal sewer system and assuring the proper disposition of soilpipes and airpipes came to be a woman's responsibility. Thus the very public, scientific and dirty subject of disease control became central to the definition of the "woman's sphere," making the home a politically charged site that linked the professional status of (male) doctors and (male) architects with the simultaneous emancipation and vilification of women.

Again we feel uneasy. Why did we refuse to take seriously the importance of standing pipes?

While placing much emphasis on the part that technical aspects of construction played in the evolution of feminine roles in Victorian society, Adams is also very interested in the link between architectural form and cultural practices. As an example of a social struggle played out in the physical environment, she cites the prescribed isolation of mothers from the onset of labour until one month after delivery. This medical imperative involved significant alterations in the spatial functioning of the middle-class home. An architecture of confinement developed around the conversion of an ordinary bedroom into the birthing room, or "lying-in room." Doctors insisted that birth take place in the sunniest room in the house. The lying-in room was to be located above the ground floor at the back of the house, well removed from the sounds of traffic and "all bad smells." Because of the association of disease with childbirth, a woman moving from her lying-in room to a dressing room was never to pass through the main hallway of the house. Entry to the lying-in room was limited to the doctor and nurse, the husband being permitted access only after "the soiled clothes" are out of sight. In this development of an architectural ritual around childbirth, Adams sees the beginnings of the "obstetrical takeover" of reproduction and the perpetuation of the paradoxical situation of Victorian women.

Those expecting Adams to draw a theory of politically active architecture from her observations will be disappointed. While she is quick to demonstrate how architecture is a forum for the promotion of social practices, she seems sceptical that wilfully disjointed planning or the original use of building materials can have predictable cultural effects. The lying-in room, despite its role in medical history, "was usually completely invisible in the architectural drawings." When the book does consider prescriptive-style architecture, as is the case with the sections on doctor-designed healthy homes and purpose-built housing complexes for women, it doesn't apply the same rigourous inside-out method of analysis that so effectively illuminates the typical townhouse and its place in Victorian society. While we know we can cynically use architectural rhetoric to further our cause, we don't know if we can conceive of a genuine progressive architecture.

Also absent is a clear timeline tracing the evolution of the architectural form alongside the social content of the Victorian home. Can we see if these houses, as sites of the growth of feminine power, physically change in a significant architectural manner through these three decades? Are they really, as is hinted, in the family way? One might argue that these are the sorts of questions predicated on the idea that a given physical structure has a particular cultural analogue. And Adams might remind us that the way you talk about bodies or houses is sometimes more important than how they actually work.

The uneasiness returns. If architects are not at the vanguard of cultural production, who is? How will our conceptions of architecture's role in social progress appear alongside DOW Chemical Corporation's involvement in the prescription-loaded Next Home exhibit? What does floor wiring have to do with democracy, anyway?

We'll leave these questions for future researchers, along with the task of determining a method for isolating historical truth: while *Architecture in the Family Way* is refreshing in its subversion of the masculine-gendered canon, Adams's goal is not to free architectural history from a real or imagined elite. Far from being guilty of the vulgarization of our heritage, she focuses on middle- and upper-class phenom-

ena. The record shows that neither the feminist nor sanitation movement in the Victorian period was much concerned by the mechanisms of stratified social organisation. While broadening the scope of the usual cone of vision, *Architecture in the Family Way* does not pretend to liberate History from identifiable interests. On the contrary. Adams understands very well the implicit partiality of writing histories, and does not hide her own motives. Nor does she pretend to reveal for us a 20th century conspiracy to blot out the shame of Victorian architects. A conspiracy was never necessary. It is not difficult to get architects to romanticize or exaggerate the value that their craft, knowledge, and profession may have had in the past. Is it surprising that the perceptions of this overwhelmingly-male group about its power during a difficult time in its history might be debunked by a study that focuses not only on another profession, but on the original other?

Kent Fitzsimons, B.Arch McGill '96, is a former TFC *editor now working in Paris, France.*

Alberto Pérez-Gómez and Steven Parcell, ed. *Chora Volume Two: Intervals in the Philosophy of Architecture.* Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996.

David Theodore

Chora Volume Two: Intervals in the Philosophy of Architecture, is the second in series of essay collections published for the History and Theory of Architecture Graduate Program, McGill University. Volume One appeared in 1994; Volume Three is in the works. Contributors are recent graduates of the program, usually offering revised portions of thesis work, and friends of the program, fellow travelers and visiting critics. The essays cover diverse topics from classical antiquity to the present, from angels and golems to dioramas and museums, from problems of history (Philibert de l'Orme) and philosophy (Heidegger, of course) to those of architectural representation (Rachel Whiteread's *House* and surrealist Paris).

Chora is a Greek word usually translated as space, but used here in a rhetorical and ideational sense: Chora denotes "an empty gap that is not nothingness...[it is] the meaning of architecture." Such substantial claims for one word are similarly made for the entire project. "*Chora* is the site of darkness," writes Alberto Pérez-Gómez in the introduction to Volume One, "the space of *mimesis* that is our nature and must be preserved for the survival of humanity" (32). In Volume Two, the crisis that these works are supposed to help resolve is not that of all humanity, but more specifically that of architecture. The end of architecture is at hand, the centre cannot hold: "If its [architecture's] role as the stage for the perpetuation of human culture is not recognized and redefined, its demise would be inevitable"(ix). The agenda for both the History and Theory program and for *Chora* is thus apocalyptic and ambitious: in architectural work, "humanity recognizes its purpose." But this recognition is only possible if the proper kind of architectural work gets done. *Doing* that proper work is the purpose of the program and publication.

The title *Chora* signals a return to Plato, specifically to the *Timaeus*, and to all the mythological, transcendental, essentialist and idealist thinking of the Socratic dialogues. Plato is viewed through hip, contemporary, "Continental" philosophical lenses: the *Chora* agenda stems from "phenomenology and hermeneutic ontology." This philosophical basis is never argued for directly here; the content of the essays never confronts the hermeneutic ontology, so that non-believers will probably not be convinced of the importance of that philosophical position. Such a basis is resolutely political and ideological, however much presented as theoretical and philosophical. It includes a "transcendental understanding of embodiment" (Galvin 85) which leaves little room for talk of classed or gendered bodies, or even bawdy bodies. It allows attitudes usually unacceptable in academia today, including, for example, Dagmar Motycka Weston's sympathetic gloss of the gross misogyny of surrealist Paris.

