

Edited by Rhodri Windsor Liscombe

ARCHITECTURE AND THE CANADIAN FABRIC



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Introduction

Writing into Canadian Architectural History

RHODRI WINDSOR LISCOMBE

Canada is among the oldest of modern states and earliest of postcolonial nations. Its emergence as a nation-state from French colonialism, British imperialism, and United States hegemony involved processes at work in supposedly more established nations.¹ Even before the Confederation of Canada in 1867, architectural design and planning had played a potent role in the formation of Canada's colonial and provincial regimes – including the diverse use of functional and ornamental building by the indigenous inhabitants of its current territory. The Confederation was quite literally *built* from a collection of entities and contesting forces, including those of class, ethnicity, and association, built as much to appropriate its geography from indigenous stewardship as it was to exploit the resources it contained; perhaps appropriately, it was for a considerable period after Confederation – into the 1950s – named the Dominion of Canada.² Set against its very physical extent – sublime in scale and topography – was, until recently at least, the relatively small size of its population, infrastructures, urban development, and built environment. Yet it is this same contrast between relative physical, chronological, and socio-economic dimensions that makes Canada a unique subject of study in terms of political, cultural, and architectural constitution.

A cohering concept for these interrelated developments is fabrication. The term captures the plurality of design mentality and activity, a combination well

appreciated by architects. But it has a broader compass of meaning especially relevant to the postcontact and post-Confederation eras. We speak of the fabric of a piece of clothing, of a building, or of a component of society, often in either a literary or political vein. The verb “to fabricate” and the noun “fabrication” variously describe positive and negative, inclusionary and exclusionary, authentic and artificial methods of creation, constitution, and conduct. Fabric(ation) thus encompasses matters of technical organization, ideological agenda, economic system, and social culture. This confluence of policy, structure, and value was articulated in a speech to the Vancouver Canadian Club by Dr. Henry Tory in August 1907: “The whole fabric of our democratic civilization rests upon our schools, and through them directly upon our universities.”³ In this instance, schools would seem to be only the metaphorical extension of what is taught and learned in them – the fabric of civilization – but schools and universities were (and are) edifices of material structure, buildings that have specified inclusion and, more often than not, exclusion. Their physical presence, almost always imposing and incorporating visual elements iconic of contemporary authority systems, gives clear meaning to what types of philosophy and what types of proponent were allowed to inhabit the “building” of democracy.

The term “fabrication” also emphasizes the constitutive power of modes of continuity and commonality, typified by architecture and technology, while acknowledging contrary phenomena of resistance and rupture. Such reconfigurative and even oppositional power nicely articulates the abstract yet practical components of architectural (and national) articulation. Buildings and plans, across a breadth of design interest, exert considerable influence in their spatial-social situations that reach well beyond the period of their construction – often embracing the transient registers of stylistic fashion. Building and town planning generate considerable economic activity as well as accommodate or promote political and corporate interest, communal institution, or personal lifestyle. Building and planning not only articulate the current specifications of culture but also mark the changing cultural values within their very fabric and fabrication. Moreover, architectural building – the main subject of this anthology – proceeds from a two-dimensional scheme to a multidimensional signification of patron’s requirement and architect’s capability, the latter further modified by user and spectator. And although the facades might express paramount effect, the interiors alike exert substantive affect.⁴ Each aspect of building interweaves a variable mix of utility, technique, and aesthetic – linked to larger understandings of local, national, and international function.

Architecture, in company with nation, is in these senses fabricated.⁵ It is built up from theoretical and technological data through communicative media

of text and image.⁶ An example is the part-utopic, part-strategic scheme for an Arctic town – combining aspects of Modern Movement planning with technologies that seemed capable of enabling Canadian development and sovereignty in the region – published in the 6 January 1962 issue of the *Illustrated London News* (Figure 0.1). The scheme exemplifies how architectural design adapts the imagined to the instrumental in the representation, and re-presentation, of interest within community. Most critically, architecture derives from some form of privilege and some level of authority, a respective capacity that is subject to alteration far beyond the temporal and cultural parameters it usually claims to stabilize. As both container and incubator of meaning, architecture manifests presumptions of society and, during the modern era, of nation, while also registering their respective reiteration and redefinition. From before trans-oceanic immigration into the territory now constituted as Canada, architectural construction – consciously designed building – has served to fabricate identities of kinship and of social and legalistic (national) identity. This anthology relates how architecture is fabricated within place and how it, in turn, has fabricated nation – from mixed sources and with equally mixed objectives and outcomes.

