

## Editorial

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Mid pleasures and palaces though we may  
roam,  
Be it ever so humble, there's no place like  
home.

J.H. Payne 1791-1852.

AH, THE PLACES and palaces we have seen! Peek at our back issues list, and marvel at *The Fifth Column*'s impressive travel itinerary. In twenty years of publication, T5C has taken its readers to The East, to The Fringe, to The "Old Country," to Utopia. It went On the Road. And then it went On the Road Again. To keep at the vanguard of architectural affairs, T5C has grazed distant horizons, bringing its discoveries to its readers. However, our fleetness of foot has come at a price. In the two decades that T5C has called Montreal its headquarters, never has there been an issue devoted to its hometown.

And so, in this long-delayed Montreal double issue, T5C finally comes home! For a little girl lost in an Emerald City, or a Homeric hero stuck on a god-throttled island, or a baseball great stuck on third, nothing could be sweeter than home. Why, then, for an architecture aficionado, is home so humdrum? Perhaps William Hazlitt summed up the restlessness that urges architects to go abroad when he remarked in *On Going A Journey* that "our romantic and itinerant character is not to be domesticated."

Jet-setting away from the drywalls of domestication, eager to escape the frontiers of familiarity at any chance, architects are amongst the keenest travelers I know. They are far-ranging hunters scour-

ing out vernacular cornice details, ancient heating systems and exotic wood joinery. They are reverent pilgrims striking out for Bilbao, Taliesin and La Tourette. After all, these trips make for splendid tales of architectural adventure, many of which T5C has happily committed to the page. But what about home? Well, home ain't nothin' to write home about, especially when you're there. Right? No. This issue of *The Fifth Column* aims to yank the ho-hum out of home. It also promotes the attitude that fresh inspection, even in the most familiar places, brings new insight.

And so, we hope this issue proves to all escapading architects that writing about home is not boring. To its contributors, this issue has no doubt proved more: that writing about home is not easy. It demands steadfast attention to things which are easily passed by, stepped on, or looked over. The author who writes about home must fight against fate, keeping her senses from dulling to familiar sights and sounds. This issue of *The Fifth Column* confounds the old English teacher's adage that it is easiest to write about the things which you know best.

Montreal architects know a challenge greater than writing about architecture at home—magnitudes more difficult has been actually *doing* architecture at home. But now, at the fortunate end of a bleak period during which few cornerstones were laid, there is still plenty to write about. And there always has been. Architects may have complained of starvation here, but *The Fifth Column* believes that Montreal is a feast for the architectural appetite. We present to you some pickings on the pages to follow.

There are articles that look back on Montreal's built history; one discusses the advent of townhouses in the city, another probes the erosion of Expo '67 infrastructure. We feature the work of innovative practices in the city including the work of an architect who built her house of straw, and the tools of a *paysagiste* who prefers to work with plastic. There are also herein the final projects of some recent Montreal architecture graduates, one of which recommends an urban monastery for the city, and another, an urban spa. A contribution from urban planning graduates explains the results of their study on the dearth of bike routes in the downtown area. And a submission from one of T5C's favorite Montreal ateliers describes an installation designed for a big bash at the Canadian Center for Architecture. And that, to conclude, should if nothing else remind Montreal architects how happening it is to be an architect in Montreal.