One of the avowed enemies of this philosophical bent is "technological reductions" (ix and *passim*). It also condones a constant harping against materialism as a "reduction" of human life, a reduction seen as a result of mathematical and technological instrumentality (e.g. Weston 151). But it is not at all clear

that a "technological spirit" has been the first cause in human history to reduce human beings to "material" although it may be currently prevalent; and what about "technology's ability to liberate human beings and thus to allow them to become more truly themselves" (Harries 103)? Lily Chi's study sets out to examine one particular manifestation of this problem in architecture, namely the rise of the concept of functionalism. She clarifies the history of terminology, but then perversely conflates functionalism with modernism, as, of course, an evil architectural theory. The argument thus is tendentious and not historical; it also ignores how *persuasive* functionalist explanations have become in the twentieth century, that is, the degree to which our notions of integrity and truth are tied to materialist and positivist epistemologies.

Beyond fostering this general philosophical orientation, the essays are supposed to demonstrate an opening up of architectural opportunities, a nurturing of innovative, interdisciplinary, experimental research. Experimentation makes its own demands, but for an academic journal some of the commonplaces of scholarly writing are not so much overcome as ignored. Two examples will have to suffice.

First of all, even though the essays include many images, these images are often used only as decorations rather than as documents or pieces of the argument. Sometimes this curious use of sources is a kind of uninnovative art-historical illustrative mode: in Gregory Caicco's essay "Socrates in the Agora," what does David's *Death of Socrates* to do with the argument? Other images, such as the image of the Golem, are gratuitous, Sunday-supplement decoration, akin to showing a photograph of Alexander Fleming in an article on penicillin. One more successful use of images occurs in Jean-Pierre Chupin on Philbert de l'Orme. He analyzes the images he presents, drawing on them as evidence, and incorporates them into his argument.

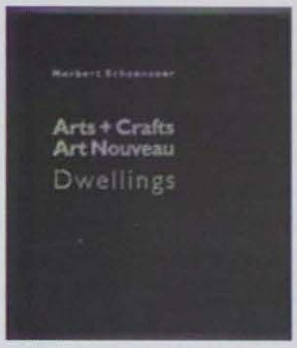
A second problem is that for scholarly writers, the authors show an unusual lack of interest in current research and a concomitant uncritical use of certain "authoritative" sources. These authorities are, unabashedly, stars of the postwar European intellectual scene—Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Ricoeur, Eliade—but there is little sense that this body of work needs to be challenged or has been challenged in the twenty or fifty years since it was published. Moreover, there is little sense that architectural projects actually modify or supplement or transform or correct this received heritage. The closed set of references is perhaps inevitable in a group of essays mostly developed within a single school program, but the repetition of not only specific touchstones—Flaubert, Surrealism—not to mention specific phrases and images—Breton 's fear of being cut in two by a window, "full fathom five" from *The Tempest*—turns them into shibboleths rather than authorities, and dims an initial sense of prodigious erudition to a feeling of in-jokes made within a hermetic circle.

These problems shape Karsten Harries clear, sympathetic and utterly unconvincing explication of Heidegger's celebrated essay "Building Dwelling Thinking." The image of a Black Forest farmhouse, shown out of context from its site and abstracted very conventionally into plan, section, elevation and detail, displays an ignorance of the problems of representation of such concern to other contributors. Harries makes a strange reduction of Heidegger's metaphysics of technology to functional, literal, considerations: he asks, "Is artificial light compatible with Heideggerian dwelling?" (103). He thus restates Heidegger's problem as the nineteenth-century problem of Zeitgeist: can we "delineate a dwelling genuinely of this age?"(103). This question is bewildering because clearly Heidegger's intention was to link the activities of building and dwelling with that of thinking, a link which Harries does not make explicit at all. But finally what is most strange is Harries' abject attitude toward Heidegger, namely, an unwavering belief that Heidegger must be *right*, that he must have something important to say, something of great importance to architecture. A truly "fresh" approach to Heidegger's famous essay would I think start from a consideration of how architecture contradicts and contravenes Heidegger's philosophical authority, drawing out the problems presented to Heidegger's formulation by the discipline of architecture.

The thrills of escaping from the authority of academic conventions are exemplified in the final essay, Tracey Winton's "When the Old Mirror is not yet Polished, What Would You Say of It? (Fragments Toward a Reconstruction of a weak Myth Through the Passages of the Museum)." According to the preface this is an article on the museum as a paradigmatic modern building. This thesis is not argued but rather demonstrated by a brilliant cutup of narrative fragments and citations. But the rigour of the method comes at a loss of critical rigour. A typical example

might be the assertion that "The picture postcard, widespread through the postal system since the Chicago Colombian Exhibition of 1893, is the forerunner of the mail-order museum" (275-6). No proof, historical or logical (or even a reference) is offered for this story of an intriguing set of historical events (the proliferation of the postcard; the emergence of the mail order museum), nor are the implications of such an historical sequence analyzed. Thus while Winton tries to use these allusions, citations and aphoristic histories to interrupt and open up the normal ways of thinking about museums (while simultaneously attaching herself to the tradition—the *locus classicus* of this method is *The Waste Land*) the essay actually reads as if structured by some preconceived normative model. That is, she does not follow the logic of her finds, but rather arranges them into a pattern whose meaning is almost entirely predictable by the time one encounters her essay at the end of the book. Plopped into an issue of the *JSAH* the essay would have considerable impact; here its thrust is thwarted by a dull litany of the same names and the same citations: Heidegger, Adorno, Merleau-Ponty, Baudelaire, Breton, Bruno. Sigh. Nevertheless there is a bravado and vigour, and rigour in its own way, to the writing that does present a challenge to the conventions of architectural writing and thinking.

Such conventions, however, do not disappear simply by making forays into other disciplines with other conventions. Philosophy couldn't care less about architecture; the success or failure of philosophical research today doesn't and perhaps never has hinged on architectural issues. But whatever the stakes for a philosophy of architecture, the counter position—what can architecture contribute to or critique in philosophy?—is scarcely acknowledged here. In these essays architecture depends on or explicates philosophy, but never confronts or changes it. Perhaps what is required is not only a "substantial rethinking of traditionally accepted values" (x), but also a much more critical attitude to the axioms of these non-traditional approaches, a testing of unconventional ideas and not just a description of the expansion of architectural conventions.



Norbert Schnoenauer.

Arts & Crafts and Art Nouveau Dwellings.

Montreal: McGill School of Architecture, 1996.

Conor Sampson

I suppose any analysis of a book's aesthetics would normally be tacked onto a conclusion, recommending it or condemning it as a nice or ugly object to hold in one's hand and spend time with. In this case, the author's voice and illustrations, combined with a well-considered layout, attempt to form an overall-work-of art, or *Gesamtkunstwerk*, as termed within the tradition of Austrian Art Nouveau. Beyond being a clever device for concretely illustrating some of the main premises of both titular movements, this approach unites what could have been a disparate collection of descriptive entries.