Architecture, both building and planning, across the Canadas counters David Cannadine's assertion that Canada has lacked internally generated monuments, myths, heroes, and traditions.⁷ In fact, quite the reverse is true. The record of drawn plans and built environments – often a rebuilding of past ideals and iconographies once appropriated by other regimes – reveals an extensive, if contested and incomplete, series of national projects. Their variety in part explains the decision to publish this anthology on the socio-political, and thereby economic and cultural, work of architecture. The range and significance of architecture and town planning in the Canadian Confederation bear comparison with the much more extensive and extensively studied United States, and even, to a lesser degree, with the built fabric of Canada's chief colonial homelands, Britain and France.

The clash of competing colonizing systems on the outskirts of Quebec City, the capital of New France, was valorized during the Dominion era in popular books like Dr. W.H. Fitchett's *Deeds That Won the Empire* (which by 1909 had gone through twenty-eight reprints distributed around the British world).⁸ Despite its ethnocentricity – Fitchett was an Australian educator of British descent – the book both responded to and formed public opinion in a manner akin to the discursive impress of architecture in the social arena.⁹ Buildings, especially those in the burgeoning settlements of the Canadas, acted along the lines Fitchett attributed to the deeds of “historic fortitude.” They constructed “the elements of robust citizenship” through their attempted formal

