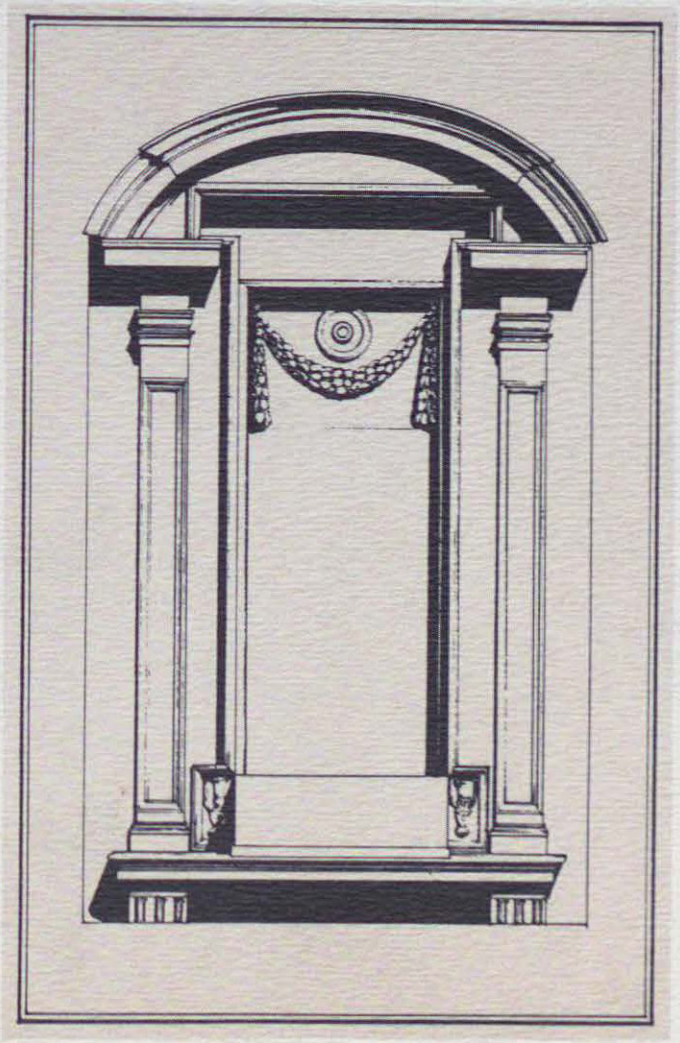
# THE FIFTH COLUMN

Volume 1, Number 4

SUMMER 1981



## SMALL ARCHITECTURE

# THE FIFTH COLUMN

Volume 1, Number 4
SUMMER 1981

Peter Collins
1920~1981

# THE FIFTH COLUMN

# CONTENTS



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**The Fifth Column,** 3480 University Street, Montreal, Quebec H3A 2A7 (514) 392-5407

# THE EDITORIAL

# Lords of the Ring

Architecture is a little known-about field, one that rarely becomes a matter of public discussion or awareness. In North America it is a tradition that large buildings or complexes elicit this awareness, through their unquestionable influence on our cities' pattern language. As this very precious language is upset by these projects (resulting in urban deterioration, whether one is aware of it or not), the public reactions of interest, awareness, and/or controversy are aroused.

A socially-minded businessman recently expressed to us (with regard to the disasters of North American urban design, particularly in Montreal) his opinion that **all** architects and **all** developers are guilty: guilty of insensitivity (an ignorance of time-proven basics of architecture and urbanism); of egotism (ignorance borne of confidence in being right); of placing money before the well-being of the public they are supposed to serve (simple human greed); and of incompetence (evident in the quality, or lack thereof, in their buildings).

When one looks around this city or Toronto, Calgary, Ottawa or Hull it becomes frighteningly apparent that these characterizations of guilt accurately form the motives and 'qualities' of our architecture today. On an urban scale, they become particularly poignant.

And looking at 'all' architects, those who commit these atrocities, one sees that there are not 1/100th as many firms guilty as there are in the telephone book. One only has to walk a downtown Montreal street (try de Maisonneuve, Stanley or Sherbrooke) to read the names of the guilty parties and to ultimately arrive at the following conclusion - that our city is being led to its grave, in very large steps, by a closed ring of architectural firms.

HOW DID THIS CLOSED RING COME TO BE?

It should be stated right out that consciencious architects get about as far as honest politicians, and are as rare. Selling one's soul in a boardroom - wiping out blocks of a city en route to one's next meal is common, **respected** practice. North American Architecture is **not** the manifestation of social need or responsibility; rather, it is a **business**, and decisions made within this context carry the same implications of back-stabbing ('society-stabbing') and dirty-dealing as those made by profiteering private corporations.

There are, indeed, several architectural firms in Canada which operate very efficiently within this scheme. They consist of businessmen, unscrupulous if need be (almost always a necessity when dealing with other businessmen - their clients); and their partners and developers - those who rope in the big clients wishing to establish the new corporate image, and who tell us that we **need** another 150-boutique underground shopping concourse which we don't want. The developers are just as concerned about their next 3000 meals, and are accordingly just as unscrupulous.

Clients, quite naturally allowing themselves to be duped by the megalomanial "...this will make this city or your company exciting...." proposals of these developers and the 'proven' abilities of the partner

architects, permit this pitiful situation to perpetuate itself, 'ad infinitum'. The 'proof' of the architect lies in the fact that they managed to inflict a monstrosity upon the public in a previous collaboration with this developer, making lots of money for everyone concerned.

The Government (Canada, Quebec), as a second-rate corporation, also blissfully funds the outrageous but quick investment return projects; and using the 'sensible' strategy of following the star-struck private sector's lead, continues to edify the closed ring by hiring one of those very few firms (they seem to know of no others). If the governments' selection processes could be attributed to nepotism or some other form of dirty-dealing, it would at least be a excuse (albeit lamentable) for this foolishness. As it seems at present, Democracy, too, can only crumble under the weight of 'good business sense'. Remember Hull?

IS THERE ANYBODY OUT THERE?

With disaster after disaster being perpetuated on our cities - so much damage incurred by so few, characterized by an ignorance of urbanity and simply low quality buildings - one has to wonder why there have not been more vocal demonstrations of reaction from citizens, from students of architecture and finally from other architects. The reactions from the latter two groups have largely been reserved for restrained hearing in journals such as this, unfortunately out of earshot of both our Architectural 'Ring' and the public itself.

'Radicals', such as Leon Krier and Maurice Culot, who work out of London and Brussels, respectively, have teamed themselves with other concerned architects and citizens, in a pact which rejects the bacchanalian tendencies of capitalist expansion and forwards, instead, alternatives encouraging the reconstruction of the city. The citizens pay the Architects what they can - the business of architecture as defined by North Americans does not exist. Regrettably, we hear of few local counterparts of Messrs. Krier and Culot.

IF THERE IS ANYBODY OUT THERE, WHAT DO WE DO NOW?

If such counterparts exist (and we know that they do), their dissatisfaction must be made public, moving beyond the scope of literature (which only their immediate colleagues read), and into the streets, so to speak.

The architectural competition achieves this to a certain extent. Judged by an impartial (although not about the state of architecture) jury, an **open** competition, where all suggestions are offered equal status and hearing, would serve at once as a forum of architectural and urban thought, and as the presentation of a rare **opportunity** to express those alternatives to the catastrophes promulgated in our cities. The alternatives are heard in an environment in which the heart rules the mind, rather than the expedience of the investment return. As a result, the architecure offered by those Ringleaders will undoubtedly appear very bad.

The most valuable resource that those who oppose our cities' presently have is the media - radio, newspaper and television; their forum is one with a truly public nature.

Our anger with regard to the disintegration of our cities, until now reserved to our own internalized forums of debate, must be channeled into activities which take advantage of that resource.

The **protest** against the construction of each bad building (their numbers increase each month) with all of its sign-carrying implications is such an activity. The public exposure of the reasons and the firms behind our urban disasters is a crucial component in an effort to arrest this condition. Public exposure will lead to public disfavour of guilty firms and developers, and corporate clientele, ever-aware of displeasure among the masses, will be pressured into rejecting the monstrous schemes that are proposed in their boardrooms.

Finally, our credibility in acts of protest is contingent upon our presentation of alternatives - **public** presentations, generated by **open** competitions (a corporation with humanist concerns is required), or by Krier's or Culot's model: proposals by architects (or students) which 'reconstruct' the city for public groups and **with** these groups.

It is only with a substantial measure of media exposure that opponents of the current destruction of the city can ever be heard. At this time, we have the opportunity. Our neglect of that opportunity would render us as irresponsible as those who we oppose●

William Mark Pimlott

The standards set by Peter Collins as an educator and a scholar epitomized a dedication to integrity, honesty and rigour in the study of architecture. He excelled not only in the lecture hall, but also in the literary world (AIA Medal, 1977), and perhaps most importantly in his personal interest in the development of his students. Peter Collins published his first article in the RIBA Journal in June, 1953. In accordance with his wishes, it is reprinted below in his memory.

# THE DE WAILLY AFFAIR

by Peter Collins.

THE ACADEMY of Architecture's spirited resistance to Louis XV's arbitrary appointment of Charles de Wailly as a senior member of that body is a detail of the French struggle against royal privilege which has up till now received little attention. To what extent it was a personal act of the king, as opposed to that of Marigny, the minister responsible, it is impossible to say. The Marquis de Marigny was the brother of Madame de Pompadour and like all upstarts he liked to assert his authority; de Wailly was assistant architect for Versailles, but it seems unlikely that the king would for this reason show a great personal interest in his advancement.

On 25 May 1767 the Academy received a letter, written the previous day at Marly and signed by Marigny, which declared that the king wished to appoint de Wailly direct to first class membership of the Academy, and thus fill a vacancy which had existed since the new royal statutes had augmented the Academy in 1756. The Academy, in obedience to the royal instructions, duly installed de Wailly, but decided to protest. For this purpose, a letter was drawn up by a sub-committee, and approved by the Academy on 1 June.

This protest claimed that in accordance with the first statutes established in 1717, appointments to the first class had always been made by promotion from the second class, and that de Wailly was showing no little presumption in wishing to pass ahead of his colleagues by illegal means. Marigny's reply to the secretary of the Academy, dated from Versailles on 14 June 1767, was unequivocal and ominous: "I have received the representations which the Academy has thought fit to address to me regarding the King's nomination of M. de Wailly to fill the place left vacant, since its creation, in the first class. As the Academy began by properly respecting His Majesty's wishes, I shall not take these representations in bad part, but I am somewhat grieved to see that the Academy shows a faulty understanding of the situation. They should have perceived that the King is only using a right which belongs to him essentially, and which is quite distinct from those he has been good enough to grant to the Academy".

Upon reading this letter, the Academy appointed another larger sub-committee, who drafted another and longer letter which was approved on 30 June. This second letter restated the case, pleaded the danger of creating a precedent for ignoring the statutes, and dwelt on the mortification experienced by members of the second class at being thus passed over. It included the significant phrase: "Formal laws can only be abrogated by other laws equally formal". Marigny's reply was dated from Compiegne, 18 July 1767, and read as follows: "I have just given

*Peter Collins was a Professor at McGill University's School of Architecture.*

the King an account of the question raised by his Academy of Architecture, and I joined to my report the two letters of representations addressed to me. His Majesty orders me to inform his Academy that he is very displeased to see them complain against a favour he has thought fit to confer; none of his architects can ignore that he may, when he wishes and without regard to the forms he prescribed to his Academy for normal elections, place in the first class any person he may consider worthy of this distinction...I have shown this letter to His Majesty before sending it to the Academy".

The Academicians remained undaunted by Marigny's reply and, adding yet two more members to their special committee, charged these ten to draw up a placet for submission direct to the king. This placet, after recalling the honour of the king's attendance at a meeting of the Academy in 1719 (when he was nine years old), protests that the sole motives in objecting to de Wailly's election are the honour of the Academy, the maintenance of its regulations, and the desire to retain his royal protection. After repeating once more their rights as they understood them, and recounting the steps they had already taken in the matter, the placet terminates: "How great, Sire, will your Academy's affliction and distress be if it is no longer supported by the hope of soon seeing your anger cease. Deprived of its laws and of Your Majesty's protection, its existence would be more painful than its entire abolition". To this placet was appended a lengthy memorandum setting out once again the whole case in detail, and a deputation of four Academicians was appointed to take the documents to the court at Compiegne.

Having aroused the wrath and antagonism of Marigny, the deputation was in some doubt as to the best way to approach the king. It was finally decided to make use of the good offices of Louis Phelippeaux, comte de Saint-Florentin, who filled the office of Minister of the Household, and who - what was far more important - disliked Marigny. But delay followed delay, and by 7 September 1767, the last meeting of the Academic session, the placet had still not been presented.

Suddenly, in the middle of the vacation, Marigny acted. On 2 October 1767 he wrote from Versailles: "The King has seen with renewed displeasure the manner in which the Academy is conducting itself, and notably its lack of respect and submission to His Majesty's latest orders, notified in my letter of 18 July. Informed, moreover, of the abuses which have crept into the Academy, and wishing to remedy these by substituting a body better able to fulfill his requirements, both for the teaching and improvement of architecture, His Majesty orders that until further notice, when he shall have made known his intentions concerning the new establishment he envisages, he has revoked and annulled not only the brevets of all the Academy's members, expressly forbidding them to qualify themselves by the titles conferred on them by the said brevets, but also the right to assemble and act together under the said titles or relative to their present possession of them until now. His Majesty has at the same time suppressed all appointments and functions relative to the said Academy, as well as the fees and emoluments resulting from the same".

But Marigny's antagonism had overreached itself, and his own humiliation followed swiftly. It can be imagined with what delight each Academician must have received the following letter from his hand, dated at Fontainebleau on 13 October 1767: "Monsieur le comte de Saint-Florentin has done me the honour of informing me that since your position as member of the Academy of Architecture was authorised by a brevet emanating from him, as Secretary of State for the Royal Household, the revocation of your brevet, decided by the King on my report, can similarly only be effected by him. This being the case, the letter I wrote you on the second of this month must be regarded as not having been sent; His Majesty will let us know what he wishes to do in this matter through M. le comte de Saint-Florentin".

The end of this dramatic episode was contained in a letter from Saint-Florentin to Ange-Jacques Gabriel, the king's chief architect and President of the Academy. It was also dated 13 October 1767 and written from Fontainebleau: "I have informed the King of what has happened at the Academy relative to the reception of M. de Wailly, and of the letter you have lately received from M. le Marquis de Marigny. His Majesty's intention is that having nominated M. de Wailly to a place in the first class, into which he has been received by the Academy, he should continue to enjoy it, but His Majesty is quite agreeable that this example should in no way be taken as a precedent, or be prejudicial to the Academy statutes. His Majesty at the same time commands me to inform you that in terminating this matter concerning M. de Wailly, he desires that M. le Marquis de Marigny's last letter written on his behalf be regarded as not having been sent, and consequently members of the Academy shall still continue to hold their brevets. Nevertheless, His Majesty disapproves the Academy's conduct with reference to M. le Marquis de Marigny".

"It is requested that a copy of this letter be sent to all the members of the Academy".

For the next few months, the relationship between the Academy and the Marquis de Marigny was adorned by mutual exchanges of quite overwhelming politeness●

# THE SQUARE MILE ~ MONTREAL 1860-1914

by Julia Gersovitz.

*Julia Gersovitz is a Montreal architect and teaches at McGill University's School of Architecture*

*Examining our lost architectural heritage through the hill-side mansions of Montreal's Victorian aristocracy...*

MOST Montrealers know that Sherbrooke Street is the longest road in the City of Montreal, but few realize that it once enjoyed a deserved reputation as the 'Fifth Avenue' of Montreal, and that it was the major thoroughfare of an area known as **The Square Mile.**[1]

Its boundaries are generally defined in two ways. Literally, they are Pine and Cedar Avenues to the north, University Street to the east, Dorchester Boulevard to the south, and Guy Street and Cote des Neiges Boulevard to the west. Traditionally, however, they demarcate an area which is in reality a half-square mile, bounded not by Dorchester Boulevard, but by Sherbrooke Street.

The reason for this discrepancy is simple. Above Sherbrooke Street, climbing the slope of Mount Royal were the mansions, isolated one from another by acres of garden. The area had an immediate image of exclusiveness and exclusion, of wealth and power. The area between Sherbrooke Street and Dorchester Boulevard was, with a few exceptions, built up with upper middle-class rowhouses, and so had a distinctly different and less luxurious impact.

It is difficult to believe perhaps, in surveying the architectural miscellany that comprises the district today, with its shoddy high-rise apartment blocks dwarfing the remaining nineteenth century houses, that from 1860 to 1914 the Square Mile was the most prestigious residential district in the city, indeed, in the entire country. By 1900, seventy percent of the wealth of Canada was held by the families of the twenty-five thousand individuals who lived within its boundries.

*View of McGill campus, after 1908*

As may be expected from this statistic, the financiers and merchants who lived there lived graciously, in opulent surroundings. Their residences were built by the leading architects of their time, and designed in the latest styles, as only the very rich can ever afford to do. Thus, an analysis of the development of the Square Mile and its architecture, provides an oppurtunity to study the work of the best Montreal architects, and to analyze the architectural trends that were fashionable at the time. Before tracing the evolution of the Square Mile, it is important to understand something of the geographics and economics of Montreal just prior to 1860.

In 1849, the city was in the depths of an economic depression. The population had been decimated by cholera and the 'ship fever' plague. Stores and houses were empty. The streets seemed deserted and dismal.

By 1870, the picture had changec dramatically. The city was prosperous. "Triumphs of architectural skill..."were everywhere.[2] What was responsible for so radical an alteration? It was essentially due to technological advances that permitted the city to develop as a transportation nucleus and shipping center. These included harbour improvements, year-round rail links with the United States, and the opening of the Victoria Bridge.

The economic boom that Montreal witnessed between 1850 and 1870 was paralleled by a growth in the city limits. Prior to 1850, the population was still largely contained within an area defined by the old fortification walls - today known as Le Vieux Montreal. Within the triangle bounded by McGill Street to the west, Craig Street to the north and the river were located all the princpal administrative, commercial, financial and religious buildings as well as the homes of the ordinary citizens and the wealthy merchants.

Shortly before 1850, there was a decided residential shift out of the crowded and busy old city. The first development occurred along St. Antoine Street in the west and around Viger Square in the east. But speculators were quick to realize the potential of the area near and on the southern slopes of Mount Royal. Here was the possibility of spacious, salubrious quarters, with the added attraction of splendid views and beautiful landscapes.

In 1832, James McGregor described its rustic character: "...the mountain is about 800 feet above the level of the river; along its foot, and particularly up its sides, are thickly interspersed orchards, cornfields and villas; above which to the verv summit of the

*The Mount Stephen Club*

*'Piedmont', 1820*

mountain, trees grow in luxuriant variety...".[3] By 1860, the orchards were being cut down and the development that was to result in the Square Mile was beginning.