The cover, wrapped in cloth and embossed with a M.H. Baillie Scott floral print immediately sets the tone for the comfortable pace and inglenook feel of the book. Down to re-sketching A.H. Mackmurdo's 1883 cover for Wren's *City Churches*, Schoenauer has gone to great effort to unify the publication, giving a fittingly hand-crafted micro-press aesthetic to a book produced by independent designer David Morin and distributed by the McGill School of Architecture. While this seems quite appropriate considering the subject matter, it strikes an odd contrast with the plethora of "alternative" manifesto toting zines that crowd the stands at present. Why doesn't it have a splash of radioactive colour and a scratch and sniff embossed flower?

There is, however, something rather disquieting about Schoenauer rendering all his examples in freehand sketches. Beyond the nostalgic bookishness it exudes, it leaves the buildings timeless; timeless in that they are removed from their historical contexts. One has no idea if they were ever built, or, if they were built, what state they are in now. Schoenauer mentions that the Donald Forbes Angus house built in Westmount in 1926, was subdivided in 1962 as it was "deemed too large for the real estate market." This

seems tacked on as an afterthought, and leads one to wonder, whether beyond the practical viability of some of these efforts, the social intent was fulfilled; and whether Arts & Crafts and Art Nouveau ever stretched beyond simply a quaint aesthetic used by large houses in order to appear smaller.

The political concern manifest at the turn of the century that motivated these designers to produce everything from model cities down to cutlery in the name of improving the standards of living of the working man is pointed out on a number of occasions, and is in marked contrast to other descriptions of dwellings as "homely" or "charming." Perhaps the clash of terms is the product of a modern overtone, but it leads one to wonder if both were ever were reconciled; "homely" being anything but New England antique shops, and whether people actually lived in "charming" cottages before they became country retreats.

The focus of Art Nouveau on decoration and the use of luxuriant materials seems to preclude issues such as low cost housing, and leads one to suspect that both movements were actually at the genesis of politely practiced craft, and veering sharply away from the utility of a wicker work chair. It raises the issue of whether any well-intended rational analysis of a craft art form could ever avoid becoming a big "A" art form (witness the beautiful polycarbonate weaving coming out of Scandinavia these days) and thus becoming inaccessible to a majority of people. Though I criticize such misguided idealism, I find idealism lacking in undergraduate architecture programs at present, especially in applied design courses, and would welcome even misguided idealism for the relief it would bring to boring formalism.

Schoenauer's emphasis on the relevance of precedence in architectural design is also worth noting. While one could object that Arts and Crafts was simply the lifting of a peasant cottage archetype and application of it to the composition of palatial dwellings to create a sense of "homeliness"(a frequently occurring word in the text), he points out that in large part the motivation for adopting such an aesthetic was to identify national character in indigenous architectural tradition. It was concerned with the *impact* of an aesthetic and mimicked with a purpose. I suppose a formalist objection to the relevance of this approach to a national architecture might be, that in an American context, there is only need for novel devices, that all historical archetypes are borrowed from Europe. In an apt quote from Percy Nobbs, Schoenauer critiques Modernism, which was to follow Art Nouveau, for precisely this reason: "One must distinguish between modernistic absurdity and modern genius in design–the one denies the past, the other realizes the present as the step between the past and future."

The conclusion, however, does not provide any sort of epilogue or follow up on the impact of these movements on contemporary design and housing patterns. Schoenauer does provide a brief synopsis of the evolution of Modernism, but is less than verbose on how Modernism modified or complimented Arts & Crafts and Art Nouveau. His concluding sentence hints that the societal concerns that motivated Parker and Unwin to design Letchworth Garden City in 1904 are resurgent. He would have done well to perhaps include some of these new projects as the progeny of ideas that originated in the Arts & Crafts period. It would have been even valuable had Schoenauer written a slightly more opinionated volume that draws these concerns into the present, legitimizing their idealism in a contemporary context.

Conor Sampson, also B.Arch McGill '96, is working in Ireland.

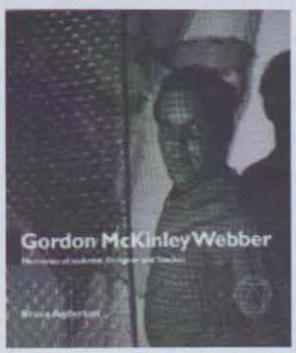
Women in Architecture Exhibits Committee. *Constructing Careers: Profiles of Five Early Women Architects in British Columbia.* Vancouver: Women in Architecture Exhibits Committee, 1996.
Andrea Merrett

Concisely and well-written, *Constructing Careers* tells the stories of five pioneering women in architecture in British Colombia from the nineteenth century to the present: Mother Joseph of the Sacred Heart, Marjorie Hill, Sylvia Grace Holland, Leonora Markovich, and Catherine Chard Wisnicki. The book is a record of an exhibition of the same name organized by the Women in Architecture Exhibit Committee, and displayed in Vancouver in the spring of 1995.

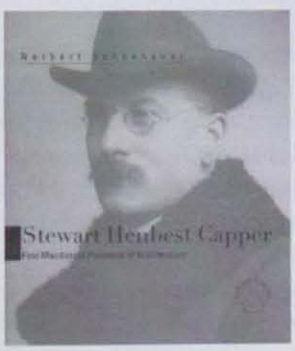
As a woman studying architecture, I feel the lack of female role models. Women still make up less than half of practising architects. The stories of these women are inspiring, even if little of their work is still standing. Each of these architects, in her own way, confronted the norms of a male-dominated field to pursue a successful career. In 1996 Catherine Chard Wisnicki was awarded a doctorate *honoris causis* from McGill University.

Due to the lack of documentation, much research had to be done in compiling both the exhibition and the catalogue. Not having seen the exhibition, I do not know how well it is represented by the book, but as a publication, the catalogue stands on its own. The authors have integrated the photographs, drawings and texts beautifully, making it both a pleasure to read and to flip through. Also included is a time line of women in the history of Canadian architecture.

Andrea Merrett is studying Architecture at McGill and loving every minute of it.



Bruce Anderson. *Gordon Mckinley Webber: Memories of an Artist, Designer and Teacher.* Montreal: McGill School of Achitecture, 1996.



Norbert Schoenauer. *Stewart Henbest Capper: First Macdonald Professor of Architecture.* Montreal: McGill School of Achitecture, 1996.

Conor Sampson
David Theodore

In 1996 the School of Architecture, McGill University, celebrated its Centennial Anniversary. Part of the celebrations involved special promotions of books written by or about the School's graduates and staff. In this issue of *The Fifth Column* we feature reviews of a half a dozen of the most recent publications.

The School also commissioned two short books, *Stewart Henbest Capper* and *Gordon McKinley Webber*. These two books were written about former McGill teachers by Norbert Schoenauer and Bruce Anderson respectively, two current McGill teachers, designed by McGill alumnus David Morin and published in-house. Both are sharp, clean, easy to look at, easy to read, and commemorative.