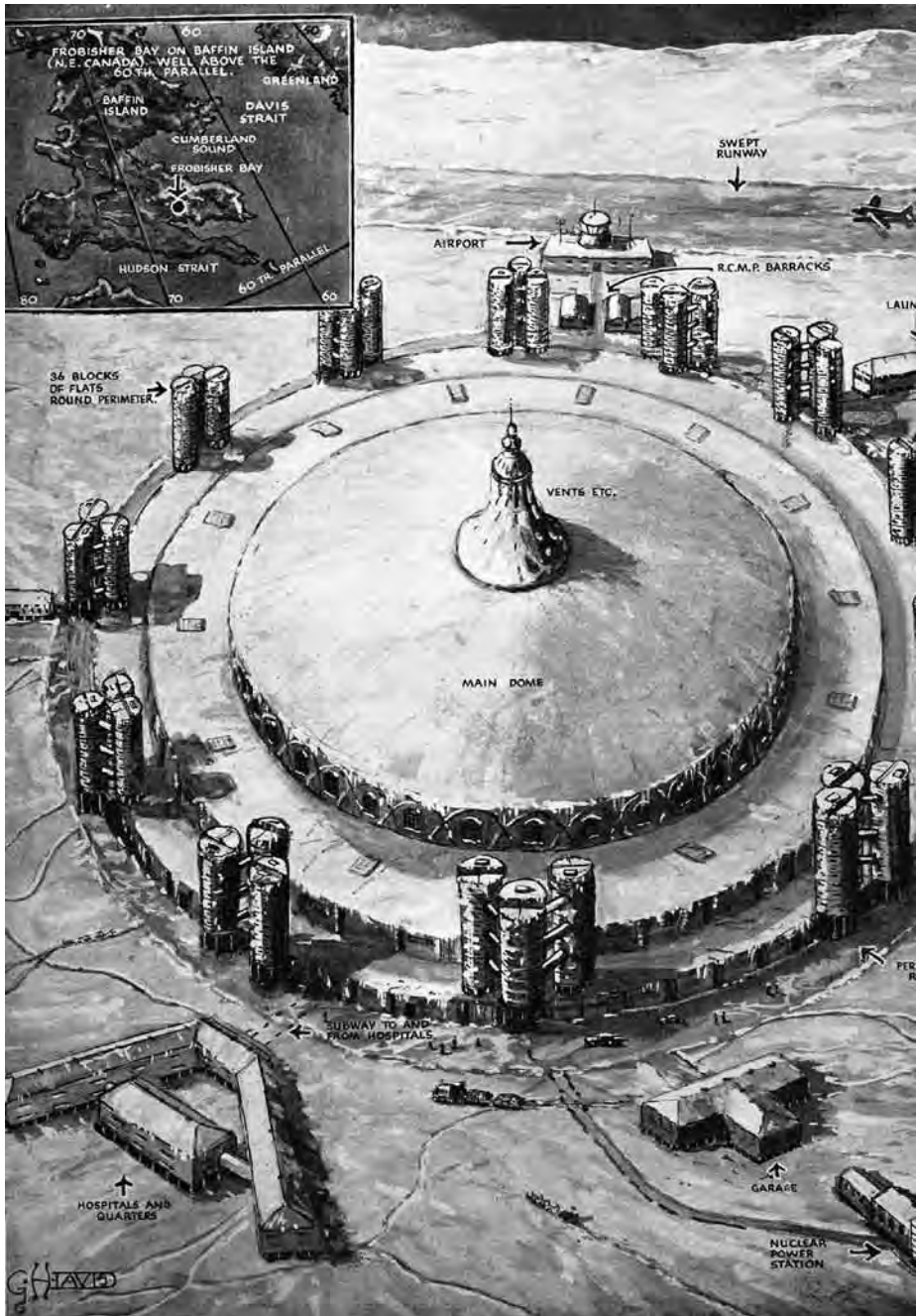


Figure 0.1 Scheme for an Arctic town by the Department of Northern Affairs. | Published in *Illustrated London News*, 6 January 1962.

and iconographic signification of the bonding of political association and personal alliance.¹⁰ Such actions and associations required emblematic and material expression to be signified culturally and realized politically, enlisting architecture's capacity to both mark place and transcend time. However, this same capacity often curtails deeper contradictions between iconographic and geographic considerations. Frequently in Canada, this has been made manifest through the appetite for importing design practitioners and thereby taste (or more truly fashion), usually only partially capable of modification to the remarkably varied "real estate" of Canada.

One example from the early history of permanent British control in erstwhile New France is the commissioning in late 1811 and early 1812 of designs for a British American legislature at Quebec City just prior to conflict with the United States.¹¹ The British governor-in-chief clearly regarded its construction as a component of the strategic defence of colonial authority. In this respect, the commission paralleled Fitchett's location, once conventional, of the generation of national identity in singular events and specific places – each sharing the promise of durability so often ascribed to both nationalism and architecture. In never having been implemented, the designs for this legislature underscore these disjunctions as well as the ideational fabric directed to the fabrication of future national structures. Three drawings for the main facade of two buildings drawn by two architects remain, one for a New Senate House and the other for a Government House. They were submitted from England by Joseph Gandy, Sir John Soane's amanuensis, and Jeffrey Wyatt, later Sir Jeffrey Wyatville (Figure 0.2). And their commissioning and dispatch of plans, elevations, and sections demonstrated the compression of space and time enabled by both colonial and architectural practice.

Fitchett's valorization of "historic fortitude" and its relationship to "robust citizenship" are now highly contested – the latter for its inclination to write and rewrite variations of the same hegemonic narrative, and the former for its idealization of fortitude as the mark of the conqueror, not the survival of the conquered. The built fabric of Canada, as amplified in its writing-up by historians and critics, provides a built chronology of the tensions in the type and tone of discourse over hundreds of years. The material form of the nation's buildings, whether still present or barely discernible in a fading archival photograph, recount a history that reveals, if not fortitude in a monolithic sense, then resilience through diversity.