**Greystone Decades 1860-1890**

The first residences built in the Square Mile were randomly placed on their sites. They had little connection to the public roads, because indeed there were hardly any roads. When development began in the 1850's and early 1860's, it followed a set pattern. Building occured after the subdivision of an existing estate, and the homologation of a street (or streets) through it, so that each individual lot was afforded on a public thoroughfare. Throughout most of the history of the Square Mile, the north-south side streets were cul-de-sacs, running up the mountain from Sherbrooke Street. This provided a quiet enclave for the residents of the area. As Stephen Leacock wrote: "...Each street was thus blind with that blindness that spells peace. Nature aided man. The elms that grow so easily on Montreal Island, thus left in secluded growth, fashioned each street into a Gothic Cathedral...".[4]

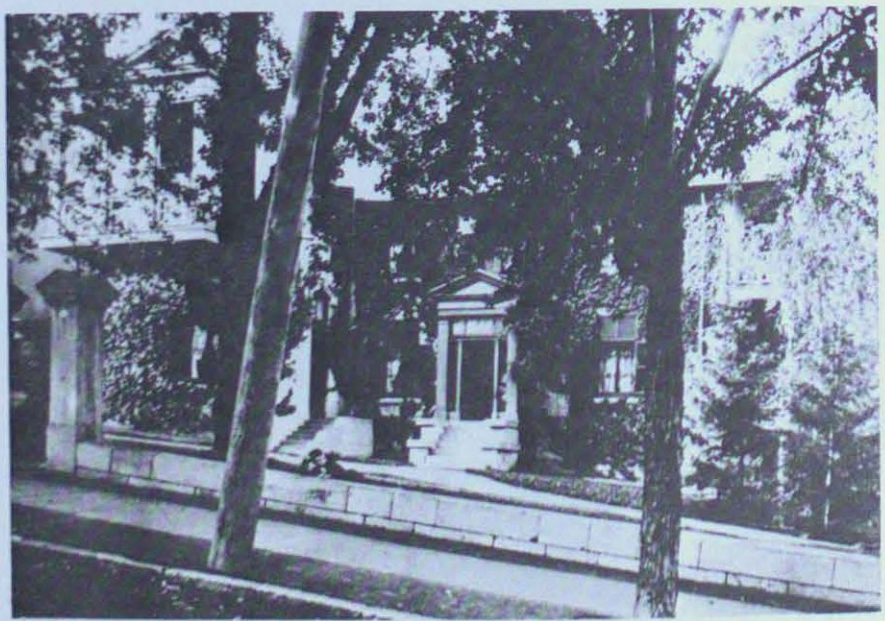
This sequence can be traced in the division and sale of the McTavish estate, the laying out of McTavish, Peel and Stanley Streets, and the construction of a number of large homes on the land. It was a time when prestigious residences were known by their names, and not their addresses. These included the 'Prince of Wales Terrace' (Browne and Footner, Architects, 1860); 'Braehead' (Andrew B.Taft, Architect, 1863); 'Thornhill' (W.T. Thomas, Architect, c.1862); 'Ravenscrag' (J.W. Hopkins, Architect, 1861-63); 'The Elms' (J.W. Hopkins, Architect, c.1862); 'Lononlet' (J.W. Hopkins, Architect, c.1865); and 'Dilcoosha' (J.J. Browne, Architect, c.1865).

The boom period of the late 1850's and 60's was followed by a building depression. The economic climate was poor, and the political conditions unstable. The major land assembly of the 1870's was undertaken not for development, but to ensure non-development. In 1872, expropriations began to create a public park on Mount Royal. Two years later Fredick Law Olmstead, the foremost landscape architect on the continent, was hired to undertake the design.

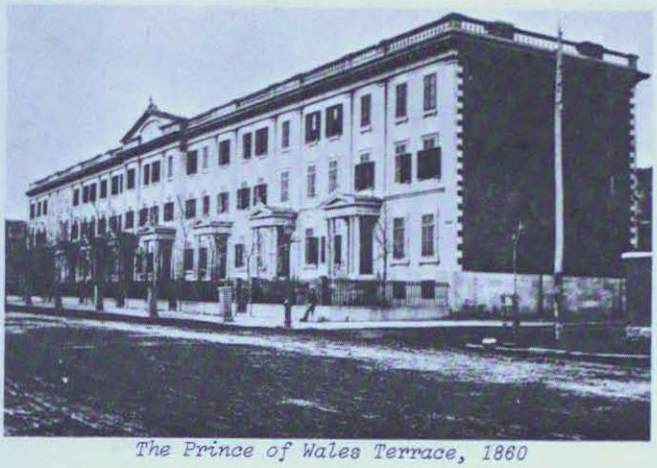
The opening of the park enhanced the value of the land in the Square Mile in a number of ways. Firstly, of course, by taking hundreds of acres of potential real estate off the market it increased the worth of the remaining land that could be developed. Secondly, it added a value to the area which now boasted a natural and protected park as its own playground and backdrop. The mountain became an extension of the Square Mile, where the wealthy could retreat from their increasing urban environment, to picnic, stroll and ride their carriages.

The decade of the 1880's, in contrast to the 70's was a period much like the 1860's, of increasing prosperity and burgeoning growth in the city's population. It culiminated in a building boom between 1887 and 1890. The political climate was stable; economic conditions were good. The C.P.R. was under construction. Fortunes were amassed, and great houses planned.

One of the most elaborate of these, and the only one largely intact today, was Lord Mount Stephen's house. It was built on Drummond Street, to the designs of William T. Thomas, and was said to cost, in 1884, the princely sum of $600,000.[5] This statistic alone sets the house apart. But more important to the architectural historian is the fact that it was one of the last significant houses to be built in the district of the traditional



*The William Workman Residence*



*The Prince of Wales Terrace, 1860*

*'Braehead', 1863*

Montreal greystone.

The rockface of Mount Royal, and the bedrock of the island is a hard grey limestone, designated by geologists as Trenton Limestone. Up to the end of the nineteenth century most of Montreal's architecture was built of this greystone, cut from local quarries. The native stone is tough, and not easy to work, but it has unique properties. The following excerpt from an article about the Cavenhill Block in the January 1870 issue of American Architect and Builders Monthly, gives some idea of what these are:

> ...The material used is the Montreal limestone; and the moulded work and carving are very successful, considering it is so very hard, and with such great difficulty worked. This stone possesses one great peculiarity over every other stone with which I am acquainted; that it becomes whiter and brighter with age; that this in a very light stone is a very great recommendation, for while dark stones are, most of them, improved with age and become mellower in tone, in white building marbles and stone almost as pure in colour when new, age only means dirt and stain....[6]

The domestic architecture of the period 1860-1890 was distinguished by several characteristics. It related to the architecture that preceeded it by its continuing use of the traditional limestone, and it differed from it in its stylistic eclecticism.

The early houses in the area, like 'Piedmont' (1820) or the Workman residence, were designed in the Georgian idiom that had been brought to Montreal by the English. It was still fashionable when the McGill Arts Building was erected in 1843. By the 1860's this style was being abandoned for a variety of increasingly popular revivals that were being developed in England and the United States.

Their use in Montreal was indicative of the growing number of trained architects practicing in the city by the 1860's. Until that time, it was common practice for contractors to prepare the designs of even the most elaborate residences.[7] McKays Directory of 1856-57 listed only nine architectural and civil engineering firms. By 1870 the list had swollen to nineteen.

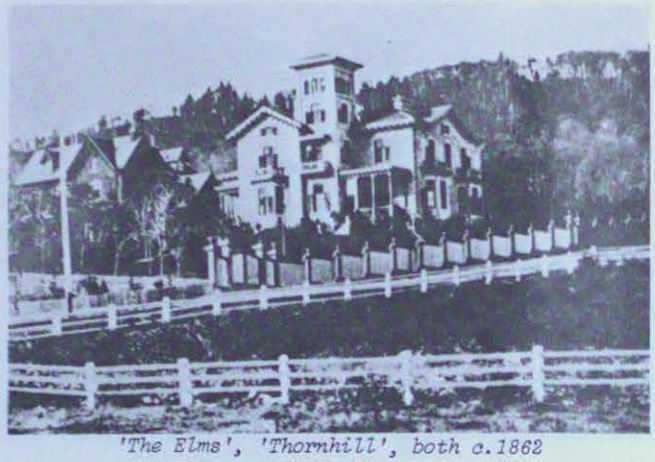
This increasing professionalism produced a more sophisticated and elaborate detailing of the limestone used as a principal building material. As time went by, the external walls were laid in regular courses of ashlar blocks, or hewn blocks furnished with cut-stone quoins, window surrounds and cornices. The carving also became more intricate and profuse. The stone work details on the Mount Stephen residence were perhaps the most complicated executed in the tough native stone.

*'Thornhill', c.1862*

The burgeoning eclecticism can most readily be seen in a chronological analysis of the houses built during the 1860's on the McTavish estate. The first, The Prince of Wales Terrace, was opened in 1860. It was sited on Sherbrooke Street, between McTavish and Peel Streets. The architects patterned it on the English terraces popularized by John Nash in London, and the Woods in Bath. It was thus one of the last buildings in the simple, yet elegant Georgian idiom.

The gothic 'Braehead', its neighbour 'The Elms', and the Italianate 'Thornhill', owed much to the ideas of Andrew Jackson Downing and his theories of the picturesque which demanded asymmetry and varied massings. 'Ravenscrag', sited further up the hill, was also in "...the Italian style of architecture..."[8] with a

*'Ravenscrag', 1861-63*



*'The Elms', 'Thornhill', both c.1862*

sprawling plan and varied elevations, pierced by towers. 'Lononlet', on the other hand, was tightly confined by a rectangular plan, and its roof topped by a mansard. 'Dilcoosha', at the corner of McTavish and Sherbrooke, also owed nothing to the theories of the picturesque. It was very much a box, with applied Egyptian-Revival detailing.

Of all of these residences, only 'Braehead' and 'Ravenscrag' remain today. With the exception of 'Mount-View', the Linton house on Simpson, the 1870 gothic cottages at the corner of Simpson and McGregor Avenues, The Mount Stephen Club, The McGill Faculty Club, and some scattered townhouses, very little stands today from the first thirty years development of the Square Mile. We must therefore turn to an analysis of the next twenty-five years, to understand the sources of the bulk of the architectural legacy.

**The Polychrome Decades 1890-1914**

By the end of the nineteenth century, Montreal was the banking center of Canada. The financiers, railway barons and the captains of trade and industry sought to build homes in the Square Mile commensurate to their newly found status. Some were rich and powerful enough to assemble large tracts of land for their mansions, even going as far as to demolish existing houses to enlarge their gardens.

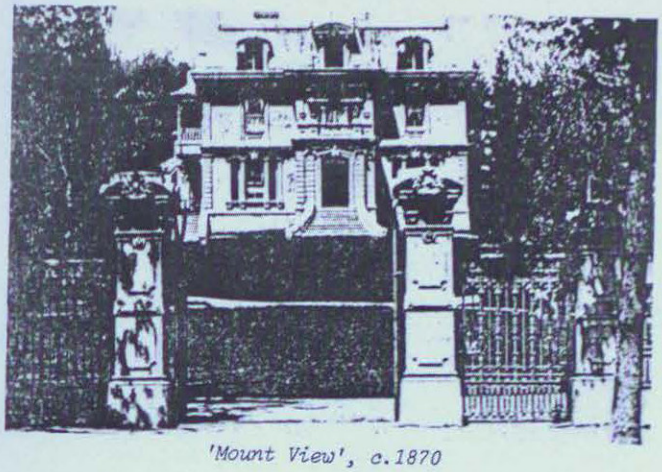
But for most the approach was more low-key. The available, unbuilt-upon land was scarcer, and more expensive. Even when the houses were large, they were restricted to much smaller lots than previously. By and large, this meant that they were more closely aligned to the street. The early houses were set back from their streets by gracious expanses of lawn and drive. As the lots became shallower, the homes moved foward, to accommodate stables and service yards at the back.

The general reduction in the scale of the buildings that began in the 1880's continued over the next thirty years. There was a finite amount of prime real estate, and a growing upper middle class that aspired to a residence on the slopes of Mount Royal. Not only were more and more rowhouses built up Peel Street, McTavish Street, and along the south side of Sherbrooke Street, but, for the first time, there were semi-detached residences built. Finally after 1900, a number of apartment houses for the affluent appeared in the Square Mile.

Although the houses that lined the streets of the Square Mile began to present a more uniform alignment to the passerby, there was a new architectural development that tended to work against this uniformity. The architects of the Square Mile were turning away from the traditional local greystone in favor of imported coloured stones. In this, they followed a trend begun in 1884 in the financial district of the old city with the Standard Life Assurance Building, and then the New York Life Insurance Building.

There are a number of reasons for the decline in the popularity of the native stone. Advanced methods of transportation by rail and steamship facilitated the use of imported stones. Foreign architects, chiefly from the United States, were coming in increasing numbers to execute prestigious commissions in Montreal. They tended to specify materials already familiar to them, that could be cheaply imported into the city. There were also stylistic considerations. The major buildings of the late 1880's and 90's had elaborately carved decorative elements. The Montreal limestone was ill-suited to intricate working, much more practical were the softer Indiana and Ohio limestones and sandstones. As well, it was an age when buildings

*'Dilcoosha', c.1865*



*'Mount View', c.1870*

*The Gothic Cottages, 1870*

glowed in colour. Polychromy was popular, both for the interior and the exterior. It is no wonder that in an age which revelled in russets, deep greens and rich browns, the pale soft grey of Montreal limestone was discarded in favor of the more interesting palette offered by other stones.

New styles were also being introduced into the Square Mile. From the United States came the Romanesque of H.H. Richardson, and the Francois I Chateau popularized by Richard Morris Hunt. From England came the detailing and massing of the Queen Anne Revival. By 1900, the chastly pale, severely cubic form of the Classical Revival appeared.

It is important to emphasize that the stylistic characteristics of each of these Revivals were never just brought into the Square Mile, and applied unaltered. The exigencies of the harsh Canadian winters meant that they had to be modified. As Percy Nobbs wrote in 1914: "...In recent domestic work of the better class...we may see the beginning of a new and really Canadian architecture with a rational relation to English traditions and Canadian conditions".[9]

By 1914 the Square Mile had already begun to experience the beginnings of the two trends - high-rise construction and demolition - that were ultimately to destroy it. The end of the First World War also meant the end of the era of the great mansions. The sons of Square Milers who came home moved to smaller houses in Westmount. Ten years after the end of the war, the stock market crashed, and with it the sheltered and carefree life that had been so carefully nurtured in the Square Mile since the 1860's.

Sherbrooke Street became increasingly commercial. Houses were split up into boutiques. Throughout the 1950's and 60's, speculators bought the remaining mansions, and cleared the sites for apartment houses. As to their architectural merit, one might best quote Percy Nobbs: "...After the war, we had to forget architecture and content ourselves with accommodation engineering...".[10] The towers, grossly out of scale with their surroundings, were designed by balance-sheet calculations and 30-year depreciation schedules rather than by the architects themselves.

Today, very little of the glory of the Square Mile is evident. Corporations like Alcan and Corby's Distillers are to be commended for their preservation efforts. One can only hope that McGill University, the largest property owner in the area, will continue to be encouraged and funded to protect what remains of our Victorian architectural heritage ●

*The McGill Faculty Club*

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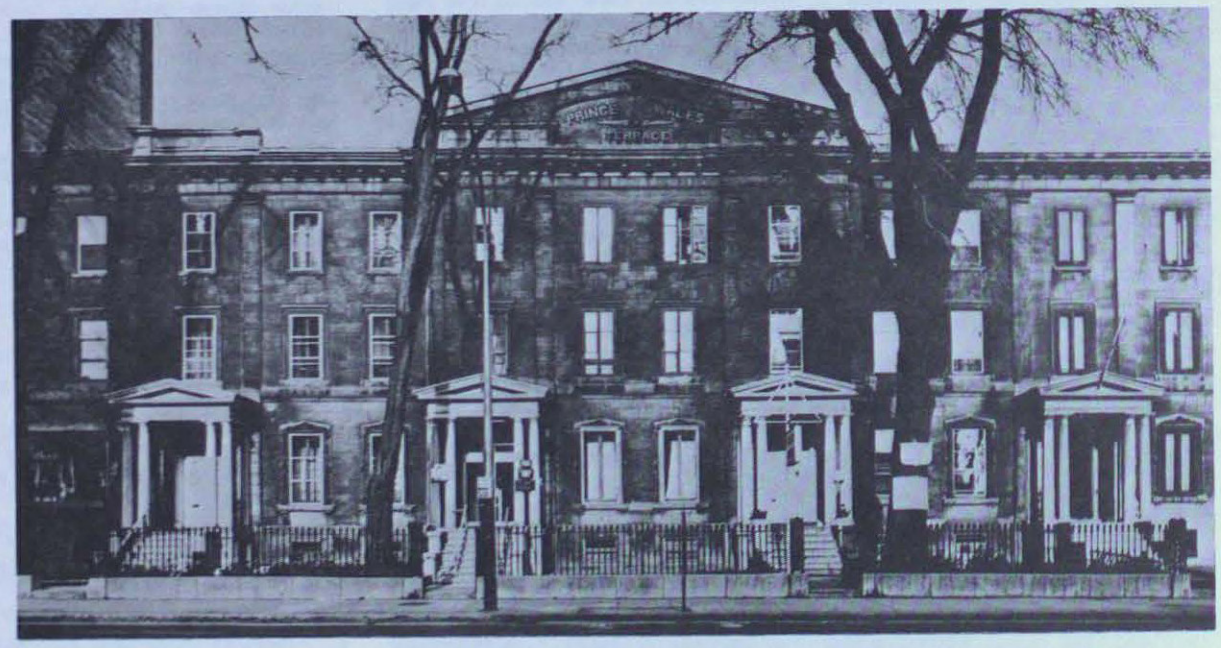
# The Prince of Wales Terrace

by Orest J. Humennyj.




*Remembering past elegance on Montreal's Sherbrooke Street...*

*The seemingly inherent romanticism portrayed in an old black and white photograph conjures up a powerful human sentiment. A discrete emotional longing to recapture that image, suspended in time, motivates us to explore and document the past.*

*"The heart has reasons of which reason has no knowledge."*

*Blaise Pascal, Pensées.*

NINETEENTH century Sherbrooke Street was lined with the splendid mansions of Montreal's elite and their densely ascending elms, and was trekked by spirited horses and cabbies searching for a well-heeled fare. It bristled with the wealth characteristic of entrepreneurial success. Its premier disposition and fragile texture were irretrievably lost, however, during the course of the twentieth century. The blessed curse of development swept away a legacy of charm, scale and beauty, in a tremendous onrush of banal corporate structures. This torrent of destruction, spanning two decades, claimed a landmark residential group virtually unique in all of North America: The Prince of Wales Terrace.

An individual house would have had to be very large and indeed grand in order to commandany attention on Victorian Sherbrooke Street. Combining several houses into a terrace, could however, due to their very number, bestow an otherwise unattainable weight and proportion onto the whole. The Prince of Wales Terrace was a rare synthesis of nine houses behind the grey dignity of a uniform Montreal limestone facade. It comprised a series of residences ranked amongst the most exclusive in the city.