Capper (1859-1925) was the McGill Department of Architecture's first director (1896-1903), and the first to hold the Macdonald Chair of Architecture, while Webber, trained at the School of Design in Chicago, brought a significant Bauhaus attitude to the school's curriculum after his arrival in 1943. Although both booklets contain some important historical information about architectural education earlier in this century, in both the emphasis is on hagiographic profiles of Capper's and Wilson's professional careers. Neither teacher had a particularly high profile outside of McGill, however, so the story of those careers, as intended, is most interesting to those most interested in McGill.

That said, these books could have a special place in the school's history in addition to their promotional and commemorative value. For perhaps now enough has been written about the school (including books on Percy Nobbs and the recent issues of *ARQ* devoted to Peter Collins, John Bland and the School itself) to spark an interesting, detailed, critical evaluation of the School's history.

Sampson and Theodore are TFC *editors.*

Reviews

Events

Refuse: Exposition au Centre de design de l'UQAM.

Brigitte Doyon
Kim Vachon
Photos: Michelle Brunelle

Brigitte Doyon

Le gaspillage, à priori négatif, apparait comme un problème causé exclusivement par les autres. Nous utilisons le mot « on » pour désigner un coupable généralisé et indéfini qui devient inexistant. « On consomme trop, on emballe trop, on utilise trop d'énergie, on, on, on... » A l'exposition « Refuse » du Centre de design de l'Université du Québec à Montréal, la réussite fut de transformer ce « on » en « je » : l'acheteur, le vendeur, le producteur et principalement le designer. (Chacun à part égale responsable de son environnement.)

Que les déchets soient métamorphosés par des enfants, des pauvres, des artistes, des personnes économes, des designers ou des industriels, les résidus s'exposent. Sortis des bacs fermés et opaques munis de couvercles, il s'installent maintenant sur socle ou sous verre. Longtemps cachés, méprisés, rejetés, les ordures sont aujourd'hui à l'ordre du jour. La vérité exposée au grand jour par nos ordures nous plait. Toutes ces immondices dévoilent sans censure le mal de la société. Ce sont dans les fosses et dans les toilettes que les archéologues découvrent les plus grandes richesses. Au Centre de design, les designers de l'archéologie nous présentent la richesse de nos dépotoirs, la valeur de nos résidus.

Le résidu est un matériau sans valeur. Pour son détenteur, les valeurs immédiates d'utilisation ou d'échange semblent nulles. En réalité, la matière n'est plus désirée qu'en un lieu et un temps précis mais possède une valeur inhabituelle et imperceptible. Nous constatons à l'exposition « Refuse » que le designer considère ce manque de valeur comme étant passager et transitoire. Le statut négatif de l'objet pour le jetteur devient positif pour le designer. Sans valeur, les déchets sont condamnés à s'accumuler.

Le phénomène d'abondance est également lié à l'absence de valeur de nos ordures. Exactement comme les ressources naturelles furent longtemps négligées pour la même raison. Nous devons changer

notre perception des « vidanges » et reconsidérer la valeur des matières premières. L'exposition nous présente d'ailleurs plus de 200 produits ingénieux, fonctionnels et esthétiques, provenant de 17 pays différents et dont la composition sort principalement de la poubelle. La matière ainsi recyclée n'est plus considérée comme résidu, mais comme ressource. Espérons qu'un jour nous serons à court de ressources ordurières !

Au Centre de design de l'UQAM, des objets composés de cette nouvelle richesse résiduelle nous sont proposés. Ils se divisent en deux grandes catégories: les produits artisanaux et industriels.

Le recyclage artisanal, quantitativement insignifiant par rapport au recyclage industriel, n'en demeure pas moins d'une grande richesse créative et affective. Le produit est généralement conçu selon une technique d'assemblage traditionnelle tout en utilisant un matériau résiduel. Par exemple le bol « IMBEGE », créé par Zulu Craftspeople, est tressé de fils de téléphone au lieu de traditionnelle paille. Le résultat est une réussite tant au niveau esthétique que fonctionnel. Le nouvel objet, adopté par l'acheteur, connaîtra une nouvelle existence, non éphémère.

Le phénomène de la mode contamine malheureusement tout le marché des produits du recyclage. Le « look » du produit domine souvent son efficacité. Il y a antithèse lorsque l'on parle de mode et de recyclage. Il est néfaste pour l'environnement de produire en grande quantité des objets faits de résidus, si c'est pour en faire des résidus en grande quantité. Certains consommateurs paient volontier un « produit-affiche » qui crie « Moi, je recycle! » Tans pis si le cartable est trop lourd, si le pinceau ne se lave pas et si le paravent perd l'équilibre...

Quant à l'industrie, soit la plus grande consommatrice de matières premières, la plus grande productrice de produits susceptibles d'être rapidement jetés et la plus pollueuse, il est normal qu'elle soit la plus concernée. Nous pouvons nous réjouir de la qualité, de l'esthétique et de l'efficacité des produits industriels exposés. Par exemple, la chaise empilable « HORIO » produite par Interdecor R & D, possède l'esthétique, le confort et la solidité nécessaires au mobilier de bureau : il est capital que l'industrie poursuive la création de nouveaux produits, selon de nouvelles méthodes adaptées à nos nouvelles ressources.

Bref, l'exposition « Refuse » nous démontre que les résidus représentent une ressource riche en possiblités. Aux matériaux traditionnellement usilisés, nous ajoutons aujourd'hui les pneus, les canettes, les fils de téléphone, les pelures d'orange ou les vieux journaux qui offrent de nouvelles qualités optiques, tactiles, thermiques et olfactives. Ce qui a toujours été n'est plus, il y a maintenant place pour un nouvel objet doté de mémoire, parlant d'avenir.

Name: Texte « Reuse »

Kim Vachon

Refuse : refuse, rejette, renvoie; reuse : réutilise, recycle, refait ; deux attitudes mises en opposition qui donnent le ton de cette exposition portant sur le recyclage. Si refuser marque le rejet et exprime une finalité qui, par le passé fut infaillible ; réutiliser représente une solution, celle de pouvoir dévier cette destinée. Cette exposition, d'eco-design, nous fait voir l'ingéniosité avec laquelle les designers ont pu redonner vie à certains matériaux.

Refuse propose une panoplie d'objets des plus inusités aux plus conservateurs. Qu'ils soient fabriqués à partir de procédés artisanaux ou industriels, il en résulte deux types d'objets, deux attitudes. Par une transformation artisanale, l'objet devient extraverti ou évoque le temps passé; alors que suite à une production industrielle, le produit rendu introverti est dépouillé de son vécu.

