

Blind Romanticism...?

THE FIFTH COLUMN is now one year old and, like a young child, it has developed greatly in its first year of life. We can take this opportunity to examine its growth and its emerging personality, as well as to make some plans for its future.

Looking back to the beginning, we see that THE FIFTH COLUMN was born of idealism and of frustration. Its ideal was the perceived potential of Architecture as a visual and social art; its frustration was with an architectural community of students, professors and professionals, all who seemed to lack both concern about what they were doing and the motivation to discover what was happening outside of their seemingly closed worlds.

THE FIFTH COLUMN's aim was to open up the eyes and the ears (and maybe even the minds) of all of these people, so that they would become better educated by learning to observe, and who would therefore have a greater awareness of their physical, social and historical contexts.

Setting out with these lofty goals, THE FIFTH COLUMN has been fortunate in its first year. Infused with the raw energy that only a student environment can generate, the magazine has achieved some of what was hoped, and more than many had expected.

It has come to provide an outlet for the publication of original writing and graphics, featuring the work of dozens of students, professors and architects which would not otherwise have come to light.

It has begun to rectify the lack of written discussion on Architecture in Canada, predating other recently started magazines such as Trace, The Independent Study, and ARQ.

It has managed to improve with each issue in terms of the quality of the

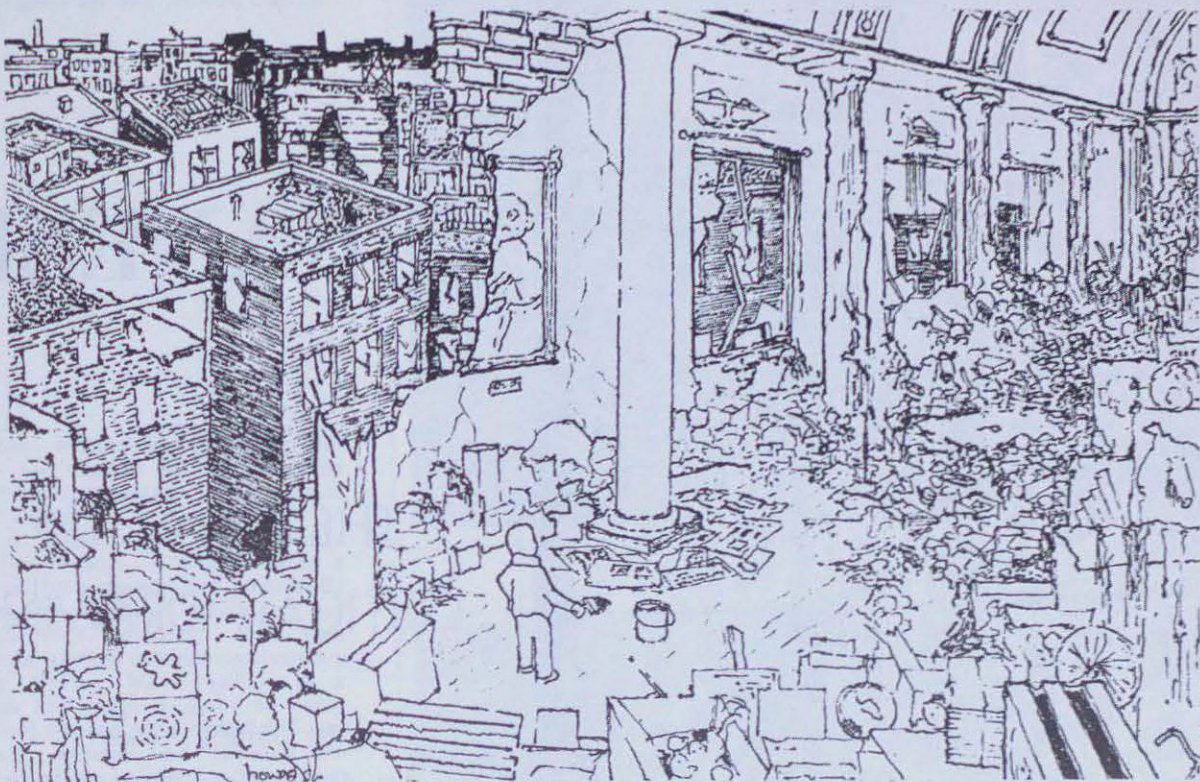
writing, the graphic expression and the technical production, coming all the way from the days of justifying columns on an IBM typewriter to computer-typesetting.