The Terrace, which was situated on the north side of Sherbrooke Street, between McTavish and Peel, was built on land which was originally part of the estate of Simon McTavish, a founder of the North West Company. It was purchased in 1860 by Sir George Simpson, the Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company; a singularly diminuitive man with a Napoleonic complex. Construction was begun that same year and by late August, several of the houses were completed. Sir George offered them forthwith as a residence for the Royal household, during a visit by Albert Edward, the Prince of Wales. The future King Edward VII was in Montreal to officially inaugurate the Victoria Bridge. As accommodation for the Royal visitor had already been secured at the house of John Rose, the Commissioner of Public Works, Sir George placed the partially built terrace at the disposal of the Royal suite in attendance. He was remunerated for his generosity by the Prince of Wales, who granted permission for his name to adorn the terrace. Unfortunately, Sir George Simpson, a man who cherished associations with the nobility, did not live to see the Prince of Wales Terrace completed. He was striken with apoplexy and died several days after the Royal visit had ended.

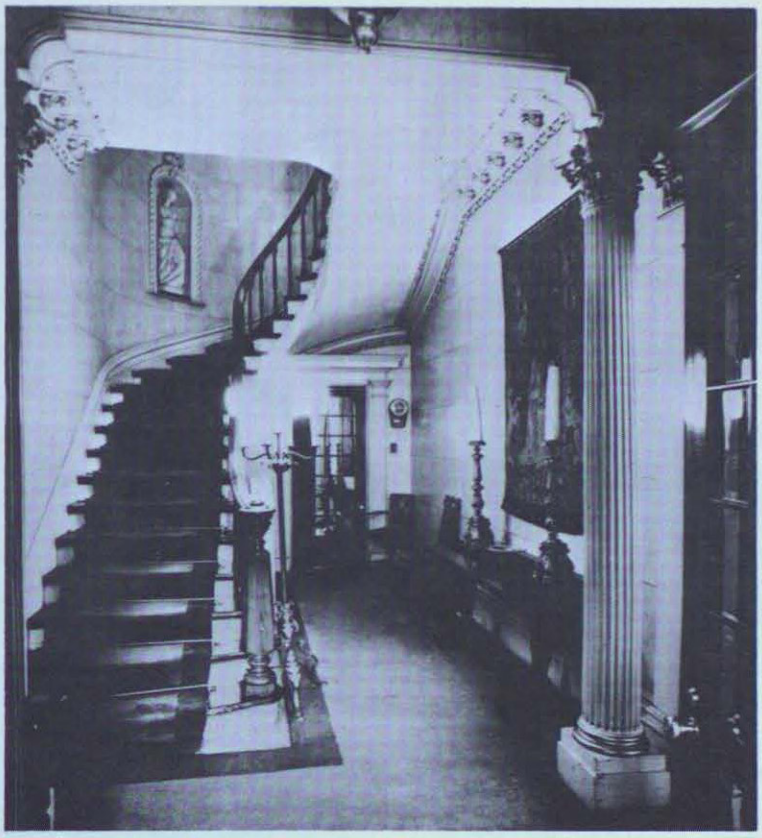
Sir William MacDonald, McGill University's greatest benefactor, took up residence at the Terrace around the year 1890 and lived there until his death in 1917. The Montreal tobacco magnate, absolutely secure in his wealth and the superiority of his position, led a life characterised by the utmost simplicity. Indeed, Sir William personified the attitudes of earlier generations. His lifestyle evoked that of Georgian London, where the affluent felt no compulsion to advertise themselves. It was considered right and natural to live in a refined, austerely decorated house.

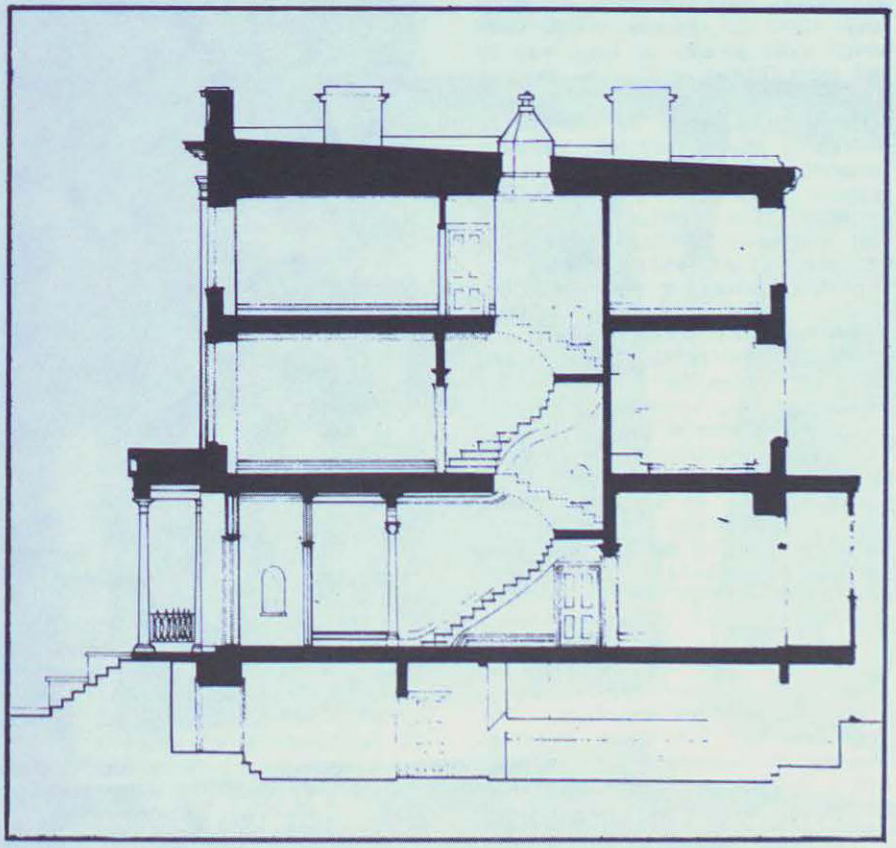
The striking similarity between the Prince of Wales Terrace and many of London's Georgian terraces was more than coincidental; the architecture of

the fashionable Bloomsbury squares doubtlessly generated their profound influences. Whereas subsequent facades tended to be handled in relief, composed of varying materials, light and dark colours and distinct degrees of hardness, the Terrace bore the traits of a graceful but **hard** classicism. It intimated a homogeneous block of stone pierced by windows; voids in the solid mass. The roof was viewed as a mere technical necessity. Architecturally it was as inconsequential as the chimneys, and both were disguised with a balustraded parapet.

The severe elegance of the limestone facade was tempered by the entrances. Their small wooden porticoes were designed as pedantically as a piece of furniture and then simply attached onto the building's taut surface. As was commonplace, they were disposed along the outer of each house's three bays. Although this arrangement permitted a superior utilization of interior space, its asymmetrical nature clearly defied the rules of Classical Architecture. This dilemma was resolved by Browne and Footner, the architects, with the brilliant, though deceptive, implied symmetry of the whole. The central unit, projected forward from the face of the building, crowned with a triangular pediment and bearing the inscription: The Prince of Wales Terrace, was its visual focus. Over the entire length of nine abutting houses, the eye could not ascertain that the projection was in fact off center. It encompassed one bay of a neighbouring unit, thus providing for its symmetry and an overall illusion of balanced proportions.

The virtues of the Prince of Wales Terrace were not to be exclusively sought in the expression of the elevation, for its interiors embodied a definite pride of place. A formidable entrance hall, lofty ceilings and tall windows imparted a restrained sense of opulence. Classical architectural details: elaborate cornices, plaster





Corinthian columns and aedicular passageways, were both literally and figuratively applied.

The basement floor of each unit was occupied by the kitchen, which contained an immense cast iron stove, and the servants' quarters. A concrete slab inlaid with coloured tiles constituted the extent of its embellishment. In direct contrast, the ground floor incorporated an impressive entrance hall, a top-lit staircase and a vast living room, the latter of which comprised no less than 960 square feet and penetrated the depth of the building. The staircase which ascended in the middle of each house, despite its frugal economy, exemplified the cultivation of an intrinsic beauty. Its graceful curves led sinuously to the first floor parlour and dining rooms, whose two storey separation from the kitchen elucidated the residents' utter dependance upon a service staff. Ensuring a certain degree of seclusion, their private rooms, as many as five intimate bedrooms per house, were located on the second floor.

In the face of mounting developmental pressure, the Prince of Wales Terrace quietly endured. Its continued residential desirability was underlined, in 1958, by the exemplary sale of one house for $140,000. It was to survive another decade, slowly deteriorating at the hands of its attritional owner, McGill University. The inevitable destruction of the Prince of Wales Terrace consituted not only a tragic architectural loss, but a further fragmentary deprivation of Montreal's imperilled historical and cultural heritage ●

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# Learning From The Point

by Pieter Sijpkes.

*Pieter Sijpkes is a professor at McGill University's School of Architecture.*

*Below the mansions and on the wrong side of the tracks, workers' housing endures and adapts to changing times...*

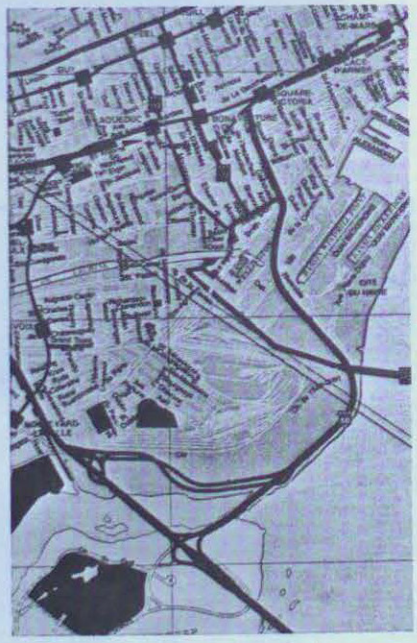

*Pointe-St-Charles, 1861*

NUMBER 369 rue Ste-Madeleine in Pointe-St-Charles, a building which I bought five years ago, has been my home now for over three years. I had mentioned to a friend who lives there that I was looking for a small building that needed a lot of renovating, to try out some self-help and reuse ideas. Within a week I was the owner of an abandoned 'depanneur': boarded up, vandalized, and very cheap. In fact, the demolition contract had already been let. I knew the area quite well; as a student I had spent a term and two summers there in a 60's function of 'architecte-animateur'. With my partner Richard Morrison and a cast of other characters, we started renovating, and in January 1978, I moved in, because my other place had burned down. This article, hopefully, will illuminate some of the aspects of the whole operation.

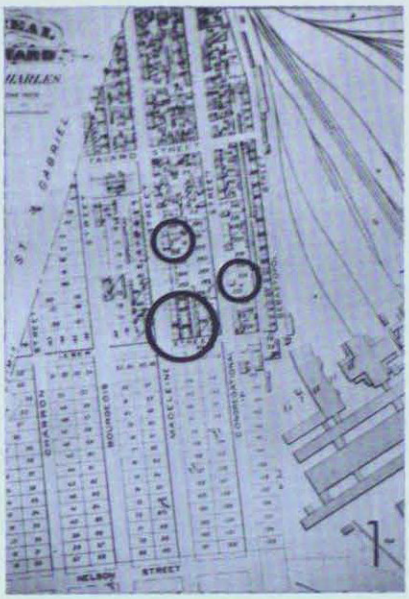
The current wave of 'gentrification' or 'white painting' of formerly scorned areas is a well established trend. Encouraged by government grants, disenchanted with high commuting costs, nice people are moving into un-nice areas and making them nice by dislocating the un-nice people who lived there before. It would take a Solomon to settle what is equitable in this delicate matter; people have moved before, the rich by choice, the poor for lack of it. But if these areas are suddenly so attractive to former suburbanites, then architects might well be advised to look at them in some detail, hopefully learning to accommodate the new city dwellers without having to uproot the people who have been holding the fort under adverse conditions for so long.

## The Area

Pointe-St-Charles is an area in Montreal rigidly defined by the Lachine Canal and the Bonaventure Expressway. It is neatly disected by busy elevated railway tracks from which most people, on their way to and from Ottawa or Toronto, catch a glimpse of the area. It was originally a farm established by Marguerite Bourgeois (the beautifully restored farmhouse is now hemmed in by railway tracks and ill planned housing projects). The Lachine Canal, which was originally constructed in 1825, became, after enlargement, an important artery in the mid-1850's. At the same time the original Victoria Bridge was constructed by the Grand Trunk Railroad (1859). Transport and the opportunities for industry, which accompanied it, became the impetus for a great boom in the construction of workers' housing. Jean-Claude Marsan, in his book **Montreal in Evolution**, gives an excellent account of the development of this type of housing, typical of the Montreal area. Pointe-St-Charles became the laboratory for 'high' density low cost options. Solid masonry, cavity masonry, balloon and Quebec plank frame were used side by side. So were detached and semi-detached cottages, rowhouses and flats. The great demand for these dwellings resulted in immediate overcrowding, which in 1898 led to the publication of the first systematic study into the plight of Canada's working class, the classic **City Below the Hill** by Herbert Brown Ames. St-Henri, Ste-Cunegonde and Pointe-St-Charles were for the first time identified as the 'wrong side of the tracks'. Interestingly, the specific area in which I live was excluded from the survey: "Beyond Centre Street lies that special district of Pointe-St-Charles which is almost an independant suburb by itself, being sustained by employment furnished in the offices and workshops of the Grand Trunk Railroad".



*Pointe-St-Charles, present*



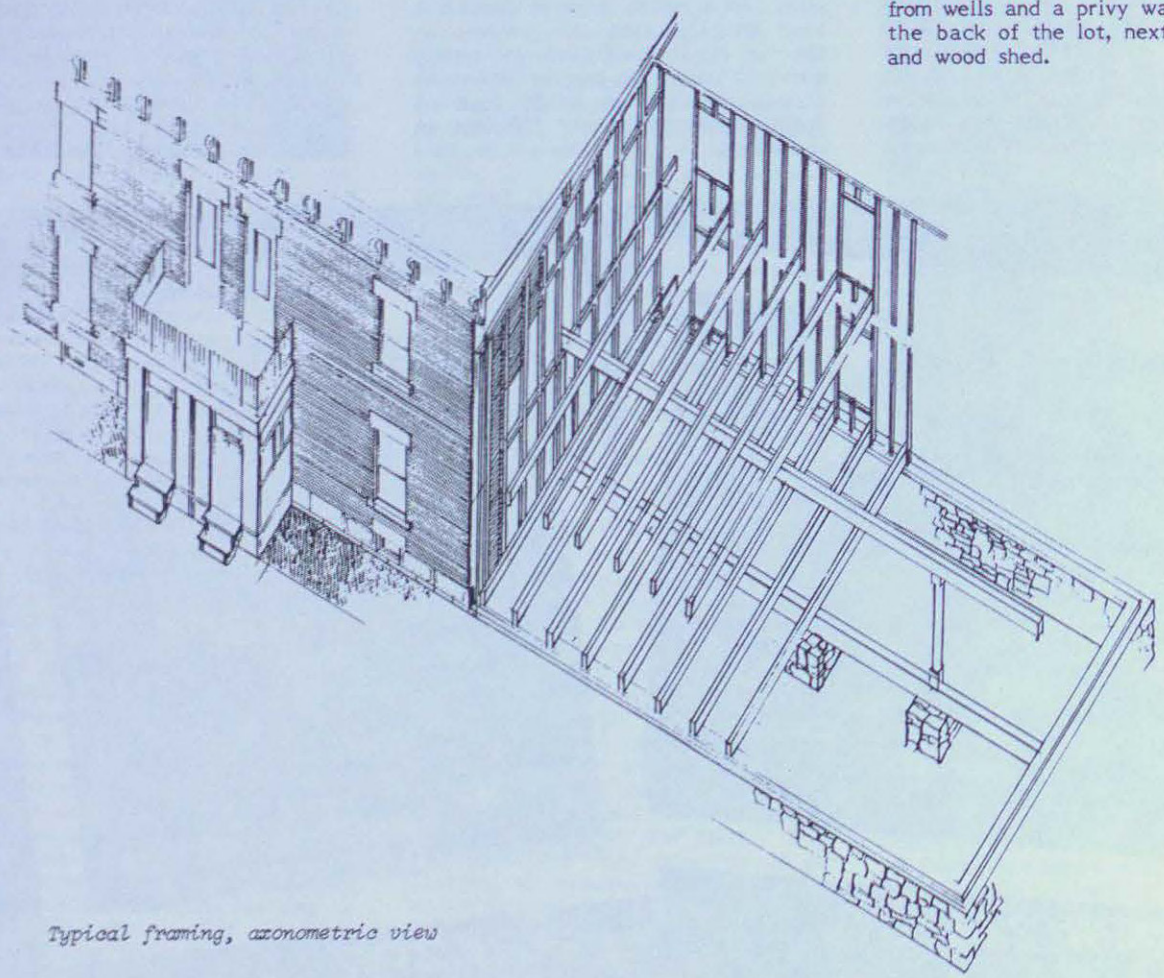
*Pointe-St-Charles, 1881*

**Planning**

Number 369 rue Ste-Madeleine (on part of lot 199, 200 and 201) was built in approximately 1875 as part of a block of eight two storey dwellings. The map shows how simple the layout of the area was: uniform lots (44 feet wide and 100 feet deep), back to back, fifteen in a row to form a block; each block separated by a sixty foot right of way. The absence of a planned alley indicates that the original idea may have been to build detached cottages such as the one on lot 234 or porte cochere type row housing as on lot 207. Most of the blocks in the area now, in fact, have 20 foot alleys, because the owners found it cheaper to build a continuous row of houses, without openings, supplemented by a 'private' service alley. As a result, some of the alleys stop abruptly, some are centered on the rear lot line and some are merely eccentric (as in the case of Madeleine Street, resulting in an 80 foot lot depth on one street and 100 feet on the other).

**Construction**

The eight units in question were constructed as simply and cheaply as possible: a perimeter rubble foundation, faced with cut stone only above grade; no cross foundation walls; stone piers support girders which in turn support 3"X10" joists, 38" on centre. The framing is genuine balloon construction; 2"X4" studs, 19" on centre, 20 feet long. The second floor joists are supported on a girder and a 1"X10" 'ribbon' let into the continuous studs. The windows, crawl space, vent openings and interior stair openings all fit neatly into this elegant system. The 3'-0" wide balconies, running the full back of the building on the ground and first floor are supported by 1"X10"s, nailed to the joists and protruding through the sheathing. Similarily the front entrance porches are cantilevered, side by side and clad in wood, providing a small balcony for the first floor. The windows have double hung sashes, wood modular lintels and sills, with removable storm windows. A shared brick chimney is the only original service provided. Water was obtained from wells and a privy was located on the back of the lot, next to the coal and wood shed.