La production artisanale, caractérisée par son contenu narratif, nous donne des indices de la vie antérieure et provoque en nous l'attendrissement devant l'objet reconnaissable. En voici un bon exemple : les modèles réduits d'avions, en provenance du Viet Nam, fabriqués à partir de canettes de boisson gazeuse et de bière. Ils nous informent de l'agilité manuelle et de la créativité de son concepteur. Certains de ces objets, parfois plus curieux, nous intriguent et nous poussent à vouloir en découvrir le processus de facrication, ce qui devient un jeu de construction mentale. A la limite, l'observateur peut même en venir à penser qu'un de ces objets lui a déjà appartenu. Entre autres, on reste bien surpris devant une tapisserie, sorte de manifeste du recyclage artisanal, tissée de sachets de thé réutilisés où l'artiste défie les limites du recyclage.

D'autres objets, provenant d'une production industrielle, comme le mobilier de bureau ou les meubles pour la maison, sont tout aussi innovateurs et intéressants que la production artisanale. Ces objets traditionnels, de par leur forme, dépendent des nouvelles technologies qui en permettent la réalisation

et laissent entrevoir ce que nos technologies futures nous réservent. Ces objets, moins bavards, donnent peu d'indices tant qu'à leur provenance ou encore sur les procédés utilisés pour leur transformation, ils demeurent plus introvertis que les produits artisanaux. Pour connaître leurs constituantes et leur méthode de fabrication, il faut posséder certaines connaissances dans le demaine ou bien lire la fiche technique.

Le recyclage n'est pas seulement une question de constituantes, mais émane d'une philosophie qui se résume en un petit nombre de principes généraux, soit les dix commandements de l'eco-design, affichés à l'entrée de l'exposition. Ces derniers touchent à la question de l'éthique : l'utilisation de matériaux toxiques, la consommation minimale d'énergie lors de la fabrication, le minimum d'emballage et la durabilité des produits, etc.

Une question doit effleurer l'esprit de plusieurs : le recyclage est-il une mode ou une nouvelle voie ? Il est évident que pour certains c'est une mode. Certains concepteurs se serviront des qualités esthétiques du recyclage dans le but d'attirer le consommateur. Les cartables, fait à partir de panneaux de circuits d'ordinateurs, en sont un exemple. Il est évident que le matériau de « look » très « high-teck » vise un type de consommateur : les jeunes qui choisiront le produit seulement pour son apparence. Le matériau choisi par son concepteur n'a pas les spécificités physiques qui font de lui un matériau destiné à ce produit. Il est lourd et sa surface n'est pas uniforme. Pour en revenir à la question de la mode, je crois que les fondements philosophiques du recyclage permettent de lui prédire une viabilité. Si notre besoin d'économiser continue à augmenter et que nos ressources naturelles s'épuisent, certains comprendront qu'il n'y a pas d'autre solution.

Le recyclage ancré dans nos vies, devrait davantage se joindre au concept du designer. Par exemple, Morin et Tardif (seuls designers québécois à l'exposition;), travaillent en ce sens, ils visent créer des objets durables en établissant des liens entre l'objet et l'usager. Ce type d'objet se recycle de lui-même, il dure un cycle de plus, il se distingue des objets « fast-food » issus de la roue de la consommation. Morin et Tardif nous proposent une horloge qui, par un choix d'images, évoque le temps linéaire; tandis que les aiguilles indiquent l'heure actuelle.

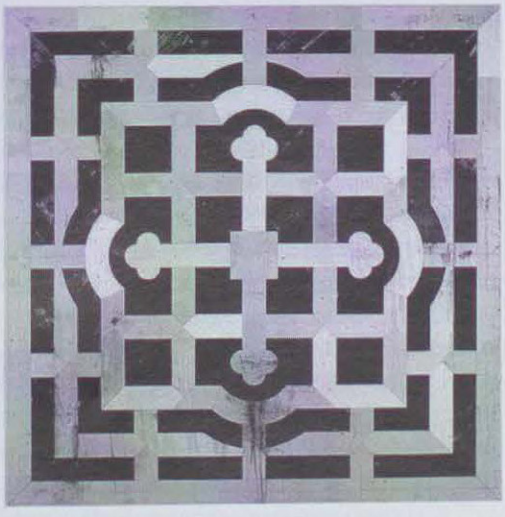
Il serait intéressant de voir apparaître l'utilisation du modulaire, comme concept écologique, car celui-ci permet l'économie d'espace et de matériaux et s'adapte aux situations de changement. Il se rapproche de l'utilisation d'une grille, principe de base d'un paravent à l'exposition. À partir d'une base qui consiste en une grille ou une trame, des matériaux sont ajoutées pour créer un objet qui se transforme selon les pièces qu'on y insère. Ce type d'objet s'adapte au contexte, à l'époque et aux besoins qui changent sans cesse, tout en gardant la même base.

Cette exposition a pu se réaliser avec l'ingéniosité de designers puisés à travers le monde. Ceux-ci, non sans audace, réussissent à transformer des déchets pour en faire des objets de choix. Ils viennent modifier notre perception des déchets en leur conférant le rôle de ressource. L'éco-design s'harmonise à la production industrielle ou artisanale. Quelque soit le type de produit, le recyclage n'est pas une mode car ses fondements s'enracinent dans une philosophie ou morale dont les 10 commandements sont affichés à l'entrée de l'exposition. Le message est clair, il vise chacun et nous concerne tous.

Brigitte Doyon et Kim Vachon sont diplomées du programme de design à l'Université du Québec à Montréal.

Uncovering Geometry: Ben Nicholson at the Laurentian Library
Centre Canadien d'Architecture/ Canadian Centre for Architecture