Most important to us, though, has been the wide acceptance of THE FIFTH COLUMN, whose circulation has increased four-fold since Issue 1 and which has found a home in the hearts of its many readers.

THE FIFTH COLUMN thanks all of its readers, especially those of you who encouraged us last summer by supporting a magazine which didn't even exist on paper yet. If one of you is reading this piece, it must mean that you have liked us enough to renew your subscription. (If you haven't re-subscribed, we've sent you this issue by mistake and you should stop reading now or rush your check in right away.)

Over the year certain aspects of the magazine's personality have emerged. It is interested in architectural education, both from a student and an educator perspective. It is also interested in the work of current outside architects and in recent developments in our cities.

However, THE FIFTH COLUMN also seems to have betrayed a fascination with the past, with many articles on historical architects and on our lost architectural heritage. Perhaps this has been because of the recent admission that history forms a continuum, and that the past **does** have an influence upon the present in architecture as well as in other aspects of society. Perhaps it is more simply because of a need to share our personal joy of discovery of men, ideas, and buildings which have long been forgotten and which provide us romantic glimpses of a different way of life - of a time when architects had time to produce an Architecture that combined all three Vitruvian ideals of utility, solidity, and beauty, and when those ideals were truly



valued by society.

THE FIFTH COLUMN has also taken on a definite 'look', one which has evolved over the past volume. This evolution can be partly ascribed to an increasing sophistication in the production of the magazine and to the pressures of standardization to increase its efficiency. However, perhaps the magazine's appearance also reflects an attitude among today's students, an appreciation of elegance and order in the face of a perceived chaos in the outside world. It is this apparent order which has, in spite of variations within the set format, led to accusations of *stodginess* from certain quarters. Though we certainly do not feel stodgy yet, it is certain that the format of the magazine will continue to evolve, as personalities change and as it continues to be a medium for expression and experimentation.

As THE FIFTH COLUMN looks ahead, we realize that much remains to be done and that our lofty goals continue to be just as distant as ever. Many still do not read about Architecture and do not expose themselves to new ideas. Many have not yet learned to observe the lessons of the past and those of the present. Many still think that Architecture is just *building*, while forgetting that it is really a

complete attitude towards life, affecting (and reflecting) man's physical, social and intellectual well-being.

Therefore THE FIFTH COLUMN reaffirms its original premise: "that architectural learning" (which ought to continue throughout an architect's life) "cannot be an *insular process*, but rather one which thrives on varied informational stimuli." (Editorial: Volume 1, Issue 1). We are also retaining our format of loose themes, which will continue to allow for a variety of articles on education, current architecture, and our heritage.

THE FIFTH COLUMN hopes to promote this variety by encouraging communication between the whole architectural community. It is important that this channel of communication is an active one, and we therefore hope to improve it in the coming year. We are excited that more and more different types of people in different places across the world are becoming part of our readership. We are also excited that students in the various Schools across Canada will now be part of THE FIFTH COLUMN through their RAIC Chapters, providing it with sources for new ideas and opinions. Welcome to you all. You are important in giving THE FIFTH COLUMN a national

dimension and infusing the magazine with a new dose of students' *raw energy*. THE FIFTH COLUMN will become a truly *Canadian* student magazine, with interested students in each School acting as Regional Editors, collecting material and having input into the Editorial policy.

All of these new sources will help provide the variety of ideas that is basic to THE FIFTH COLUMN's objectives. However, now the ball is in your, our readers', court. You can help to develop THE FIFTH COLUMN into a magazine of true communication, of response and reaction, of point and counterpoint. We need to look more at current developments in the worldwide architectural community, and we depend upon you to send in your comments and to open up issues of concern. It is important. For THE FIFTH COLUMN remains the last resort of the *blind romantics* of Architecture. Unfettered by the daily world of Developers, Big Offices and Big Money, it remains to preserve that idealistic notion of our profession: that Architecture is an *art*, shaping our society and its way of life, and that we must therefore practice it only with continuing observation, awareness and concern. □

S.W.