*Typical framing, axonometric view*

The amazing fact about these developer-built houses is that they seem to have been designed for retrofitting. The missing cross foundation walls have gradually been put in place to counteract the excessive sagging of the lot line joists. The balloon frame is ideally suited for accommodating insulation; either poured in from outside, when new brick veneer is put up, or installed in batts from the inside when the plaster is replaced. The space between the ceiling and roof is perfect for blowing in insulation. The deep widely spaced floor joists provide ample room for installation of electrical and plumbing services. My own house has gone through at least three distinctive renovation addition processes in the last hundred years. The only tough problem is the fire separation, which, between buildings, is virtually nonexistant; only every other party wall has brick infill between the studs. Injecting the stud spaces with cement, might be a solution.

My objectives in renovating this slice of rowhousing were to see if it was feasible to reuse old building materials, and whether it was possible to gradually renovate, over a period of time. Both were aimed at reducing costs. The isometric lists some of the materials and their origins: bowling alleys for counters, old railway car floors turned upside down and sanded for new floors, conveyor belting for floor covering and obsolete neon signs for lighting, as well as a seemingly endless supply of doors and windows, collected from the heart of Westmount to the tip of the East end, which currently give the house an appropriate ad-hoc look.

Is it worth it? As with all cost comparisons, what does **cost** mean? Money? Satisfaction? Obsession? Depending on your level of willingness to put up with a chronic state of chaos, this gradual approach, may be satisfactory to some, unbearable to others. It certainly is not appreciated by the inspection department of the City of Montreal: to try occupying a house which is not 'finished', according to by-law 1900, seems to be of great concern to them. Five court cases, all amicably settled after pleading guilty, resulting in $20 fines, might be a bit much for the average renovator (my muttered defence these days is simply: "a tree would never get a building permit in this town...").

The gradual approach has the advantage that decisions don't have to be made in the abstract. By ripping out an eight foot plaster ceiling and living underneath the exposed sloped rafters, you have the advantages of comparison. By using a 'temporary' entrance, for a year, you get a 'feel' for the consequences of tight turns and openness versus privacy. Familiarizing yourself with the way the sun moves and the trees cast shadows, allows you to place a window where it optimizes these variables, for different times of the day or of the year. The house becomes a mock-up. Drawing a plan or a section is an abstraction. The mock-up approach is a luxury generally reserved for aircraft, naval and plant design, and curtain wall details.

The whole operation was financed with a series of overlapping 36 month personal loans. Mortgage companies don't like the gradual approach either. You pay off half of one loan and your credit rating becomes good enough for another. As a result, the total amount of interest you pay, even at elevated rates is relatively small.

My experiences have not been of much direct use to my neighbours; different lifestyles, different outlooks and different patterns. My agonies and ecstacies have met with curiosity, sympathy and occasional suspicion. "Not much good comes from uptown", it is felt. But I have benefited immeasurably. Looking at the entries to the 1979 Design Council Awards, I feel that what I found here is quite comparable to the cream of Canadian designs at similar densities:

The frontage provides enough space for on-street parking, one car per dwelling. There is an identifiable private entrance, cross ventilation throughout the house, two different exposures, a large private garden and separation of living and sleeping areas. The particular variant in which I live provides, on top of that, two extra bedrooms, more ground floor space, a balcony in the front, allowing for a greenhouse and a large balcony in the back. The house is energy-efficient by virtue of its shared party walls, due-south orientation and because of its modular, standardized design. The Dutch S.A.R. system has been alive and well here since 1900. (Just turn the street into a **woonerf** and we could compete with the Dutch.).

Could it be that taking the single family bungalow as the ideal model for housing families, even in high density situations, as witnessed in some of the Design Council submissions, is as counterproductive as North American attempts to shrink the Cadillac into an economy car? Could the approach that was taken here, frugality, first principles, simplicity and adaptability, lead to better results than trying to squeeze the 'American dream'? Could we all do some 'learning from Pointe-St-Charles'? ●

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## Some Hints

- How to estimate costs:
  Easy: Estimate as carefully as you can all expected expenses.... then double that amount if you're experienced, triple it if you're not...
- Fix the roof first, it's a drag to get wet..
- Every square inch of surface, inside, outside, front, back and on top needs work...
- Don't cut a hole in your roof where you have found a used skylight, unless you are willing to cook up some very tricky detailing
- Don't route plumbing fixtures, unless they are extra ordinary... it's not worth it.
- Airtightness is more important than high R-values.
- You don't see structural work such as new foundation-walls, jacked-up floor beams... to don't be discouraged when people, after six month of hard work ask you when you will start?
- A wood stove is a marvellous device: it keeps you warm and cleans out your yard.

## Sources:

- First look around you. The best source for materials is demolition sites. You save the contractor transport and storage. The old C.B.C. building on Dorchester was the source for a lot of materials in this house.
- Demolition contractors check Yellow pages. (They change location often).
  - Star Demolition
  - A.B.C. Demolition
  - Gayette Demolition
- Antique stores generally expensive, but sometimes cheaper than new, for better quality.

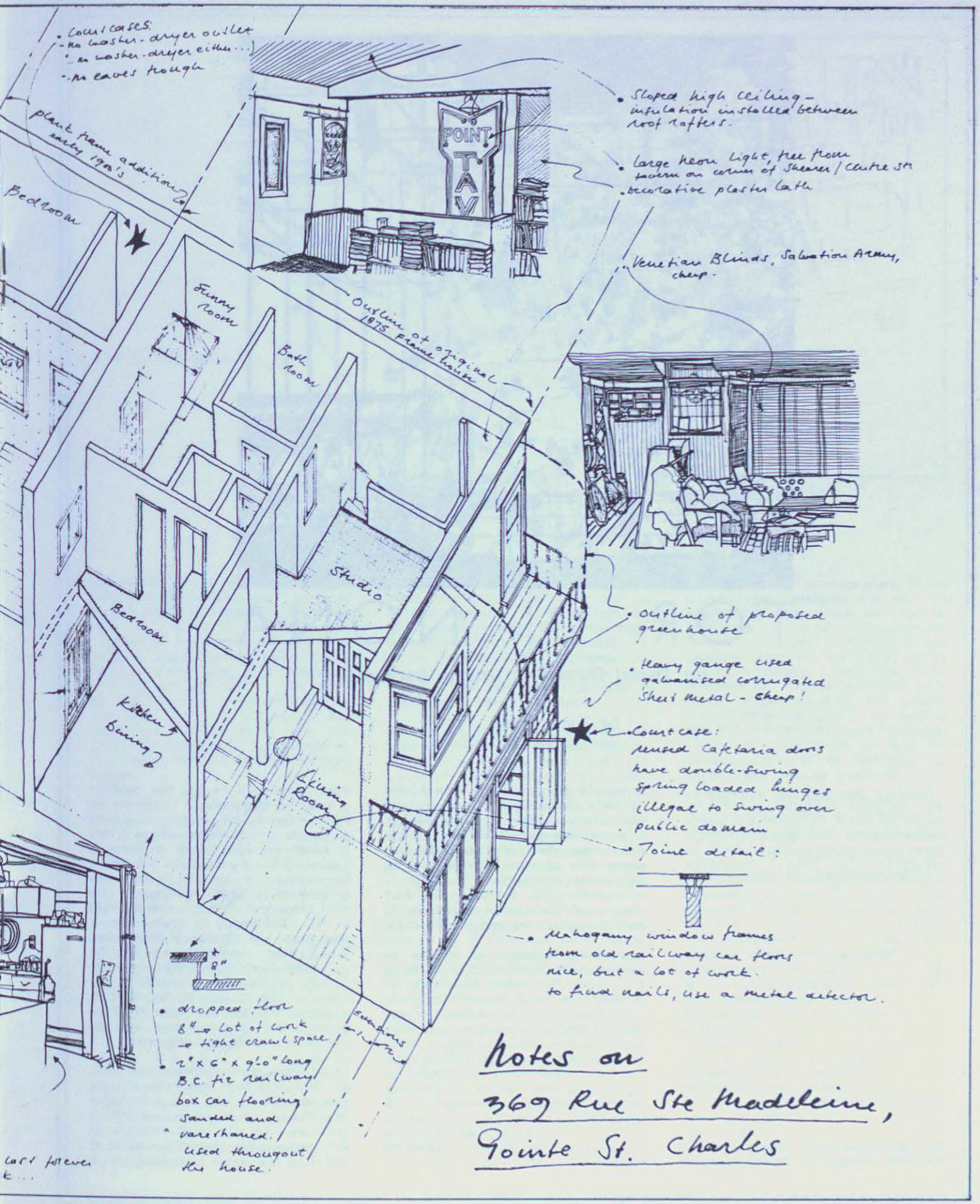
- Old cast iron light post - courtesy City of Outremont
- Carved stones from St. Matthew's Church..... nice, but sad.

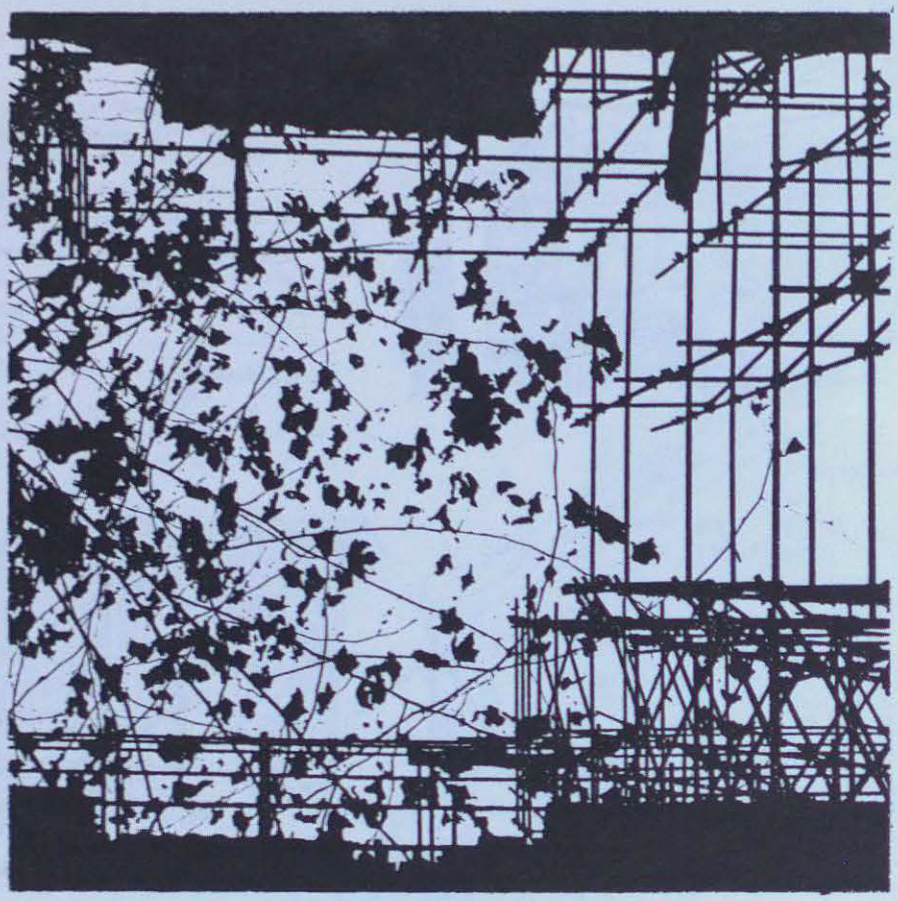
Back yard:
very important,
stuff coming out and
stuff coming in...

Strong, high fence,
very necessary...

- Very heavy-duty double-hung window from I.C.A.O. building
- Court case: no second exit stair (not needed after changing occupancy from department+flat into "cottage")
- Two nice doors from Westmount, remember: you find one set of doors free, you still have to make the double (storm) doors!
- Wall of former shed cut to form fence

- Mountain goat-horns turned capitol-shawbridge flea market
- 40's prefab metal kitchen, courtesy Tim Holt
- Bowling alley countertop suspended on pulleys (makes cleaning the floor easy)
- Polished marble garbage can enclosure (top not finished). formerly column cladding old C.B.C building.
- Conveyor belting used throughout the house for kitchen, w.c., bathrooms — cheap, will but is black


• court cases:
- no washer-dryer outlet
- no washer-dryer either...)
- no eaves trough
plant frame addition early 1970's
Bedroom
Sloped high ceiling - insulation installed between roof rafters.
Large neon light, free from tavern on corner of Shearer / Centre St
decorative plaster cornice
POINT
TAV
Venetian Blinds, Salvation Army, cheap.
Outline of original 1875 frame house
Family room
Bath room
Studio
Bedroom
Kitchen
Dining
Living Room
Outline of proposed greenhouse
Heavy gauge used galvanized corrugated sheet metal - cheap!
Court case:
reused cafeteria doors have double-swing spring loaded hinges
illegal to swing over public domain
Joint detail:
8"
dropped floor
8" → lot of work
→ tight crawl space
2" x 6" x 9'-0" long B.C. tie railway box car flooring sanded and varethaned.
used throughout the house.
Mahogany window frames from old railway car floors
nice, but a lot of work.
to find nails, use a metal detector.
Notes on
369 Rue Ste Madeleine,
Pointe St. Charles



# TOR DI NONA

par Daniel Durand et Jacques Lachapelle.

*Le long débat d'une petite intervention...*

*Daniel Durand et Jacques Lachapelle sont des étudiants à l'Ecole d'Architecture de l'Université de Montréal.*

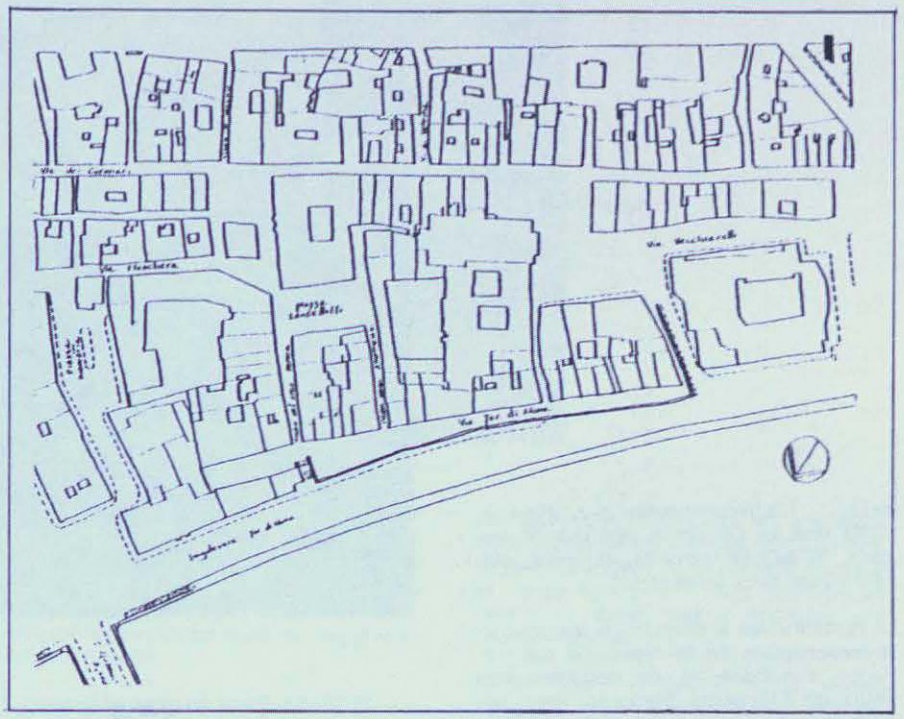
LE NOM de Tor di Nona, au cours de l'histoire, a été associé à la muraille d'Aurélien, à un poste de dépôt alimentaire, à une prison papale, à un théatre, à un quartier, et aujourd'hui à une restauration entreprise par les pouvoirs publics, en vue de répondre à certains de leurs idéaux. L'exploitation idéologique du patrimoine architectural est un élément important de l'étude de ce cas.

Le développement scientifique et l'intérêt croissant de l'archéologie, et la portée des oeuvres de John Ruskin et de Viollet-Le-Duc ont ouvert une nouvelle sensibilité aux moyens de réanimer les anciens bâtiments. Le débat qui s'ensuivit, s'est maintenu entre deux positions extrêmes, si on exclue la démolition, à savoir la restauration, i.e. la remise en état sans modifications majeures et la restructuration sous toutes ses formes.

Les relations entre la richesse du centre historique de Rome où se trouvent les immeubles dits de Tor di Nona, et les conditions et caractéristiques physiques de ces derniers rendent le problème complexe. Ces immeubles, situés le long du Tibre en face de l'ancien Palais de Justice, se sont transformés depuis le moyen-âge, pour donner un ensemble densément organique et diversifié. Le contexte et les principes de la restauration invoqués sont autant de facteurs qui marquent l'intérêt du sujet.

Contrairement à ce que l'on pourrait croire, les bâtiments à l'intérieur de l'enceinte murale, sont en grande partie du dix-neuvième siècle. Les poussées démographiques en sont la cause. Sixte V et Urbain VIII furent les premiers, à imprimer la structure urbaine de la Rome renaissante. Le plan régulateur d'urbanisation de 1873 et les subséquents, se voulaient pour leur part, une réponse à l'expansion. Plusieurs prévoyaient la monumentalisation de certaines voies (le corso Vittorio Emmanuele, par exemple). Le quartier de Tor di Nona a perdu tous ses bâtiments riverains pour donner place à une voie de circulation rapide, le Lungotevere.

Le fascisme, porté au pouvoir en 1922, est allé plus loin dans cette optique avec son plan de 1931, qui a transposé en idéaux urbanistiques ses idéaux politiques. Le plan voulait "insérer la Cité neuve à l'antique"en[1] prévoyant la création de voies cérémoniales et



*Plan de l'ensemble*

perspectivistes aux principaux monuments de la ville. Ce, "...avec le plus grand respect quand l'antique est vraiment beau et artistiquement valable et au contraire quelquefois avec le sacrifice de celui qui à l'époque romantique était considéré comme pittoresque".[2] Le plan entreprenait le remplacement de quartiers par des places et des bâtiments contemporains pour des motifs d'assainissement. L'austérité et la froideur de cette architecture sont connus.

C'est dans ce contexte que la Commune de Rome fit l'achat de l'ilôt Tor di Nona en 1939-40, en vue de le remplacer par des immeubles à bureaux. On prévoyait envoyer les habitants dans un quartier neuf, mais mal équipé. La guerre empêcha la réalisation du projet.

La période 1950-60 vit les grands projets de démolition du fascisme s'estomper; les destructions ponctuelles cependant ce continuaient. L'administration réenvisageait celle de l'ilôt de Tor di Nona. Plusieurs réactions suivirent. La plus efficace fut la contre proposition de Carlo Ceschi. Pour lui, la "...sauvegarde du quartier du Rinascimento devait commencer avec Tor di Nona".[3] Il appuyait sa thèse sur l'importance de l'ambiance environnementale de Rome. Son projet cherchait à montrer la faisabilité et la rentabilité de l'intervention. Il conservait à la fois la fonction et l'apparence extérieure, mais restructurait l'intérieur par le recloisonnement, la diminution du nombre de logements, d'escaliers, etc., de manière à remplir les nécessités de la vie contemporaine. La proposition, jamais réalisée, n'empêcha pas l'éviction des habitants, transférés à Ascita, à 20 km de distance.