So the anthology does not purport to be a comprehensive analysis or to pursue a singular critical approach. Neither is the purpose to explore the writing of the history of Canada, nor of nationalism, nor yet of architecture. Instead,

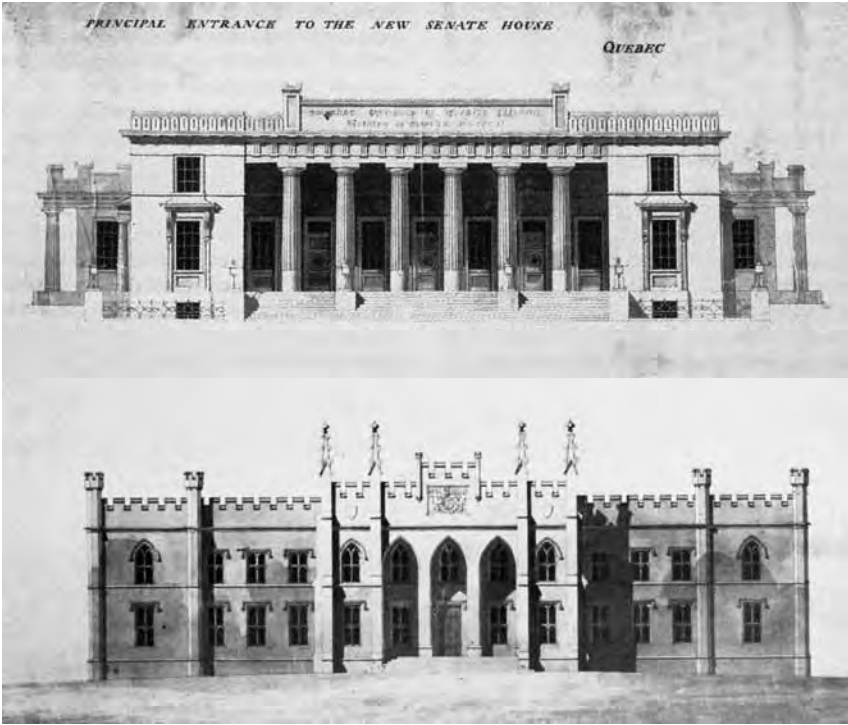


Figure 0.2 Designs for the entrance front of the Senate and of the Government House, Quebec City, respectively in the neo-Classical and neo-Gothic modes, by Joseph Gandy and Jeffrey Wyatt, dated 1812. | Library and Archives Canada, 2358/e002418507 (upper), 2361/e002418504 (lower).

this volume offers a sequence of investigations of architectural form-making and architectural formations of Canadian society through the material and symbolic disposition of structure and space. Underlying each investigation is the contention that architecture concentrates, moulds, and mediates current societal values, while also serving as a more prominent marker of collective experience, memory, and identity. Furthermore, as both a social process and an individual pursuit set in time, architecture additionally integrates different interests and intentions reflective of broader cultural discourse and activity.¹²

The richness of the Canadian structural tradition is admirably recounted – or rather recovered from the varied patterns of settlement, ethnicity, and building typology – by Harold Kalman in *A History of Canadian Architecture* (1994).¹³ It was published at the junction between diverging approaches to writing, and reading, architectural history. Kalman’s focus on major practitioners

or monuments, and on formal (typological) or aesthetic (stylistic) issues, has since given way to closer analysis, or postmodern deconstruction, of the economic and political factors determining both architectural culture and critical discourse. This change is particularly evident in the questioning of essentialist narratives of cultural production as well as in attention to the peripheral, supposedly marginal, spaces of practice and recognition of the place of hegemonic systems in social and critical operations. The study of the history of architecture has also been influenced by the theoretical strategies of the Frankfurt and Paris Schools, exemplified respectively by Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin, or Martin Heidegger, and Pierre Bourdieu, Henri Lefebvre, or Michel Foucault; their publications have stimulated a remarkable legacy of critical thinking, including about the making of space and place in association with the gamut of architectural production represented by, among others, Marc Augé, Edward Casey, and Doreen Massey.¹⁴ These strategies, which illuminate the architectural dimensions (built typology and environment) of epistemology, stimulated an analysis of the everyday scene that was as deeply serious as prior inquiries into the architecturally inscribed cultural sphere.¹⁵ Such unpacking of component factors has an unintentional prior figuring in the diverse composition of standard prefabricated units in the Habitat housing Moshe Safdie designed for the Centennial Exposition at Montreal in 1967 (Figure 0.3).