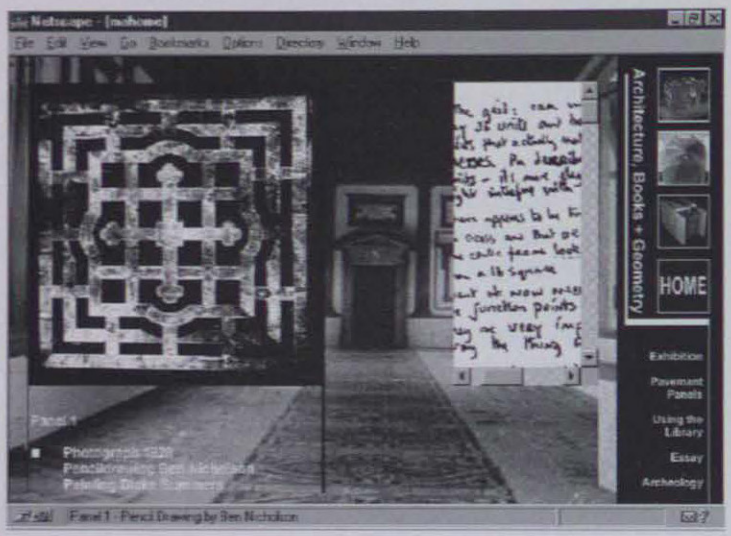
Sarah Roszler

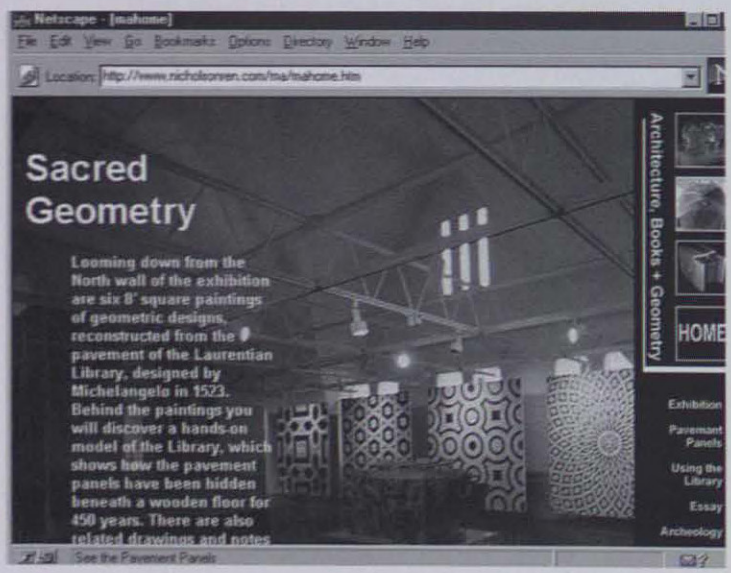


As two semesters worth of crit-talk draw to a close, a common question resonates in final reviews across the country—what are the fundamental truths of architecture? Cynicism, although often tempting, would be too quick a response to this possibly valid inquiry. Architect Ben Nicholson stumbled upon one of these potential "truths" in an old Florentine library some ten years ago and checked it out under the subject heading of "Geometry." After a decade of research, the CCA gave Nicholson a forum to display his findings in an exhibition entitled "Uncovering Geometry: Ben Nicholson at the Laurentian Library," which, after a four month stay in the museum's Octagon Gallery, closed in March. The exhibition truly delineated the possibility of an architectural fundamental: a thematic resource which can never be worn out or outdated. The exhibit's formal crux was the study of the geometry of the terra-cotta tiles laid on the floor of Michelangelo's Renaissance Laurentian Library. However, as the exhibit unfolded, my attention was channeled from the superficial representation of geometry on the library's fifteen tiles to the examination of the tiles in the context of geometry. This deflection was, fittingly, probably similar to one made by Nicholson during his investigation. His study started with the examination of the material evidence of the tiles and became a study of geometry as a consistent generator of architectural thought: a timeless, architectural truth.

Ben Nicholson was initially looking for homologies between the ceiling frescoes of the Sistine Chapel and the architecture of the Laurentian Library. A few years into his study, an obscure photograph of the library void of furniture turned up, showing fifteen intricate terra-cotta tiles, identical pairs spanning the length of the library in two strips. In Nicholson's words, the "classic triad of painting, geometry and architecture could now be studied as a whole," and he began to scrutinize the tiles assuming Michelangelo to be their author. Nicholson's statement was probably made early on in his investigation: the exhibit considered geometry not as a part of a triad, but, rather as the generative source in Renaissance painting, architecture and discourse.

Nicholson examined geometry as a broad basis of architectural design, meditating on many possibilities of how geometry has been fundamental to art, building and thought throughout the ages. It would be contradictory to the consideration of geom-





etry as a wide-ranging essential to narrow in on and give precedence to one potential meaning. With this in mind, the curatorial notes at the entrance of the exhibit irked me. They implied that the CCA was interested in determining some singular reason why geometry was a fundamental generator of Renaissance design. A theatrical slew of seductive questions about the possible meaning of the terra-cotta panels prefaced the exhibit—Who designed the tiles and why were they covered? Do the tiles contain the canons of Renaissance proportions, or could they be coded blueprints for the arrangement of the library? And how about geometry as symbolism which links science and religion? All were heady possibilities and, I'll admit, packed ample drama value to jump-start my interest in the exhibit. But, thankfully, those luscious inconclusions were left as just that—any individual theory fades in light of geometry's expansiveness. What was impelling was not simply Nicholson's contemporary study of Michelangelo's Renaissance study but the fact that geometry has fascinated architectural society and engendered art over a span of hundreds of years. What's more, it was, within each era, at the root of widely varied fields of study and has been deliberated and displayed with the most mixed of media.

The first room of the exhibit focused on the Renaissance—some of the principal new manifestations of geometry were on display. Pacioli's Divina Proportione equated proportion with the divine, while beside it, Cesare Cesariano's woodcut of the "Vitruvian Man" linked geometrical space with the human body. These classics of theological and philosophical study were flanked by volumes on Renaissance patterns and aesthetics. The walls sported plans and photographs of the Laurentian Library. Contrary to the intimation that the CCA would try to synthesize these geometric occurrences, the room was left theory-free—no guesses were made, in the end, as to why geometry was so pervasive in so many different domains. The archival information alone painted a succinct and thorough picture of geometry in the Renaissance—its presence appearing everywhere from the walls of a library to the pages of a manuscript.

In the main room of the exhibit, Ben Nicholson proved that the geometry is as alluring a subject of study today as it was in the Renaissance. Research on the topic is perpetuated by new investigative techniques from sixteenth century woodcut graphics to twentieth century computer graphics.

First, Nicholson showed his own study of the individual tiles. In the middle of the room was a large, ceremonial-looking display case in which were exhibited his minutely annotated drawings of each tile. By finding ways of replicating their geometry himself, he believed he could simulate Michelangelo's creative process. Nicholson pointed out religious symbolism in the designs which could have been significant to the Renaissance mind. He detected breaches in the patterns' geometry where aesthetic had indubitably stepped in. Calling these points of human interventions "hell-tempered fudges," he raised questions about the feasibility of a human control of geometry: is geometry self-perpetuating and simply documented by humans or can a human attempt to manipulate or determine it^ Finally, Nicholson reproduced digital models of the tiles and examined mathematical conundrums in the tile designs. All these themes seemed as enticing as the ones made in the curatorial notes. Likewise, I was grateful that no one theme presided. In this way, the investigation was kept open-ended.

On the issue of diversity, the cerebral side of Nicholson's investigation was balanced by artist Blake Summers' spiritual implementation in the project. The artist was called on to generate large-scale interpretations of the tiles which he executed in painting and collage. Summers' role was key in amplifying the intuitive and spiritual aspects of the inquest. At a distance, the paintings were stark black on canvas, looming large and glossy. Close up, the varnish trapped scraps of red paper under a murky surface. The paintings were extremely successful in eliciting the "visceral reaction" that Nicholson and Summers intended.