Peu à peu, la critique sur les interventions abusives au centre historique et les politiques de l'administration en se répondant mutuellement, évoluaient. L'administration légiféra en 1962 un nouveau plan régulateur d'urbanisme très articulé qui prévoyait la protection du centre historique. Son application connaissant un succès mitigé, les critiques se faisant plus pressantes, des organismes se formèrent et cherchèrent des moyens d'informer la population. Les murs de l'ilôt de Tor di Nona ont gardé jusqu'à sa récente restauration des fresques populaires, affichant le mécontement et le désir d'intervention. En parallèle, des politiques nationales et municipales de plus en plus claires pour la sauvegard et mise en valeur des centres historiques se développaient. Le cas de Bologne est certainement à citer.

Forte de toutes ces expériences, l'administration communale, élue en 1976, formée du parti communiste (PCI), socialiste (PSI) et socio-démocrate (PSDI), et présidée par l'historien et critique d'art, Giulio Carlo Argan, envisage une mise en application plus solide du plan de 1962, sans en changer les fondements. Deux problèmes particuliers les intéressaient: les bourgades et le centre historique. Pour eux, "...le problème des centres historiques sera résolu le jour où il ne s'en parlera plus, c'est-à-dire qu'il ne se parlera plus d'un problème du centre historique séparé et distinct du problème du développement et de l'évolution du noyau urbain dans sa totalité".[4]

Le centre historique souffrait d'un phénomène avancé de dépopulation, ses activités commerciales se détachaient de l'activité résidentielle, et l'activité artisanale étant non protégée, rétrogradait. Pour l'administration, il importait en plus de palier à ces phénomènes, de redonner le centre historique comme un tout culturel. Face auxbâtiments, elle se fixait pour but de considérer la valeur de la structure, de la qualité de l'environnement, du caractère monumental et typologique. En raison du retard, elle s'est imposée une rapidité d'action pour les expériences pilotes à mener.

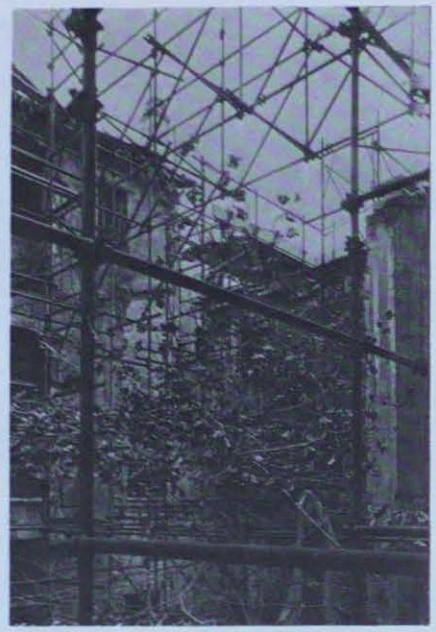
Voulant servir un contre-exemple significatif aux spéculateurs, le choix de Tor di Nona s'imposa de façon naturelle, puisqu'il était déjà propriété municipale, qu'il jouissait de l'attention publique et qu'il pouvait permettre la libération rapide d'une subvention

gelée. L'administration mit aussi à profit une loi nationale pour servir les gens à faible revenu et ceux qui résidaient dans le secteur.

La restauration a cherché à maximiser la conservation de la typologie malgré l'état d'abandon et de délabrement. Seuls les bâtiments écroulés, dont les relevés ont permis de connaitre l'état original, se sont vus plus fortement modifiés à l'intérieur. On a répondu aux besoins de diversification de la population en prévoyant des boutiques d'artisans, un centre communautaire pour personnes agées, et en réservant de petits logements pour les étudiants. De rares parties sont démolies, et ceci généralement pour des questions d'obscurité. Toute la structure est solidifiée, voire remplacée. Les particularités inhabituelles que peut offrir un bâtiment transformé selon un lent processus séculaire sont conservées. A titre d'exemple, les cuisines et salles à manger très étroites (env. 1,90m x 10,50m), résultant de la formation de la place Lancellotti à la fin du dix-huitième siècle, ont été sauvegardées. Les recloisonnements lorsqu'ils sont nécessaires, cherchent à reprendre d'anciennes divisions. Les équipements sanitaires et de cuisine sont installés. Un ascenseur est prévu pour le bâtiment le plus élevé. On le voit, il s'agit d'interventions minimales, qui visent non seulement à préserver l'"intégrité organique du bâti, mais la signification même des relations entre l'intérieur et l'extérieur du bâtiment.

Malheureusement, des retards accumulés et l'"inflation ont augmenté les coûts au point d'entacher la volonté de prouver le caractère économique de l'intervention. A l'opposé, l'extrait d'Armando Montanari représente bien la réception critique faite par les organismes de protection du patrimoine:

> ...instruit de la situation actuelle des polémiques et des disputes qui risquent de

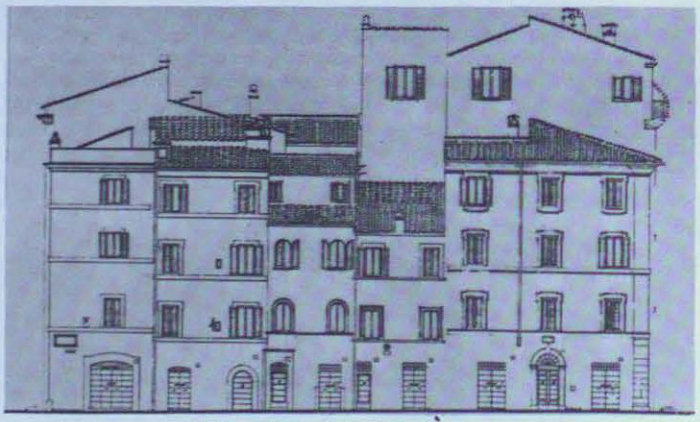


*Cour arrière*

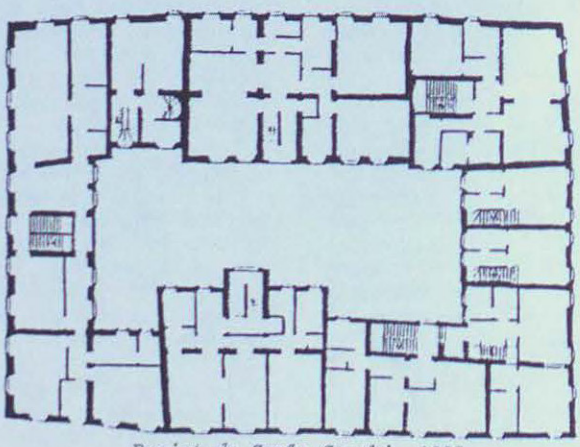
continuer, nous pouvons affirmer que même ce projet de restauration de Tor di Nona est un acte de courage...

Le projet de Tor di Nona n'est surement pas un projet parfait, mais il est perfectible. Il y a une carence de connaissance de base qui a constitué un manque du point de vue méthodologique; mais ce n'est pas un projet erroné, plutôt devrions nous dire incomplet...".[5]

Au niveau de la perception urbaine, nous considérons que l'exemple de Tor



*Elévation, Via Tor di Nona*



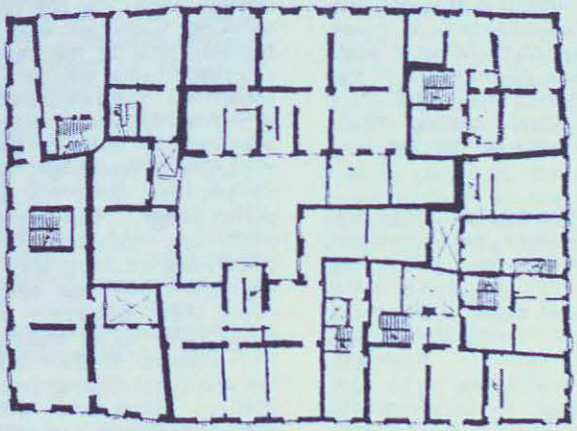
*Projet de Carlo Ceschi, 1957*

*Piazza Lancellotti (gravure: Giuseppe Vasi)*

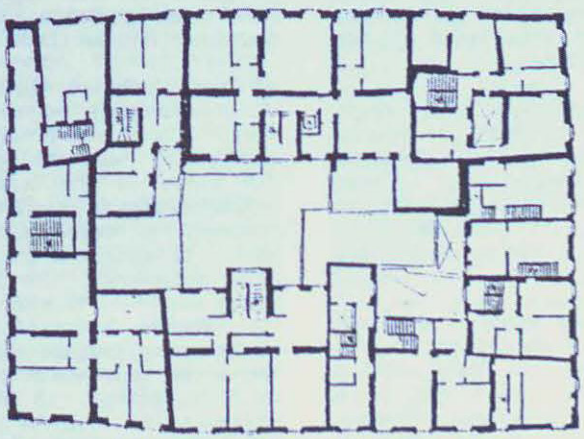
di Nona est un choix critique de l'administration et qu'il évite de tomber dans l'intervention stéréotypée. Cette attitude progressiste et contemporaine mérite d'être citée. En ce sens nous croyons aussi nous ranger derrière cette perception de Manfredo Tafuri de l'intervention en milieu historique: "...on n'a pas compris que renoncer à reconfigurer la ville, signifie renoncer à la comprendre de façon critique. La conservation a donc été réduite à une problème de scénographie urbaine superposée à une restructuration fonctionelle, arbitraire dans ses prémisses et ses propos, parce que non fondée sur une considération historique et organique du problème".[6]

Dans ce propos on voit déjà une réserve que nous émettons face au projet. La commune de Rome en optant pour une gestion publique par un organisme central et en précisant chacun des détails de la restauration, a peut-être gelé le processus évolutif et organique de l'ilôt; phénomène commun dans notre architecture contemporaine.

Enfin Tor di Nona nous donne l'exemple qu'un gouvernement n'a pas besoin de s'ériger un monument pour signifier son passage. La petit intervention, basée sur la signification de la ville implique ici la socialisation même de l'architecture; la volonté d'avoir un centre-ville habité plutôt que voué aux touristes ou dépendant d'une population de banlieues. Pour Rome ou ailleurs, le caractère d'une ville dépend souvent de ses habitants et de leur falon de récupérer l'espace urbain. En ce sens, Tor di Nona est un exemple méritoire.



*Relevé par la Commune de Rome, 1976*



*Projet de la Commune de Rome, 1977*

Note: les principaux intervenants de la restauration:
Commune de Rome: défraie les coûts.
Assessorat pour les interventions dans le centre historique (dépendant de la Commune): Analyses et élaboration du projet.
IACP (Instituto autonomo per le case popolare): surveillance de chantier, gestion des bâtiments ●

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4. G.C. Argan, Interventi nel centro storico, 1978, p.26
5. Armando Montanari, extrait de Il San Michele come questione de principio, tiré du catalogue Per il restauro del San Michele, 1979, pp.198 et 200
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# AN ACADEMIC EVENT

## THE EDUCATIONAL VALUE OF THE ALCAN LECTURE SERIES

by Nathan Godlovitch.

*Can a high-profile, event-oriented, star-studded lecture series be of academic value?*

THE PAST seven winters have seen a weekly ritual - a Pilgrimage of hundreds of loyalists, skeptics and curiosity-seekers. These masses are not seeking their salvation, but perhaps merely a glimpse of fresher knowledge or a new word of explanation; maybe not the absolute truth, but at least a clear viewpoint. They seek ideas, fantasy, **stimulation.** The destination of the pilgrims is infinitely distant from a holy land or Mecca in itself. The event is the Alcan Lecture Series which, with weekly standing-room attendances of five-hundred and more has come to merit some investigation as a **phenomenon** beyond the scope which typical series of academic discourses would embrace.

The success of the Alcan Lecture Series can be attributed to several roots, not the least of which is the quality of the lectures' attractions themselves. However, one must view the content of these lectures relative to the nature of the formal educational processes encountered by those working into and through the fields of Architecture. Such a comparison reveals a weakness in the Schools' (particularly in the local circumstances) approach. An intellectual and experiencial void - a product of an institution's excessive instructional self-reliance - invariably widens with time, leaving new, broadening fields of study primarily to the initiative of the individual (student or faculty) through independent research. Alcan offers a neatly packaged, clear-cut 'capsule' which partially fulfils many of the lacking requirements for a broader-minded Architecture. To a starving crowd of idea-hungry professionals and, mainly, students (the ideal professional would always consider himself a student), the Alcan Lecture dangles a most tantalizing Architecture 'vitamin pill'. The danger, many counter - and the question of the series' value at hand - is the colourful 'candy coating' which renders this addictive pill far too easy to swallow.

The fields of attraction of Alcan are multi-plex. An aura has developed over the past seven years which has turned the series into **The** architectural social event of Montreal and beyond - removed from the academic experience. Amongst students at McGill (lectures are currently held at the University's largest lecture hall, the H. Noel Fieldhouse Auditorium of the Stephen Leacock Building), to miss **any** lecture without good reason is taboo. Selectivity in attendance is not generally acceptable.

The attraction potential of any single lecture can be attributed to several factors of varying merit from an educational standpoint. These innumerable classifications can be grouped (with overlaps) into three fundamental realms: celebrity; fashion; academics.

The lecture based solely on the work and personality of the lecturer himself tends to raise the most serious objections to the series from those concerned with educational influence. One might easily see the 'celebrity star-attraction' as necessary to the series' reputation and continuation as a high-profile event (this is vital due to the unescapable and understandable ego of the series' corporate sponsor). Unfortunately, the practising architect speaking '...On his own work' - the familiar title of the celebrity lecture - often turns out to be a hollow, sometimes narrow-minded exercise in showmanship, more reminiscent of a best-selling author's appearances at department stores and on talk shows to improve both his sales and his public **image.** 'Hot' personalities can omit any substance from their discussions allowing their reputations, and often boistrous personalities, to carry their lectures - undeniably to occasionally highly entertaining levels. Not unaware of their oral virtuosity, the practising demi-gods of the lectern (Robert Stern and Michael Graves come immediately to mind) are often permitted incredible flippancy and arrogance by their highly enthused, star-struck audience, turning their discussions into an academic farce.

Although much less dubious than the lecture focusing on celebrity, the aspect of 'fashion' is a major target of criticism by those who oppose (fear?) the scope of the lecture series. Annual comments, hardly kept private, condemn the imposition of too many ideas - of superficial trends - on the easily infuenced. One professor of design was heard to wish out loud for the complete demise of the lectures on these very grounds. The nature of 'trendiness' is consistently passed off as mere faddism - a passing phase perpetuated by an immature, capricious generation of popularizers of the field.

Yet, to deny the student the exposure to new (albeit 'trendy') concepts of aesthetics; to contemporary practitioners whose time-untested work is drawing attention; to architects of past eras who have earned a second look at their contributions through a fresher perspective, is hardly a decent response to the problems associated with fashion-following. The lectures actually contribute somewhat to proper understanding through the powerful tools of first-hand explanation and thoroughly studied and documented interpretation. A 'trend' or 'fashion' once understood is a valuable resource to aid in the designer's ability to articulate, discriminate and express. To add to one's architectural vocabulary through the clarified understanding of others' intentions can only enrich the individual, even if the new lexicon is never consciously applied. As such, the Alcan Lectures should be considered as a preliminary basis to avoid the narrowness and blind following usually associated with fashion, if the lectures' inherent weaknesses (discussed below) are duly recognized.

Intellectualism is probably the one aspect currently most lacking in many design studios. In its ability to provoke thought and discussion among those who habitually slip into a dreary, introverted, isolated routine, Alcan is providing the stimulation necessary to open one's eyes a touch wider, and, optimally, to perceive a touch clearer. Insightful, comprehensible criticism, positive **and** negative, induces further investigation, experimentation, and, ultimately, the elusive (while limited) understanding of some minute facet of architectural expression.

Lack of intellectualism in Schools of Architecture - the void which the Alcan lecture (or **any** lecture) only **begins** to fill - stands as a symptom of a wide-spread malaise common to contemporary education. The lectures act as surrogate to the immensely rich literary aspect of architecture which, amongst too many students, has fallen into difficult times. Undoubtedly, returning to an earlier analogy, Alcan represents a pill much easier to swallow (more readily available, requiring little input beyond mere presence and some attentiveness) than the literature which ideally should be providing this necessary function. Surely, as the 'audio-visual' approach to education must begrudgingly be accepted as an inevitable teaching instrument, so the Alcan Lecture serves as the equivalent to the electronic, pre-packaged, **pre-edited** literature and theory of architecture. While one must not laud the further demise of the written word, it must be realized that the event-oriented lecture series is, for many, the only intellectual stimulus they will voluntarily encounter on a regular basis concerning architectural design, and for others, it is the only locally available expose of current global architectural issues (at least in such a dynamic format).

The main weakness inherent in any lecture series as compared with the impact of the written word is in the choice of subject, which, in the former case, is entrusted to the series co-ordinators. Without the desire and enthusiasm to follow-through on any stimulating revelation encountered at an Alcan Lecture by further investigation and research severely narrows the value of **any** lecture or presentation to that individual. In an age of the mass media, the permutations of choice are ultimately reduced from the infinite ("which?") to the finite ("yes or no?"). The lone decision left to the discretion of the consumer is the question of whether or not to attend. The co-ordinators of the Alcan Lecture Series (Montreal architect Peter Rose and up to the conclusion of last season's lectures, Alcan's Terry Kirkman) have obviously found what the consumer wanted - the question of attendance is seldom pondered by the loyalists; seats are often at a premium in a 600-seat auditorium.

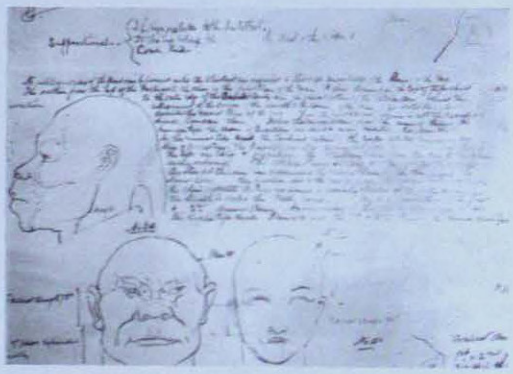
March 17. 1981 - Vincent Scully - **Frank Lloyd Wright, Freud and the American Dream;** this was Scully's fifth appearance in the seven years of the series. Scully's fame as a lecturer, scholar and educator reinforced by his previous dynamic perfomances for Alcan, as well as the enticing title, drew an unprecedented deluge of students, professionals and faculty to the Fieldhouse Auditorium. For very nearly two hours, some seven-hundred hot, cramped individuals witnessed every enrapturing flamboyant gesture and emotive description. The steps to all exits were completely obstructed as were the aisles, making the unlikely desire to depart prematurely a virtual impossibility. Yet, as Scully reached his crescendo, not a distracting sound was noticed. His conclusion was met by a sustained ovation, followed by a slow, silent exit, as everyone reflected on the experience of the completed lecture. Months later, his comments, observations, analogies and pure emotion are still remembered and recalled - and noted in re-experiencing Architecture through his added perspective.