In company with all academic discourse, architectural history has become a much more multidisciplinary and even interdisciplinary enterprise. In response, this anthology seeks to further the innovative literature on Canadian social and cultural formation exemplified by *Painting the Maple* (1998), edited by Veronica Strong-Boag, Sherrill Grace, Avigail Eisenberg, and Joan Anderson; *Tropes and Territories* (2007), edited by Marta Dvořák and William New; *A Great Duty* (2003), by Leonard B. Kuffert; and *Beyond Wilderness* (2007), edited by John O'Brian and Peter White.¹⁶ All four books bring out the challenges and contestations, inclusions and exclusions, associated with nationalist projects such as Canada. Each also gives voice to those often overlooked in the promulgation of a comprehensive nationalist fabric of governance and culture by dominant groups: most notably women, Aborigines, and those from formerly marginalized ethnicities. Similarly, the essays therein foreground new and often cross-disciplinary investigation particularly associated with historiographical, literary and visual-cultural, feminist, and postcolonial studies. They also draw upon a much more diverse range of documentary materials that give greater prominence to experiential and anecdotal evidence. Lastly, they demonstrate how Canadian social development and cultural production afford a rich vein



Figure 0.3 Habitat housing complex, Expo '67, Montreal, designed by Moshe Safdie. | Reproduced by permission of *Canadian Architect*.

for critical analysis – and how creative practice therefore both denotes dominant values and connotes collective attitudes.

The denotative and connotative aspects of architectural design have been the subject of sophisticated analysis by Umberto Eco. A major instance is his 1973 essay “Function and Sign: Semiotics of Architecture,” which Neil Leach selected for *Rethinking Architecture* (1996), an anthology of innovative theoretical and historiographical approaches to redefining the role of architecture in later-modern society.¹⁷ In this essay, Eco also provides a discerning description of “architectural objects” operating in the realm of “mass communication.” Eco asserts that the “discourse” of architecture is aimed “at mass appeal” and is “psychologically persuasive.” It is “experienced inattentively,” it “can never be interpreted in an aberrant way” but “fluctuates between being rather coercive ... and rather indifferent,” and it belongs to “the realm of everyday life” and is “a business.” Eco captures the range of the interpretation of architectural effect

and affect in buildings commanding national or local urban space argued by contributors to this anthology.

Similarly inclusive definitions of “nation” and “nationalism” are accepted in this anthology. Such scope is marked out by the writings of Benedict Anderson, Eric Hobsbawm, and more broadly David Harvey, Fredric Jameson, and Giorgio Agamben on the legislated and invented, imagined and virtual, exploitative and exclusionary, but it is not limited by any one construction.¹⁸ Consequently, nation and state are considered as having been constituted through such processes as the consolidation or projection of geo-ethnic power through the acquisition of material resources (of wealth, territory, and population), as well as through adherence to shared myth, ritual, convention, and allegiance. The main thrust is held to be the so-called logic emanating from the systems of capital investment, colonial expansion, commercial activity, and technological capability (typified in Canada by the industrial development of the Pre-Cambrian Shield). These systems led to the consolidation of the European – and American – regimes, and it was the competition between these regimes through which Canada began an initial path toward nationhood. This path, as this anthology indicates, comprised many kinds and overlapping scales of collectivized community and allied identity formation – noting that in Canada the term “nation” is further complicated by its use to describe indigenous as well as immigrant socio-political groupings. Thus the operative definition of “nation” here parallels the plural definition of public and private space argued by Ali Madaupour.¹⁹