Leave it to a computer to provide a brilliant 90s finale to the mixed-media exhibit. After the experience of Summers' neo-relic paintings and Nicholson's hand-drawn replicas of the octagon gallery, I found myself face to face with a monitor set at Ben Nicholson's web site on which I could scroll through most of what I had just seen. The on-screen review linked up to a variety of interesting sites from Ben Nicholson's other projects to Fibonacci and fractals. This burst of digital energy proved the final touch, leaving me itching to make my own geometric inquisition. The knowledge can be accessed at http://www.nicholsonren.com. and used as fodder for future projects and essays.

Before coming across the tiles, Nicholson's work revolved around Michelangelo's paintings and architecture. With the discovery of the tiles of the Laurentian Library, Nicholson was able to go a step beyond simply studying Michelangelo; viewing geometry as a mutual focal point and through the similarity of their methods, Nicholson became a partner to Michelangelo. If Michelangelo was the designer of the tiles, his role was in three parts. Working with geometry itself, he accepted concepts handed down from antiquity. Linking them together, he implemented his own creativity. Opening up the library to the public made his work leading to the conception of the tiles accessible. Ben Nicholson performed in steps congruent to Michelangelo's: he took material, put it together and handed society a product. Nicholson began with the geometry of the library as his raw material. He used a variety of 90s tools to give it his own personal rearrangemant. Finally, Nicholson made his work publicly accessible in normal contemporary fashion—in a museum.

To return to that architecture school query about the "architectural truth," it should be promising when we find a theme which unites practitioners in the field across four centuries. What is even more promising is that the issue lends itself to study and display using media of eras half a millennium apart. The final point, the fact that the public is invited to relate to it today as before, is not just a bonus but a necessity. It's the step which voids the "architectural truth" of elitism.

Sarah Roszler, who is not in Tokyo this summer, is a student in the McGill School of Architecure.

Cinq remarques en ligne pour un univers en colonne (Notes sur Dans la colonne de verre: 5 villes d'Isabelle Lelarge)

Martin Carrier

Le nouvel aquarium humain.

Dans nos villes de plus en plus compressées, les fragments viennent à s'entremêler et à se briser davantage. Si la ville d'aujourd'hui est chaotique, celle de demain s'annonce d'un chaos si prégnant qu'elle finira par s'organiser en couches, en une sorte de supra-structure, de l'ordre du gigantesque (nous sommes dans l'ère de la densité urbaine et du *bigness*, rappelle Rem Koolhaas).

Bientôt, l'être humain ne vivra plus dans un aquarium étouffant tel celui de la modernité, mais deviendra l'aquarium même: pris constamment entre deux états (l'air et l'eau n'en étant que deux exemples), ne se nourrissant plus que de reflets, ondes et vagues lumineuses.

La superposition comme nouvelle structuration.

L'oeuvre *Dans la colonne de verre : 5 villes* de l'artiste montréalaise Isabelle Lelarge, devant cette réalité humaine, ouvrirait-elle la voie à une nouvelle forme de sculpture: celle du superposé et de l'hypertextuel plutôt que de l'assemblé, du taillé ou du sculpté? Si la réponse est oui comme nous tendons à le croire, alors l'oeuvre fait partie prenante de notre ère du palimpseste temporel et spatial et invite l'homme à flotter dans un nouvel espace : un espace trouble.

Des composantes hybrides.

Un ensemble de blocs aux formes définies et aux couleurs pures, pas plus que l'identité d'une personne, ne peut rester intact et fixe sous l'accélération du temps. En somme, ceux-ci ne peuvent plus alors que se frotter l'un l'autre tel des atomes en furie, subissant du coup une profonde métamorphose: d'une seule identité, ils en acquièrent plusieurs, rappelant que notre ère est aujoud'hui celle du *trans*national et du *trans*culturel bien plus que de l'*inter*national et de l'*inter*culturel. Dans un monde réseauté, tout bloc (et c'est aussi vrai pour tout fragment urbain ou tout humain) se reproduit par ailleurs indéfiniment, ne semblant survivre que par hybridation perpétuelle.

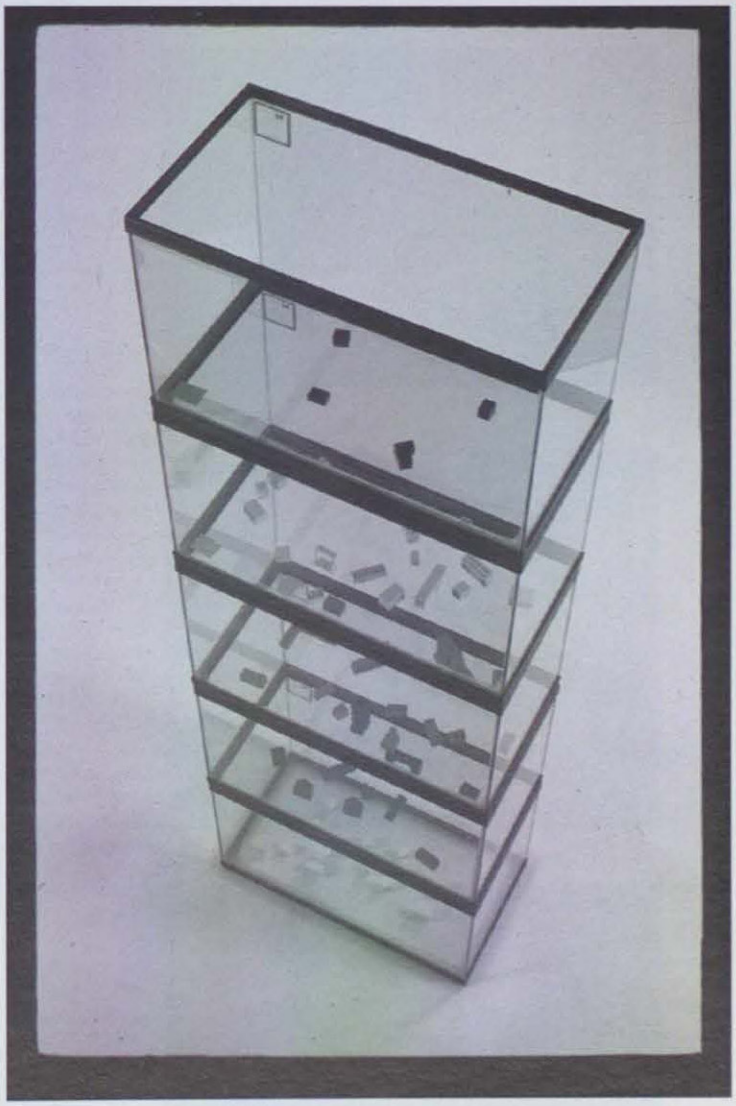
L'épaisseur de l'instant.