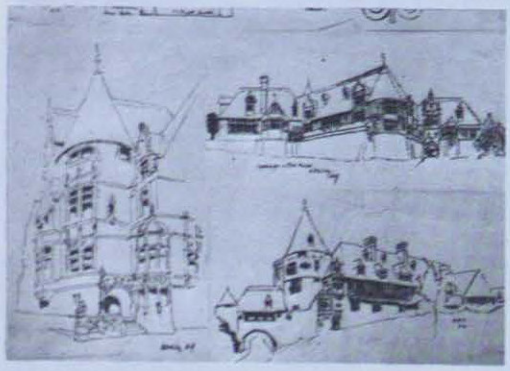
This is the epitome of what the Alcan Lecture Series **can** be, at its best. For McGill students (told on being informed of the series by their Director to sit near an aisle to facilitate early departures), Alcan is an invaluable complement to the usually sterile studio routine. For inspiration and provocation, the series is unparalleled in its mass affectation. Even the bitterest opponents of the series' intentions still find the time to attend and observe - even if only to defame it the next morning. This universal attraction of proponents **and** detractors may be the strongest indicator of the Alcan Lecture Series' undeniable educational value●

*Rediscovering an Architecture of fine detailing and exquisite drawing...*

# The Maxwell Scrapbook

by Stefan Wisniowski.





WITHIN today's architectural community, and especially within the Schools, a certain tension seems to exist between the aesthetic and the functional aspects of architecture and camps of 'artists' and 'engineers' seem to emerge from within the ranks of architectural students. In the face of this implicit schism, a figure emerges from the past who combined these two facets of architecture: Montrealer Edward Maxwell (1867-1923).

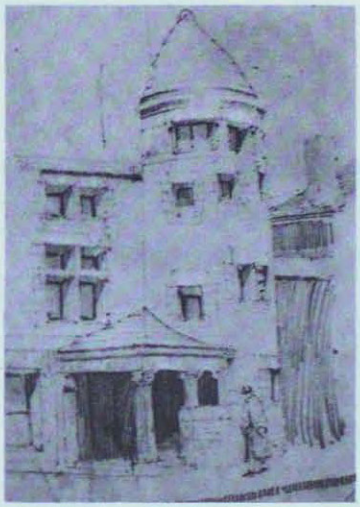
It was within the last generation before the Modern Movement took hold that Edward, with his brother William Sutherland Maxwell, learned and practiced a total architecture. His obituary of 1923 states it clearly: "He was the rare combination of a practical architect and true artist."[2] Whether designing houses for well-to-do clients within Montreal's Square Mile or planning institutional works such as the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, the High School of Montreal, and the Regina Parliament Buildings, the Maxwells had a flair for fine detailing in addition to their practical approach to planning and lighting. This combination resulted in buildings that both looked pleasing and worked well.

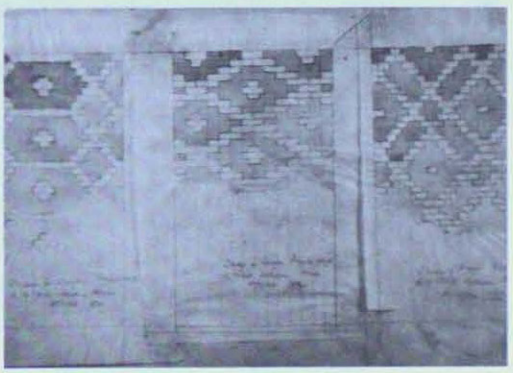
*Illustrations, from the top:*

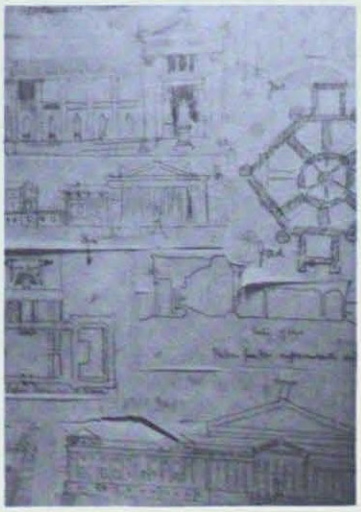
*a. Edward Maxwell in mid-career*
*b. Notes on human facial structure*
*c. Sketches of New England houses*
*d. Marshall Field Warehouse, Chicago, cast mullion detail*

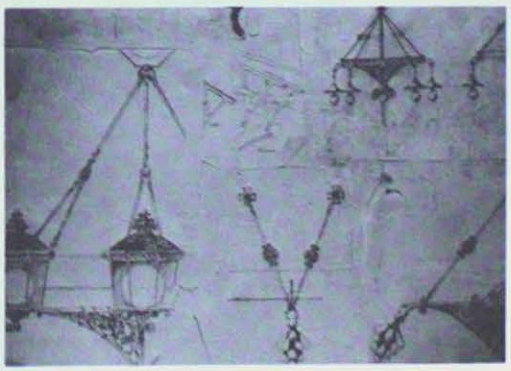
In the following pages we have reproduced excerpts from Edward Maxwell's scrapbook (held in McGill's **Canadian Architecture Collection**), which records much of his education, gained before the days of Schools of Architecture, in the Boston offices of Shepley, Coolidge & Rutan and at the Boston Architectural Club. We are immediately struck by the drawing skills of this future member of the Royal Canadian Academy of the Arts, for it seems that these skills led him to the sensitivity for detail that is crucial to an artist. It is in his exquisite detailing that Edward found expression for his artistic abilities, otherwise denied to him in the efficient lighting and commodious planning of his buildings.

The scrapbook contains scores of careful drawings of the New England houses (which so influenced Edward later on), studies of Classical detailing and planning, human morphology, and even a fanciful design for his own tombstone.



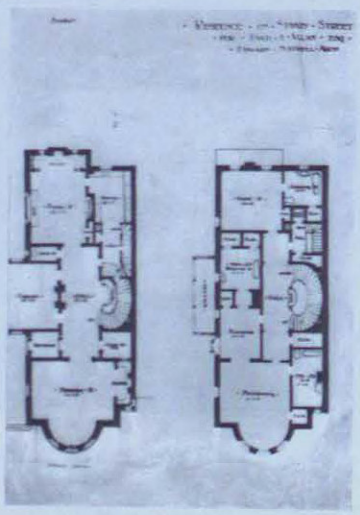


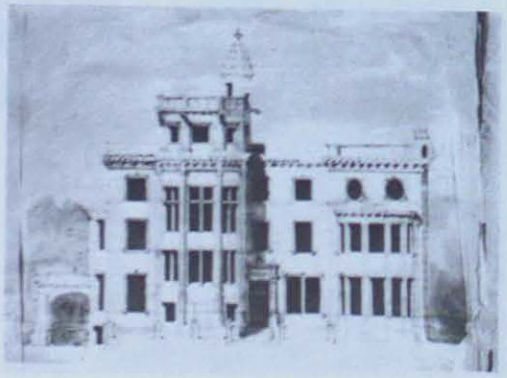




*Illustrations, from the top:*

*a. Design for John A. MacDonald statue competition, Montreal*
*b. Sketch of the Albany City Hall "Lawyer's Staircase"*
*c. Cornice form study, watercolour*
*d. Hugh A. Allan House, studies of brickwork patterns*
*e. Classical building-type notes: "Academie de Medicine", "Jail" "Palais pour les Representants de France"*
*f. Chandalier and lamp studies*



We have also reproduced some of Maxwell's later work, showing some of his skills as an artist and draughtsman. An example is the entry to the Supreme Court competition in Ottawa. Although the Maxwells won a 1907 competition for the Court Building, typically drawing praise for their "simply and conveniently arranged"[3] floor plans, construction was never commenced and the competition was presumably re-opened at a later date. Together with some of the Maxwells' other work, we have reproduced an entry into this second competition, in which the design has been expanded and a dominant central tower added to the composition, resplendant in its beautifully drawn Gothic tracery.

*Illustrations, from the top:*

*a. Hodgson House, pencil sketch*
*b. Saskatchewan Legislature*
*c. Andirons study, watercolour*
*d. Hugh A. Allan House, plans*
*e. Unidentified design, pen & ink*
*f. Unidentified design, watercolour*

The Maxwell Scrapbook is worth studying in its entirety; it provides a fascinating view of an architect's education and work at the turn of the century. These selections from the scrapbook should suffice, however, to demonstrate the caring and attention to detail exemplified by one of contemporary North America's most practical architects ●

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1. Canadian Architecture Collection, McGill University, Montreal
2. The Gazette, Montreal, November 15, 1923
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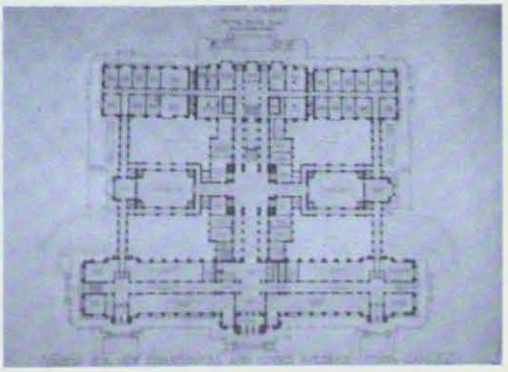
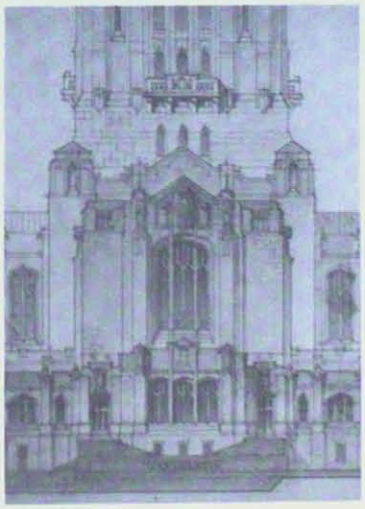
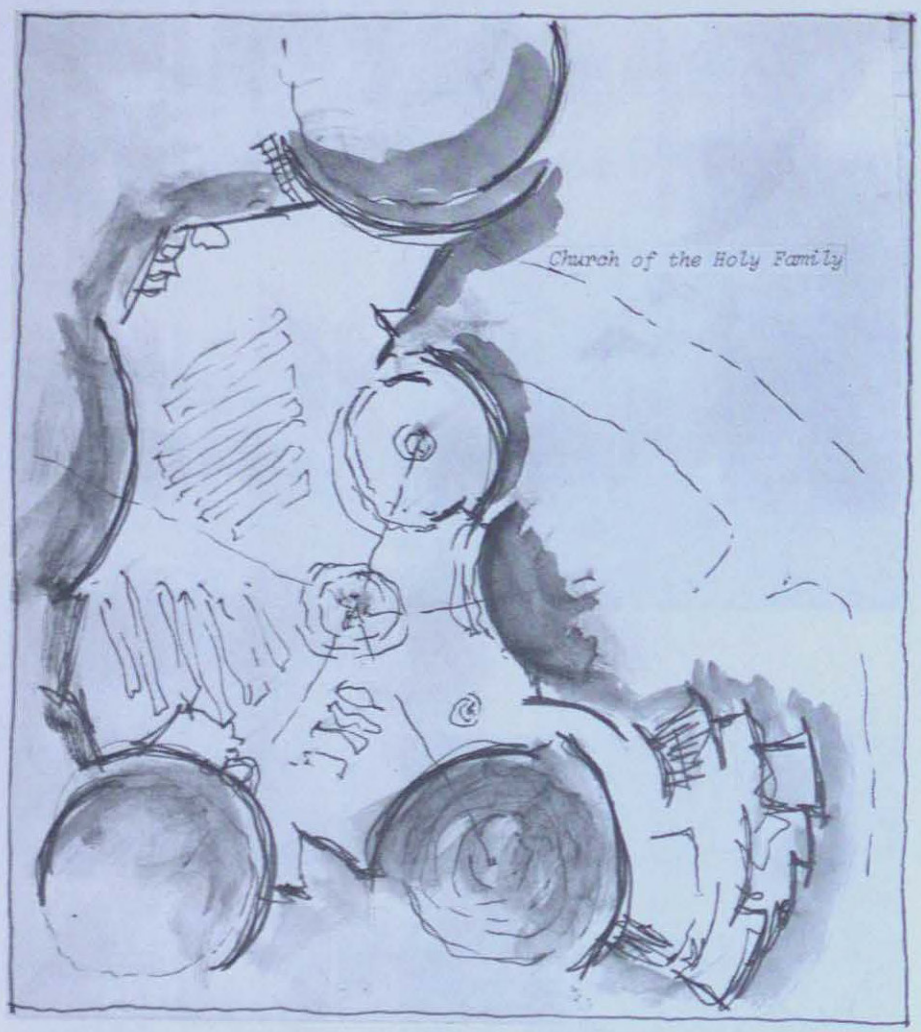




*Illustrations, from the top:*

*a. Unidentified design, ink wash*
*b. Hodgson Cottage, Ste-Agathe P.Q.*
*c. Departmental and Courts Building competition entry, tower detail*
*d. Courts Building, elevation*
*e. Courts Building, logical planning*
*f. Courts Building, entrance detail*




# Baroque Modernism

*Examining its master, that Italian Scholar:*

## Paolo Portoghesi

by Graham D. Livesey.

*"For who will not marvel that our body, a moment ago imperceptible in the bosom of the whole, should now be a colussus, a world, or rather a whole, compared to the nothingness beyond our reach."*

*Blaise Pascal, Pensées.*

PAOLO PORTOGHESI'S eminence as a widely published architectural historian, teacher, critic and architect of note places him in a rather unique position. The exhausting research that he has pursued into specific periods of architectural history, although not directly paralleling his work as an architect, has profoundly influenced a number of his major projects. This direct link with the past was a sensitivity maintained by few other architects during the 1950's and 1960's. Portoghesi's ability to interpret the past and to play contrary historical ideas off against one another, while retaining a distinct twentieth century character, has placed him in the forefront of the movement which Charles Jencks labels 'Late Modernism'.

The influences of the Italian Baroque, Art Nouveau, Frank Lloyd Wright, German Expressionism and the Modern Movement, subjects he has written a great deal about, can be traced in many of his projects. Portoghesi, however, along with his partner Vittorio Gigliotti, often delights in juxtaposing these influences with more contradictory and obscure notions. As with his writings, each project stands as a step in an ongoing research process. His houses, in particular, bear witness to his most fruitful experiments, marking definite theoretical changes, although maintaining a common 'Late-Modernist' thread.

As an historian, Paolo Porteghesi is respected most for his knowledge of

the Italian Baroque, with particular emphasis placed upon the work of Francesco Borromini, the Baroque master who is best known for his brilliant spatial compositions and manipulations of the classical orders. Indeed, of all of the influences to which Portoghesi openly professes, Borromini looms as the most apparent.

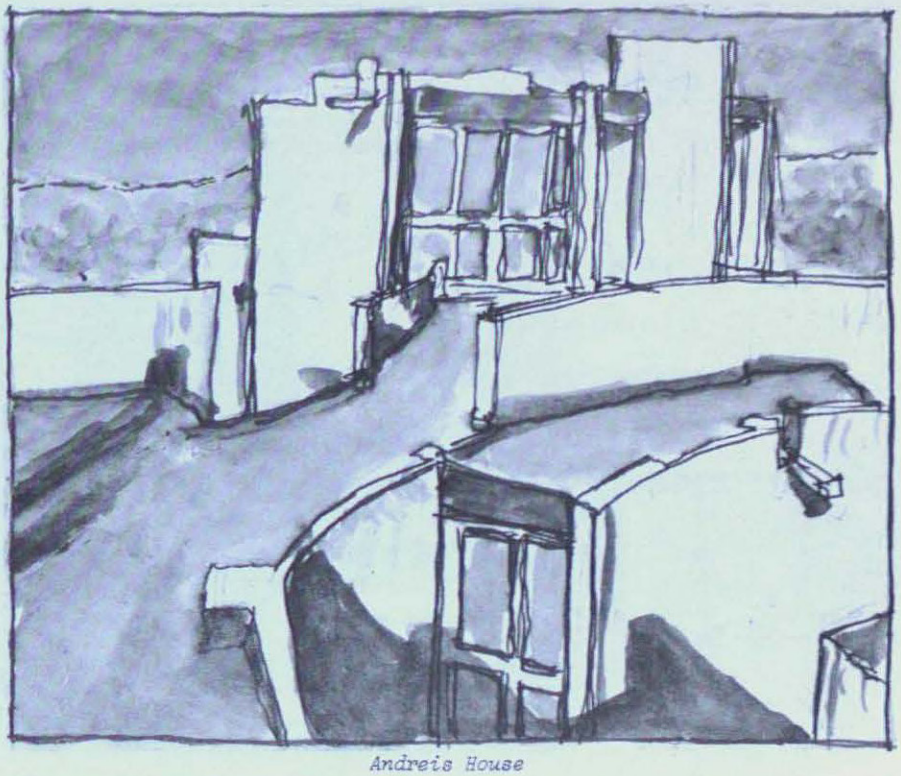
The understanding of space as a compositional factor is the strongest basis of comparison between Portoghesi and Borromini. Both architects, have carried out experiments with space as a psychological reality, able to control the thoughts and emotions of those experiencing their buildings. A fascination with the geometry of curves and how the use of undulating walls produces contracting and expanding spatial forces runs rampant in their work. Also, the use of light, to produce a powerful dynamism, as well as the manipulation of spatial dynamics to create specific visual foci and a sense of movement to the infinite, are overly prevalent in both Baroque Architecture and Baroque Modernism.

Paolo Portoghesi makes a strong use of basic geometry in his planning, although the flowing plastic walls and spaces tend to de-emphasize this. The inherent sculptural and organic nature, which produces a powerful interior-exterior relationship and lends to an easily readable building, contradicts current Post-Modern theories, which seek intellectual stimulation through ambiguity.

"Infinite space is endowed with infinite quality, and in that infinite quality is lauded the infinite act of existence".