To register this range of effect and affect with respect to the formation of the Canadian state, the anthology has seven parts. These follow an overall chronological order modified by a thematic analytic, intended to encompass the many levels of architectural agency. The chronological order comprises, first, “Architectural Culture in French Canada and Before”; second, “Upper Canadian Architecture”; third, “Building the Confederation”; fourth, “Reconstructing Canada”; fifth, “Styling Modern Nationhood”; sixth, “Fabricating Canadian Spaces in the Late/Postmodern Era”; and seventh, “Identities of Canadian Architecture.” Building on Kalman’s comprehensive account of Canadian architectural development and typology, the volume seeks to disclose the architectural representation of the ideological impetuses and material conditions at work in building the Canadian Confederation. Attention to impetuses and conditions further reveal the patterns of colonization and alienation, while also setting individual or corporate initiative against larger groupings of economy and culture. In addition, the chapters variously demonstrate the extent to which buildings, and the built environment, operate as a regulatory factor and a

discursive presence in daily life – and that they perform at the conscious and subconscious levels of multiple and singular social activity.²⁰

Consequently, the series of chapters – briefly contextualized in the introductions to each part – begins with initial encounters between Aboriginal peoples and early settlers. Bringing out the significance of wording and imaging preliminary to design execution, Judi Loach considers the fabric of linguistic and phenomenological definitions developed by the Jesuit missionaries to comprehend the indigenous territory and society. This includes indications of how such definitions framed the thinking of those who helped to establish New France. The anthology then continues through a sequence of focused studies of place and space-making that both represents and interrogates the larger constitution of national and architectural culture in Canada. These studies begin with Marc Grignon's reading of a celebrated late-seventeenth-century view of Quebec City to disclose the intense competition to impose sectional hierarchy on the imaginary and real space of New France's capital. The subsequent imposition of British colonial authority contributed to new patterns of settlement and regime in the Maritimes and St. Lawrence Basin that included the renaming of New France as Lower Canada. The different cultural orientation encompassed a switch in architectural idiom from Continental Baroque to Anglo-Palladian norms enhanced by the migration northward of Loyalists during the American War of Independence.

This phase of postcontact world-making reinforced the building-up of such strategic British centres as Halifax in Nova Scotia. It also sustained development in Upper Canada, from 1841 until Confederation defined as Canada West in the United Province of Canada, much of which territory is now contained in the province of Ontario. The most thriving city was York, later renamed Toronto. Its early development depended on the construction of both utilitarian and emblematic buildings that demonstrate the commercial underpinnings of architecture and its diverse agency in establishing civic and national identity. The impact of functional infrastructure, no less than elevated building types like churches, is recounted in chapters by Barry Magrill and Sharon Vattay, respectively on St. James Cathedral and Toronto's urban markets.

Their close analysis of the built form and its social presence is succeeded by three chapters that variously indicate the very significant shifts in scale and ambition, architectonically and politically, associated with Confederation. Like architectural construction itself, Confederation was constructed over time and space to assume an increasing general coherence that yet retained distinct components; additionally, as can occur in architecture and more so in planning, its construction would reveal incompletely considered problems or anomalous

conditions. The bold idea of a continental nation spanning diverse existing colonial entities and as yet unsurveyed territories (being a multivalent response to American Manifest Destiny and a reflection of continued British imperial expansion) was embedded in the architectural magnificence and sophisticated planning of the Parliament Buildings at Ottawa. Christopher Thomas reconsiders what might be termed the architectural and thereby cultural politics of the legislature of Confederation. The narrative of power and place is taken up in the new western terminus of Confederation Canada – Vancouver, British Columbia – by Geoffrey Carr. He deconstructs contesting personal, commercial, and racial motives framing the construction of a high-rise office building for a local newspaper. With comparable attention to design analysis but also to the theorization of cultural practice, Michael Windover places real estate development in the emergence of another media, radio, which, together with the sport of ice hockey, helped to articulate national consciousness.