Dans la colonne de verre : 5 villes est-elle une constatation du nouveau *Zeitgeist* ou plutôt sa condamnation? Une chose est sûre, elle nous renseigne de façon sensible sur l'état de plus en plus *épais* des choses. Soulignons le mot épais car

contrairement à ce que l'on croit, le monde ne devient pas de plus en plus mince, visible et clair—et ce malgré l'instantanéité et la translucidité croissantes. Dans la méga-vitesse qui nous assaille se cache plutôt une épaisseur des plus lentes et des plus morbides. L'épaisseur de la mort? En tous les cas, l'épaisseur de l'aveuglement.

De la représentation à l'apparition.

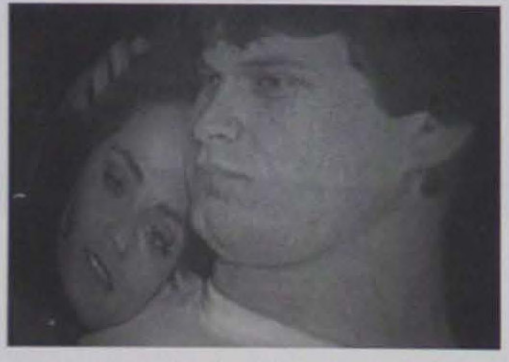
Si les années 1980 ont en grande partie été celles de la critique de la représentation (en peinture et en sculpture autant qu'en architecture), la présente décennie apparaît comme celle de la critique de cette critique, ou du moins, comme l'aveu de sa désuétude. L'oeuvre de Lelarge témoigne bien de ce passage en mettant l'accent sur *l'apparition* ou la *transparition* plutôt que sur la représentation : les villes imaginaires, vues de haut, semblent davantage liées à une compression temporelle et spatiale qu'à un jeu de miroir, fidèle ou non. La «sculpture» *Dans la colonne de verre : 5 villes*, ainsi, semble avoir troqué la représentativité et la tridimensionnalité pour un espace plat et lumineux qui rappelle le papier de soie, mais encore et surtout l'écran cathodique.



Historien et critique d'art et d'architecture, Martin Carrier contribue régulièrement à des revues telles que ETC Montréal *et* Parachute. *Il agit également à titre de commissaire d'exposition.*

Jeffrey McKay's Daytime Poets Series

David Theodore



1. In architecture, the problem of representation is typically broached as a problem of image-making. In design drawing, the urgent problem relates to the status of representations and of the relations between representations and what is represented: it is important to define the connection, symbolic or mathematic, between drawings and imagined buildings.

1.1. But the dangers of formal seduction and graphic distortion make it difficult to judge the accuracy (and thus the usefulness) of images. It is impossible to decide whether the image-making gestures refer ontologically to the appearance of a new *eidos* or onanistically to the gratification of the old *ego*.

1.11. Fortunately, this recalcitrant problem, a polarisation between poetry and fact endlessly schematized as a set of dialectical oppositions (theory/practice, school/work, drawing/building *ad nauseam*), can be easily displaced.

1.2. In these photos of daytime television programs, McKay, as a goal of artistic process (itself glossed as a sharp tool of social analysis), thematicizes the seductive surfaces and distortions afforded by that quintessentially modern technology the camera. The conceptual problem of representation is moved back within the purview of content, so that questions of equivalency become connections of form rather than forms of connections.

1.21. This complex operation can be nicely summarized ("parodied" and "mimicked") by a simple mathematical formula:

$$\frac{\sum SL : \sum TV}{\sum TV \quad \sum PR}$$

SL=social life; TV=electronic representations of social life; PR=photographic representations of TV

1.211. This operation parallels on the level of artistic symbolism Lacan's well-known algebraic formula of signfication S/s. However for Lacan's "I" (" / " as a divisive mirror: temporal, spatial *and* symbolic), we can substitute ourselves: "us" or "we."

1.3. Clearly, all transcendental worlds preceding SL are regressive fictions, irrelevant to the process of representation. Thus TV, once re-distorted into cultural life (a seduction that reinstates SL retroactively as the knowable fundamental term of artistic meaning), is able to reveal us to ourselves accurately.

Jeffery McKay is a documentary filmaker working in Winnipeg. He recently won a prestigious Peabody award for the NFB production Fat Chance.

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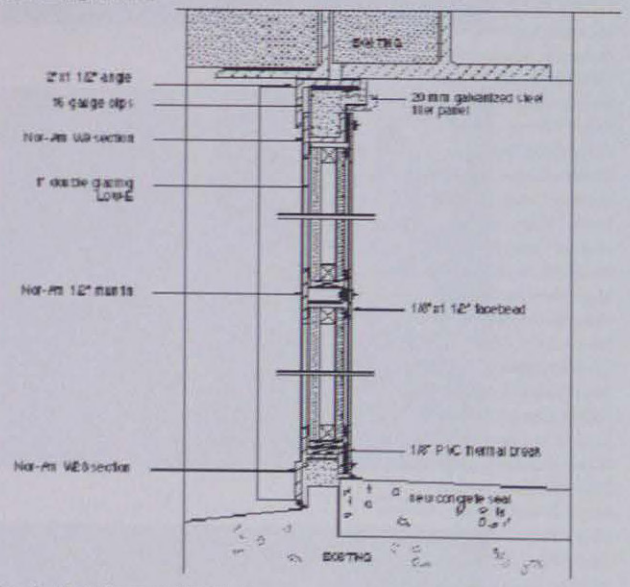
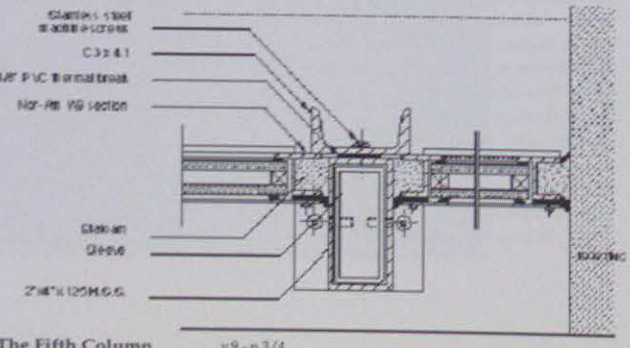


Horizontal section through structural element



Window Detail, 10 Duke St., Montreal

Atelier in situ

Annie Lebel
Geneviève L'Heureux
Stéphane Pratte

Collaborators:
Manon Asselin
Katsu Yamazaki
Pawel Karwowski
Natalie Dionne
Martin Laneuville
Pierre Soucy

The Project: An industrial building converted into offices for the multimedia production company Behaviour Entertainment, inc.
Material: Hot rolled steel
Finish: Hot dipped galvanization
Window Area: 11,550 sq. ft.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