Giordano Bruno, L'Infinito Universo e Mondi

The creation of the sense of the infinite, and infinite space, is a Baroque measure achieved through the use of curvilinear walls, dynamic space



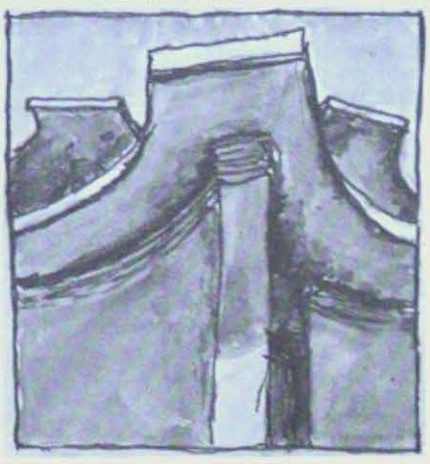
*Andreis House*

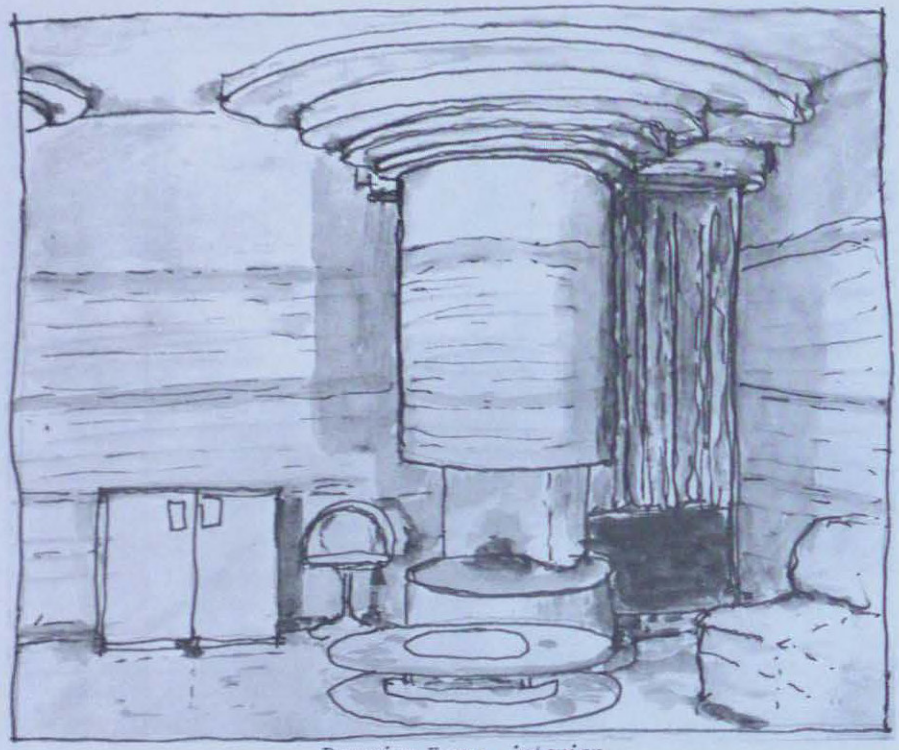
and ornament. A judicious use of ornament enhances these qualities by guiding eye movement across major structural changes, endowing a building with a sense of timeless harmony confined within its own dynamism.

Frank Lloyd Wright's revolutionary turn of the century work provides further inspiration. His conception of flowing space, regard for the site and enhancing the use of colour and ornamentation have left their distinct imprint on Portoghesi's work. Art Nouveau and especially the designs of Antonio Gaudi and Victor Horta have reinforced the curvilinear and organic nature of his buildings. German Expressionism and American industrial design have added a streamlined look to some of his later projects, and Bruno Taut has given Portoghesi inspiration with regards to the use of colour in the modern context.

A major concern for Portoghesi, in his design work, is responsiveness to a particular site, be it rural or urban. His method entails a careful study of the site and its environs in order to identify the character of the place and utilize it as an educational device to reflect the area's nature back onto its inhabitants. Portoghesi is particularly aware of how people, through the workings of the mind, will respond to a building.

*Baldi House, detail*





*Papanice House, interior*

In several designs, Portoghesi and Gigliotti have made rather unique use of a curvilinear stair motif, traceable back to roman amphitheatres, Borromini's S. Ivo alla Sapienza and Frank Lloyd Wright. It produces a diminishing and expanding effect, shifting slices in an uprising towards a never to be reached climax. They have employed it in an amphitheatre-like manner and, inverted, as a roofing technique.

The following are some of Portoghesi's more influential works, unique in their intertwined and dynamic spatial relationships, use of colour and fantasy:

The Baldi House of 1959 constitutes Portoghesi's first major experimental endeavour. It sparked interest and discussion, particularly in Europe, where his work tends to be better known. Its disjointed walls are united by strongly emphasized cornice lines, as the building shifts between sculptured fluidity and harsh linearity.

The Andreis House of 1964-67 is the work, although still experimental, of a more mature architect. Here again, a series of diverse styles have been synthesized to produce sequences of interacting interior and exterior spaces. The surroundings are well reflected by the large windows which act to disjoint the curvilinear concrete walls.

The Papanice House of 1967, influenced by Borromini, Taut and vernacular buildings in Rome, has on several occasions been used as a science-fiction movie set. The exterior, much more fluid than the earlier work, is covered in a profusion of organ-pipe-like tubes of various colours. Although introverted from the outside, the flowing interior walls constantly draw the eyes of the onlooker to the windows and beyond. Radiating pools of space are defined by circular stalactite-type structures penetrating them at key points.

The Church of the Holy Family of 1968 makes an overall use of the curvilinear stair motif to create various interlocked, pulsating spaces.

The Bevilacqua House of 1964-72, generated by interacting oval shapes, combines both strong convex and concave planes with the stair pattern. Its fortress-like appearance harmonizes well with the rocky seashore site.

As an historian, Paolo Portoghesi takes a strong, anti-internationalist position, for history as a continuity, relating to the context within which a building falls. In this time of shifting theories, he stresses the importance of a building's relationship to the influences of the period in which it was constructed, and in fact, how it influences that which is outside its own time and place. Portoghesi, in dealing directly with historical fact without succumbing to the threat of imitation and in employing and expressing modern building methods, is now recognized after twenty-five years of work as a leading theoretician in the search for an expressive architecture ●

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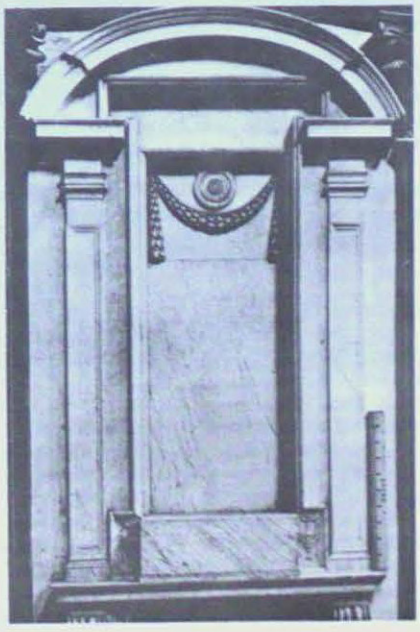
*Bevilacqua House*

# MANNERISM

by William Mark Pinlott.

*An analysis of 'irrationality' in an age of Reason...*

MANNERISM is a term that was born in the 1920's, used to describe a body of work, dating roughly from 1520 to 1600, which could be neither defined as a part of the High Renaissance nor Baroque periods. A sometimes skittish and surprising reaction to the former movement in the eyes of modern art historians, Mannerism co-existed with both of the aforementioned styles, and as such, cannot be defined as a specific 'period' in the history of architectural development.



Its reception during its beginnings was mixed, divided almost perfectly between 'moderns', young architects and Renaissance art historians. For the former group, the master architects/artists Giulio Romano, and most importantly, Michelangelo, exercised tremendous influence, through their revolutionary (rather than reactionary) manipulation of surface, volume and architectural language. The revolutionary practices were quite possibly interpreted as

were quite possibly interpreted as irreverent reactionism by many, resulting in a movement which encouraged fracture from the strict and logical art and architecture of the Renaissance.

The boundaries of artistic licence formed by that period are discussed by modern historian Colin Rowe:

> ...the Renaissance...conceives Nature as the ideal form of any species, as a mathematical and Platonic absolute whose triumph over matter it is the purpose of art to assist; so, in painting, it seeks an infallibility of form. Scientific perspective reduces external reality into a mathematical order; and, in so far as they can be brought into this scheme, the "accidental" properties of the physical world acquire significance.[1]

Rowe, through this, asserts that neither natural instinct nor purely emotive form-making were justifiable within the realm of Renaissance sensibility. He continues:

> Therefore, the artistic process is not the impressionistic record of the thing seen; but is rather the informing of observation by a philosophical idea; and, in Renaissance architecture, imagination and the senses function within a corresponding scheme.[2]

In the 1520's, this attitude denied credibility for both romanticism and eclecticism, for as indications of these new attitudes appeared, they were met with derision by Renaissance critics such as Ludovico Dolce. The insult was named **la Maniera** - derived from the Italian "mano" (hand), used to signify an ascendancy of manual practice over visual observation and clarity.[3] This **manneristic** activity was seen, in the context of an age of reason, by these same critics as common and decadent (notably, an opinion that has been shared, until quite recently, by modern historians).

Controversial discussion, however, would not have arisen around these new works if they had not been considered to be enchanting and progressive by many others at that time, and thought to be indicative of 'a more cultured age'. Progressiveness from the 1530's onwards, it seems, was seen to mean a conformity with "the tastes of the present century".[4] Satisfying the tastes of one's critical peers was an objective which carried great influence in the formation of a large body of Mannerist work in the three major visual arts. John Shearman, in his analysis of all facets of Mannerism in the arts, details Paolo Pino's advice to painters (c.1584):

> ...in all your works you should introduce at least one figure that is all distorted, ambiguous and difficult, so that you should thereby be noticed as outstanding by those who understand the finer points of art.[5]

In another case, the writer Bernardo Tasso (who spoke earlier of tastes), refers to some of his intentions (c.1549). He wished to achieve "the greatest possible artifice, so that they (verses for madrigals) shall satisfy universally".[6]

The Mannerist attitude, unlike that held during the Renaissance, took sympathy with the **imperfection** of man: his various quirks and his need for eclectic variety - directly in opposition to the Renaissance's dominant concerns for logic, perfection, and as the Mannerists argued, monotony.

Thus, the lines of combative dialogue were drawn - a dialogue presently interpreted as having to do with order and 'disorder'.

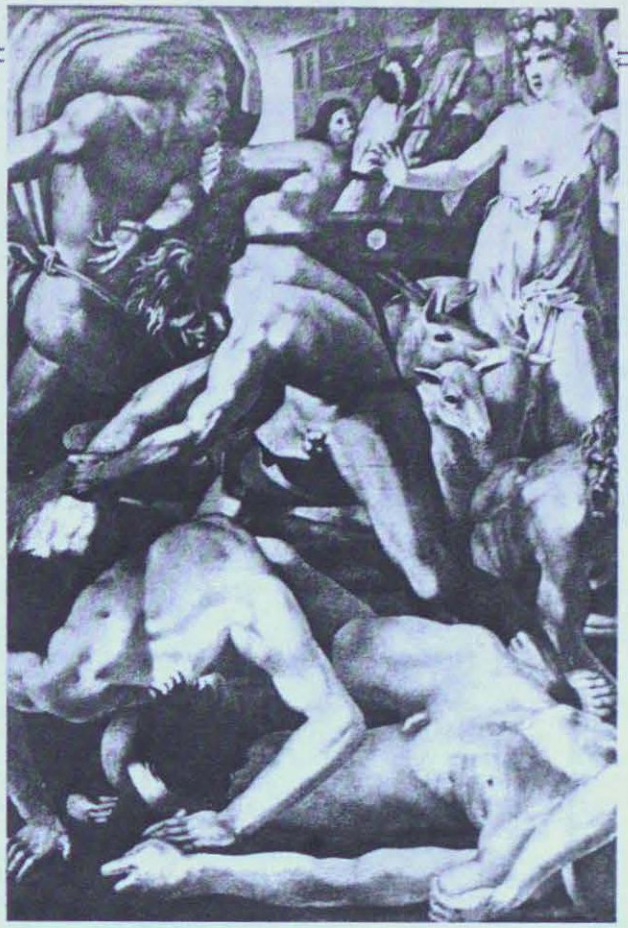
The body of Mannerist work in all areas of the arts which became increasingly popular with the decline of the Renaissance (and said to have passed away after the Sack of Rome in 1527), is seen as a **malaise** by art historian Frederic Hartt, and has been categorically qualified by him as follows:

> Content: Abnormal or anormal. Exploits strangeness of subject, uncontrolled emotion.
> Narrative (or allegory): Elaborate, involved, abstruse.
> Space: Disjointed, spasmadic, often limited to foreground plane.
> Composition: Conflicting, acentral, seeks frame.
> Proportions: Uncanonical, usually attenuated.
> Figure: Tensely posed; confined or overextended (powerless or weightless).
> Colour: Contrasting, surprising.
> Substance: Artificial.[7]

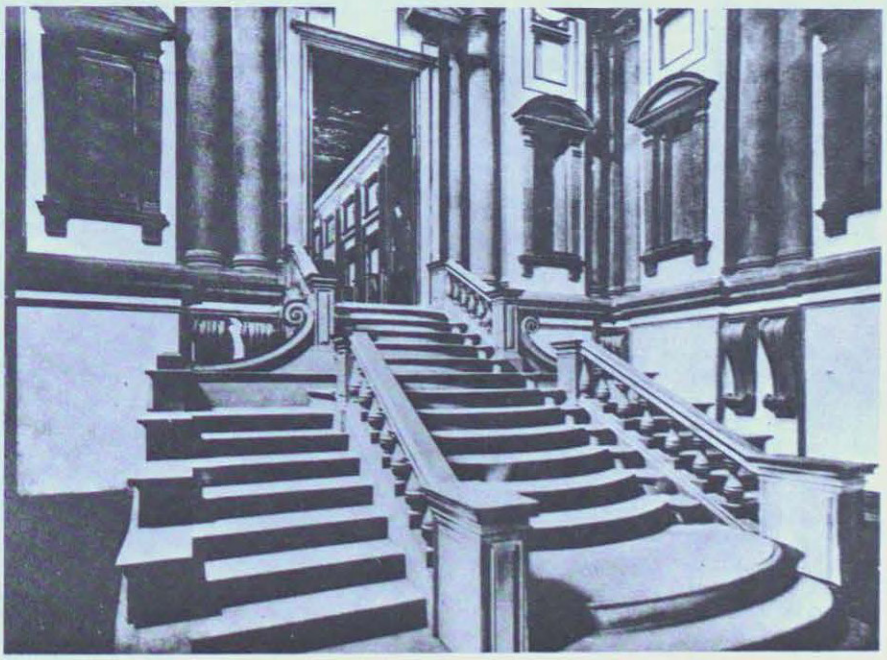
Although the above constitutes an

*Above: Donato Bramante, Tempietto di S.Pietro in Montorio, 1502*
*Rafael, La Transfigurazione, 1517*
*Domenico del Ghirlandaio, The Massacre of the Innocents, 1485-90*

*Pontorino, The Entombment, 1525-28*



*Rosso Fiorentino.*
*Moses and Jethro's Daughters,*
*1523*

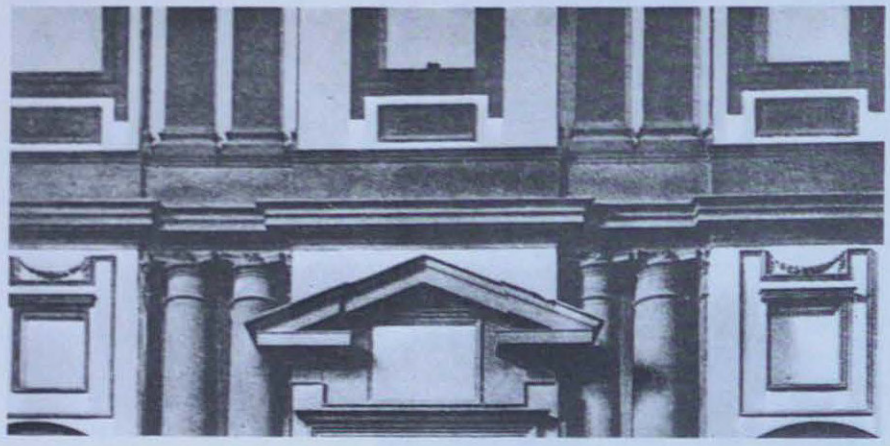


*Michelangelo,*
*the stair of the Ricetto*
*of the Laurentian Library,*
*1524-59*

observation of properties of Mannerist painting, from it, one may easily draw parallels applicable to architecture. Art Historian Linda Murray derives such comparisons:

> ...it (Mannerism in architecture) concentrates on violations of the rules governing accepted usage of the classical orders and an irrational and unpredictable disposition of space, combinations of features, treatment of surfaces. It is invariably accompanied by rich decoration and often by elaborate illusionism.[8]

It seems, through these two latter interpretations, that our contemporary



opinions about Mannerist intent deal solely with some sort of perversion - "the very human desire to impair perfection when once it has been achieved".[9]

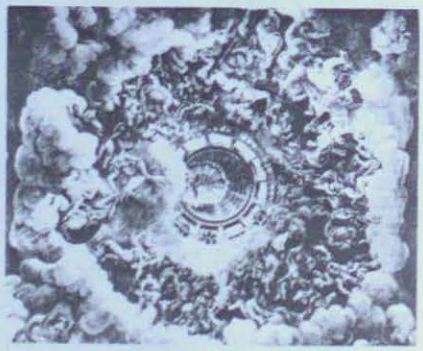
It is perhaps fitting, then (and presumably embarrassing for participants in arguments of this sort) that Mannerist works frequently stand as some of the greatest achievements in the history of architecture. One such achievement was the Laurentian Library (1524-60) in Florence, particularly its **ricetto** (entrance lobby), engineered by the great Master, Michelangelo. He was indeed 'guilty' of breaking the rules of Renaissance ordering - the notion that this should be done by the unquestioned leader of Renaissance sculpture, painting and architecture, carries an element of surprise, and is essential to the credibility of the Mannerist thesis. Mannerist historian Giorgio Vasari says of Michelangelo:

> ...the man who bears the palm of all ages, transcending and eclipsing all the rest, the divine Michelangelo Buonarotti, who is supreme not in one art but in all three at once. He surpasses not only all those who have as it were, surpassed Nature, but the most famous ancients, also, who undoubtedly surpassed her. He has proceeded from conquest to conquest, never finding a difficulty which he cannot easily overcome by the force of his divine genius, by his industry, design, art, judgement and grace.[10]

The ricetto is an essay in organic playfulness, despite its omnipresent severity. In this room, each architectural element is given licence: the half-column pilasters do not obey the traditional hierarchies (lighter with ascent), becoming shorter, thicker and untapering in the highest portions of the space. These same pilasters, rather than sitting on the walls, press into them - 'pushing' the walls out, thereby rendering the enclosure unusually plastic. Large brackets beneath these half-columns, intended to be perceived as support for them, are left to hang, perversly, off of a wide, continuous horizontal moulding, leaving them supportless. Rectangular pilasters, again contrary to tradition, are hidden by the pregnant walls, rather than resting upon them. The staircase, the showpiece of the room, fabulously curved, pours downward from the doorway of the reading room into the ricetto, filling the entire room.

The techniques used by Michelangelo give each component of the room - wall, pilaster, moulding, bracket, niche and stair - autonomy. Were they capricious gestures of irrationality on his part? Modern appraisals of Mannerist theses would suggest that this is so, but knowing of the seriousness of this master (and the solemnity of a 'theatre' such as has been described), one must conclude that this is **not** so, and that other motives were intended. Vasari, the architect and art historian who along with Ammanati was responsible for the completion of construction of the stair,[11] thought (because of their acquaintance, probably most rightly), that Michelangelo's manipulations were to provide **varieta**,[12] an all-pervasive concern of the time.