There follow two chapters examining aspects of the post-Second World War “Reconstruction” of Canada when government policy enacted independent nationhood and engendered compounding popular conviction in a distinct national culture, notwithstanding increasing demographic, regional, and economic change. An important motivator of changed, proto-postcolonial ideology as well as of design practice was the Modern Movement in architecture and planning. Blending architectural with popular cultural inquiry, Lucie Morisset walks readers around and through the immediate, physical, and contingent spaces of the Quebec bungalow. By contrast with this process of adaptation, Alan Marcus charts the less benign impact of utopic modernization onto the federal project of Arctic sovereignty with particular respect to a scheme for redeveloping Resolute Bay, now Qausuittuq, on Cornwallis Island. A different indication of international practice with a national objective is traced in the next part, which also contains a pair of chapters. These reflect the determined official statement of unique Canadian nationhood during the 1970s and 1980s, when architecture was accorded notable prominence. Réjean Legault chooses the rapid designation of the Brutalist-styled Fathers of Confederation Building at Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, to excavate the intersecting architectural and historiographical structure of this later Modernist design idiom. The articulation of mature national status, including recognition of its Aboriginal constituent, is recounted by Laura Hourston Hanks in her study of the National Museum of Civilization at Ottawa. The corresponding external impact of Canadian culture – from high theory to populist quotidian and professional design practice – is demonstrated in three chapters on the contemporary late-, or post-, modern era. Richard Cavell elucidates the formulation by the Canadian

theorist Marshall McLuhan of a prescient but generally misinterpreted ideation of the urban conurbations that seem set to supersede nation. The disruption of the older polity by the globalized economy, but also the fabrication of new coalescing identities through everyday commerce, informs Justin McGrail's critique of big-box stores. In my chapter, I take up the monetarist reconfiguration of community in considering contemporary conditions of design practice in Canada. I focus on the marketing of condominium property at Vancouver – a model of sorts for international urban redevelopment at least prior to the financial collapse of October 2008.

The final suite of chapters returns, first, to the supposedly outdated yet still potent concept of identity and, second, to the related problems of history – appropriately with reference to the relatively recent recovery of the Aboriginal foundations of the modern fabric of Canada. Nicholas Olsberg and Michael McMordie – each incidentally important figures in the study and promotion of Canadian architectural culture – respectively ponder the repute of Arthur Erickson, arguably the first Canadian architect to attain international celebrity, and the meaning of identity for Canadian architectural practice at the Millennium. The final chapter, by Daniel Millette, both measures historical Aboriginal architectural production and introduces its contemporary manifestation into the discourse of Canadian architecture.

These studies of architectural articulation of the engines and institutions of nationhood are obviously selective. But they have been selected on the basis of the confluence of types of architectural and national design, with a relatively greater emphasis on post-1945 development since Canadian citizenship existed only beginning in 1947. Consequently, the geographical sites, architectural issues, and historiographical perspectives are multifarious – a paralleling of the by now conventional description of contemporary Canadian national identity as multicultural. The several perspectives of the contributing scholars also enhance the variety of critical inquiry, which deliberately includes aesthetic, typological, sociological, historical and historiographical, as well as theoretical interpretation of policy and practice in national and architectural fabrication. The anthology is thus about the uses and even misuses of architecture in the modern and late/postmodern project – about, too, the way architecture, from the monumental to the everyday, impacts the individual and social enactment of national consciousness.

Those focused studies of architecture's role in building community and nation merit a broader contextualization of historical events and design idiom. The history of Canada can be described as a fashioning of limited spheres of agency often managed by distant authority in search of new resources, as the

Canadian scholar Harold Innis has demonstrated in his innovative work *Empire and Communications* (1950).²¹ Most notable have been those economic and political institutions successively situated in France, Britain, the United States, and the Pacific Rim. Consequently, Canadian politicians, technicians, and writers have tended to describe the nation in terms of geography, transportation, and resource development (the dynamics and discourses of modernity). Ironically, perhaps, the power of political economy was rather subsumed in traditional architectural history by a concentration on biography, chronology, typology, and taste or style. The emphasis on formal appearance, structural innovation, and monumental building echoed the architectural culture both before and after the signing of the British North America (BNA) Act, which established the Canadian Confederation and the Dominion of Canada in 1867.