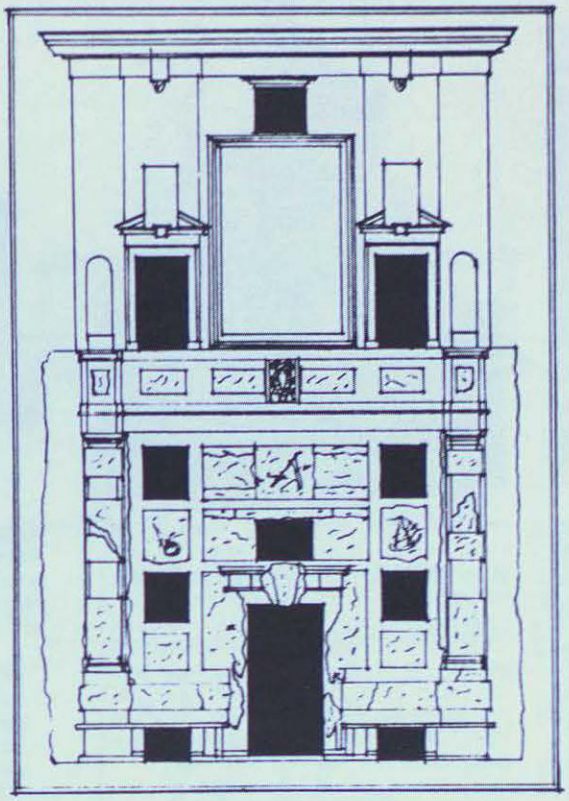
Vasari had praise too for Giulio Romano (1492-1546), based on very similar premises. Romano was: "...learned, bold, sure, capricious, varied, abundant and universal". A similar opinion, referring to Romano's work, was held by Vasari's contemporary, Serlio: "Variety among the elements is a source of pleasure



*Above:*

*Michelangelo, the Ricetto, detail*

*Above, from left:*
*Giulio Romano, Palazzo del Te, 1527-34*
*Entrance elevation*
*Courtyard elevation*
*La Sala dei Giganti, detail*



*Federico Zuccheri,*
*Casino dello Zuccheri, 1578*

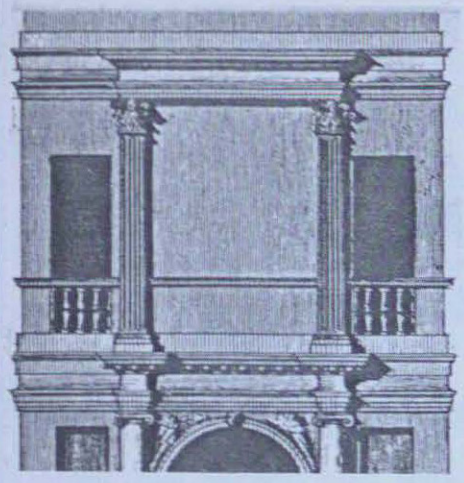
to the eye and satisfaction to the mind".[13] Romano's Palazzo del Te (1526-34), extremely popular at that time, and inspiration for much imitation, has remained today the Mannerist archetype.

The building, recently, has been spoken of primarily with respect to one of its courtyard elevations, in which monstrous keystones, curiously placed over blind openings, are contained by bottomless pediments; in which the entablature over the grotesquely rusticated, columniated wall shifts out of place in each bay to suggest dropped keystones; and so on. What has escaped much attention, because of that devoted to Romano's perversions of Vitruvius' rules, is the fact that each facade of this building, both on its outer edges and within the courtyard itself, are quite noticeably different. Notable, also, is that each room of the building is profoundly dissimilar to the others: this, in a complex which does not carry any real organisation (the great number of rooms are simply strung in a line around the courtyard). The chambers' characters range from refined and antique to off-beat, as in the case of the Sala dei Giganti which is simply a small, two-way vault, 'sans murs', with a heroic fresco, depicting a scene of a cataclysmic earthquake (repleat with suitably contorted giants). The original design of the room included a fireplace which cast its light on the figures of the painting as if they were real, reinforcing the fantastic image, imbuing the room with the "reality, myth and suprise"[14] which made it the favorite of owner and patron Federico Gonzaga, his distinguished house guests and the ladies and cavalieri of the Mantua courts.[15] The Palazzo del Te became, with great speed, a champion of the Mannerist spirit of **varieta.** Unlike the opinions concerning its 'disturbing' nature forwarded by Hartt and Murray, one must surely admit that the building is enchanting, although perhaps a threat to architectural (which some equate to cultural) sobriety.

There exists, however, a thin line that is drawn between enchantment through caprice (irreverence?) and decadence, where the rational or the normal is lost sight of altogether. Many maintain that Mannerism - its attitudes in architecture, painting, sculpture, the decorative arts, literature and music, crossed this line. The 'crisis' then, is the period of 'decadence', which we contend in this discussion, is at worst, to be considered as a time of some 'irreverant' activity. Unique to this time, though, were horrific, extreme works which have fueled arguments and accusations of Mannerist 'pre-meditated sin'. And, in the interests of fairness of this discussion, one should illustrate one such extreme. Federico Zuccheri's casino in Florence (1578), a confusing and clearly uneducated work (decadent in its egotistical isolation), is brought to our attention by Colin Rowe in his essay **Mannerism and Modern Architecture** (1950). Zuccheri's 'composition', a **jeu d'esprit** using both applied and excised architectural and sculptural detail and 'over-Mannerist' trickery, is simply inexplicable. The rusticated base, its sometimes shattered stones floating somewhat freely on a smooth field, seems to support nothing. The piano nobile is disproportionately compressed and lacks structuring rigour altogether. Traditionally ordering pilasters are of ungainly width, and surprisingly (or maybe not so) violated by openings, their framing, in turn, conspicuously incomplete. The attic story, too, escapes identification, its one opening hovering above the central blank panel. The panel too, unlike its contemporaries (by Palladio, et al), is rendered meaningless, because of its lack of focus, and in turn, inability to generate necessary dualities within the facade.

Projects such as the Casino dello Zuccheri, and the architectural promiscuity it represents, have unfortunately been seen to be representative of all Mannerism, thus leaving the movement to be viewed with confusion and disdain until recently (Robert Venturi's love for the **complexities and contradictions** of the movement's work - as illustrated in the book named similarly (1966) - have brought Mannerism to light somewhat; however the body of work remains largely unknown today).

Mannerism has been traditionally relegated to scornful little passages at the back of chapters (or whole books) about Renaissance architecture. Texts



such as **History of Italian Renaissance Art**, a standard educational tome in departments of Art History (notably at McGill University), devotes slightly more than a snippet of discussion to Mannerist architecture, and curiously, places Michelangelo's Medici Chapel and Laurentian Library in the scope of the Late Renaissance (surely, Michelangelo could not be guilty of the conscious sins of a Mannerist architect?). His 'mannerisms' tend to be attributed to his awareness of plasticity as a sculptor, and are thus accepted into the High Renaissance's realm of perfection. Palladio, too, can be said to have been a Mannerist (note particularly the facades of the Venetian churches), but his compositional rigour, seen both in plan and elevation, stemming from his use of harmonics to derive ideal proportion, tends to overshadow his mannerisms, and justifies his isolation by historians as a phenomenon - Late Renaissance - neither High Renaissance, Mannerist nor Baroque. With exclusions of Michelangelo and Palladio from discussions of Mannerism, a one-sidedness arises which allows the perpetuity of accusations of capriciousness, irreverance and decadence. Hence, the 'Mannerist Crisis'.

Courtauld Institute Art Historian John Shearman believes that Mannerism, being examined again (although somewhat superficially) in the twentieth century, earns poor hearing because interpretations of it are derived from twentieth century terms of references (our prejudices and problems). Indeed, Mannerists were guilty of the same fault in assessing the High Renaissance as 'boring'.

Historians such as Hartt and Murray, and others who have dealt with Mannerism during the last sixty years (Nikolaus Pevsner, Anthony Blunt and Colin Rowe), have seen the movement as an abberation of an architectural methodology .which was logical and perfect - and quite 'Modern' in this regard. The sympathy towards the functional logic of the Modern Movement and its supposed absence of eclecticism is very closely tied with a corresponding empathy towards Renaissance dogmae. Coincidentally, disdain towards Mannerism has been, by these same critics, also been held for Victorian Gothic architecture and the Picturesque style, and even until quite recently, for Art Nouveau.

One must conclude that assertions establishing Mannerism's position as a 'crisis' in the history of art should be considered fundamentally untrue. The movement enriched us with an invaluable resource of references, among them, the works of Michelangelo, Palladio, Romano, Vasari (the Uffizi, Florence), Ammanati (Palazzo Farnese, Rome) and Peruzzi (Palazzo Massimo alle Colonne, Rome). Their efforts broke essential ground which allowed the Baroque movement, as well as, even, attitudes of freedom within the Modern Movement, to flourish.

The licence taken within the domain of Mannerism, which some see as frivolity or vassilation constituting a crisis, was simply indicative of flux within a transitional period - just as in any such time. These characteristics were not borne, for the most part, of an ignorance of nor a rejection of the constituent elements of a fine architecture; rather, they were based upon the knowledge and manipulation of these elements. Mannerism was an educated style, quite naturally a part of 'a more cultured age'.[16]

**Postscript**

It is not surprising, then, that Mannerism is enjoying some renewed interest today, as Robert Venturi and many others who share his concerns, find these reflected in Mannerist work. Correspondingly, the non-Modernists will find fault with Modernism based on similar grounds as those which Mannerists found with the High Renaissance. As well, as in 1520, architectural opinion in our century is placed into a condition of dialogue, not dedicated to any single thesis.

> Mannerism was not the style of the whole of sixteenth century art, but it was like one part of a dialogue; similarly the ideas it fed upon were not unopposed. It was partly because opinion was divided that it became sharpened to the point of complete consciousness....[17]

Now, again, the lines of combative dialogue have been drawn between opposing fields of theory; the nature of these debates will be illuminated in the next issue ●

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4. Bernardo Tasso as quoted by John Shearman, Mannerism, 1968, p.139
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6. Shearman, p.140
7. Hartt, p.518
8. Linda Murray, Late-Renaissance and Mannerism, 1967, p.31, reprinted in Omer Akin's article: A Style Named Post-Modern, Architectural Design, Aug-Sept, 1979, p.225
9. Rowe, p.5
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12. Shearman, p.75
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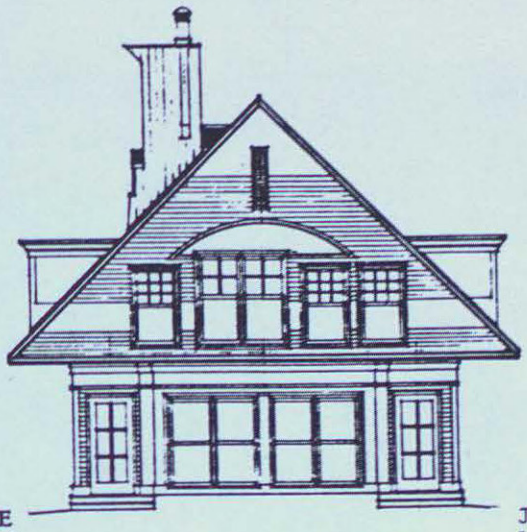
14. Akin, p.225
15. Hartt, p.522
16. Shearman, p.136
17. Shearman, p.137

*Above, from left:*

*Andrea Palladio, Casa di Palladio*
*Andrea Palladio, Il Redentore*
*Michelangelo, Porta Pia,*



OLD POST OFFICE

# MAKING PLANS

by Barbara Dolman and Helen Malkin.

**CHATEAU DUFRESNE, LE MUSEE DES ARTS DECORATIFS DE MONTREAL,** corner of Pie IX and Sherbrooke, Thursday to Sunday, 12 AM to 5 PM
May 30 to July 19
**Innovative Furniture** - This exhibit organized by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibit Service (SITES) concentrates on innovations in 19th and 20th century American Furniture making

**COIN DES ARTS,** Central Station
Summer
**Young Canadian Artists:** Georges de Rome, Jean Piere Latour, Uttan Bradley, Alice D. Rawstron

**EN DIMAGE,** 3967 St Denis
July to September **Jordi Bonet:** sculpture and serigraphs
**H. Bouchard Bonet** ceramics
Jean Letarte: Jean Latarte: paintings
**Andree de Groot:** paintings

**GALERIE A,** 680 Sherbrooke West
July 15
**Michele Tuoret:** Serly Volant du Claude Thibodeau
August 1 to August 26
**Michel Gauthier:** photographs

**GALERIE ART ET STYLE,** 896 Sherbrooke
July and August **Paintings:** Claude Castonguay, Helene Douset, Jean Marie deBlois, J.P. Ladouceur

**GALERIE DON STEWART,** 1460 Sherbrooke West
September
**Seymour Segal:** paintings: series on "runners"

**GALERIE JOUIRDAN,** 1234 Bishop
July 7 to July 31
**Gallery Collection:** Chagall Miro, Dali, Belanger, Tobiasse, Delunay and others
August 1 to August 21
**Antonio Maro:** Peruvian artist; oils on canvas and mixed media on paper
September 1 to September 21
**Peter Ganss:** sculpture

**GALERIE LIBRE,** 2100 Crescent
July 25
**Francois Sylvand:** paintings
April 15 to September
**Felix & Cecilia Vincent:** paintings

**GALERIE MOTIVATION V,** 1447 Bleury
September
**Copy Art Exhibition**

**LA GALERIE SHAYNE,** 547 Royal Mount Avenue
September 24
**12 Maritime Artists**

**LITTEL GALLERY,** 1324 Sherbrooke West
July
**West African Masks and Figures & Pre-Columbian Art**

**MCCORD MUSEUM,** 690 Sherbrooke West
until September 20
**Ulric Bourgeois:** Photographs of Quebec and New England
**The River and the Bush:** the impact of the timber trade on the Ottawa Valley
until October 11
**Fashonable Female Dress of the 1860's**

**MONTREAL MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS,** 3400, avenue du Musée
to August 9
**Where did the Cap Go?**
July 2 to August 10
**Lithographies** (Prints and Drawings Galleries)
July 10 to August 16
**La Pierre parle: Lithography in France, 1848-1900**
to September 20
**Ulysse Comtois: Le 23 octobre (Highlights of the Collections)**

**MUSEE D'ART CONTEMPORAIN,** Cite du Havre
July 17 to September 6
**Paul-Emile Borduas**
August 2 to August 23
**Francoise Buyold:** 1933-81: "Writing Drawing Engraving"

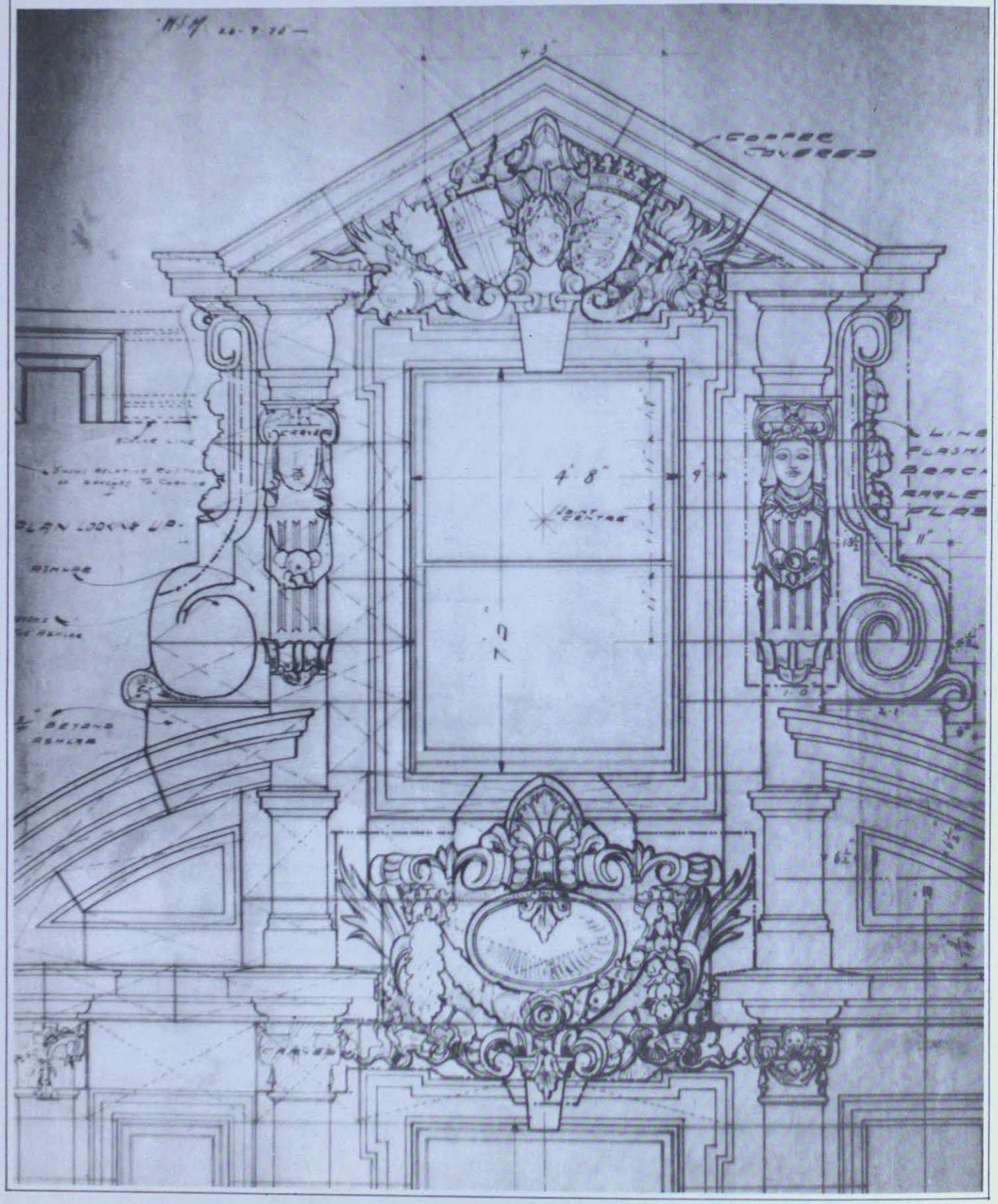
**OLD POST OFFICE,** Greene and deMaisonneuve West
July 16 to August 8
**Peter Rose and Alan Maples, Erich Marosi, Ron Keays:** Architectural Drawings and Models

**SAIDYE BRONFMAN CENTER,** 5170 Cote Ste Catherine
July 15 to August 4
**Graphimage:** members of the Fine Arts Faculty of SBC; photography, etching and photo-etching
**Sword Street Press:** lithographs
August 11 to September 2
**Stanley Lewis:**
Gravures 1977-81; 50 engravings from stone cuts
**Francis Gettman:**
paintings
September 10 to September 28
**Colours of Jerusalem:** 100 prints by Jerusalem artists
**David Ducholo:** photographs

**YAJIMA GALLERY,** 307 Ste Catherine, Suite 515
September
**E.J. Bellocq:** Storyville Portraits
**Georges Legrady:** Floating Objects

**WATCH FOR THE OPENING OF:**
**Archives and Library**
**Canadian Center of Architecture,** 1440 Ste Catherine, 2nd floor
Montreal

# ARCHIVES




Detail Drawing for the London and Lancashire Company Building
Edward Maxwell

*Canadian Architecture Collection, McGill University*

$2.50 per copy

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