The BNA Act built on imperial and regional colonial legislative accommodations predating Lord Durham's report of 1839. The Durham Report modelled the governmental narration – through policy *and* building – of British imperial expansion as a framework of orders and fabrics that came to be known as Indirect Rule. Like the many written and delineated documents of empire, this report refashioned the natural geography and artificial topography constituting Canada.²² Its chief formal characteristics were a series of instrumental hierarchies – covering those financial no less than ideological constitutions of culture – that can be compared with the Classical Orders of architecture.²³ Most obvious were the increasing subjugation (latterly through assimilation) of the indigenous peoples, the separating-off of French Canadian culture (churlishly decried by Lord Durham), and the general privileging of British attitudes and systems whatever the actual demographic of the flows of immigrants and capital that enabled the settlement of territory deemed Canadian.

British power was manifested in, arguably, the initial defining moments of transcontinental national consciousness: the suppression of the Métis freedom movement in 1885 (usually named the North West or Riel Rebellion) and the opening of the Canadian Pacific Railway line to Vancouver on the Pacific Coast in 1888. The accommodations of growing Canadian nationalism culminated in the 1918 Functional Principle – resulting in Canadian representation separate from Britain at the League of Nations – and in the 1926 Balfour Declaration. As capital or capstone of distinct Canadian national structure, the Balfour Declaration acknowledged Canada's autonomy in the British Commonwealth of Nations. It undergirded the 1931 Statute of Westminster, which granted full governmental independence to Canada, except, at its own request, in matters of constitutional change. The apotheosis in the architecture of nationhood was topped out by the final signing-away of any residual imperial authority by Queen

Elizabeth II in April 1982, conducted, with obvious conscious symbolism, in front of the Parliament Buildings (although the current building had replaced the original architectonic signifier of Confederation after its destruction by fire in 1916).²⁴

Significantly, however, the final staging of nationhood occurred midway between resurgent contestations of Confederation. These were the secessionist movements focused in the province of Quebec, which were echoed in western Canadian alienation and in Aboriginal nationalism, including the political recovery of Métis identity. These movements gathered momentum in the wake of the Centennial, celebrated in the spectacular, if transient, architectural display of Expo '67.

It was held at Montreal, then still the capital city of the nation's economy and of its culture of Two Solitudes.²⁵ The organization of Expo '67 revealed the scale and increasing multiplicity of the natural, financial, and social resources of the country. But it also disclosed the very different agendas at play – typified by Moshe Safdie's socialist, standardized Habitat housing complex, as against Buckminster Fuller's capitalist, technocratic United States pavilion. The apparent stitching together through architecture and spectacle of a now more inclusionary and independent confederated nation, from the 49th parallel to the Arctic archipelago and from the Atlantic seaboard to the Pacific shore, masked changes in the economic as much as cultural structure of contemporary Canada. Financial and even popular cultural hegemony had shifted fully to the United States but was beginning to be influenced by the emergence of the Asian economies as well as by the radical alteration in the racial and ethnic demography of immigration.

Nonetheless, the 1967 Centennial marked a high point in federal interventionist policy in the cultural arena, a policy that started with the 1951 Massey-Lévesque Commission on the Arts in Canada. One beneficiary had been the Canadian architectural profession, through the Massey Medals for Design awarded annually across the provinces and territories forming the nation; these were subsequently replaced by the Governor General's Medals in Architecture. These awards exhibit the continuing value ascribed to architecture in defining the local, regional, and national culture. The successive criteria for such awards reflect the evolving politics of national identity. The political shifts were exemplified by the 1986 North American Free Trade Agreement with the United States (subsequently extended to include Mexico) and by the 1992 referendum on the Charlottetown Accord, which aimed unsuccessfully to finally resolve the constitutional place of Quebec/French Canada.²⁶

These conflicted events echoed the contestation underlying the constitution of nations. In Canada this heritage, especially the foundational idea of Two Founding Nations, is manifest in the phrasing of the two “national” anthems. Throughout the era of Anglo-Canadian predominance, this anthem, including in French Canada (i.e., Quebec and to a smaller extent New Brunswick), was “The Maple Leaf Forever.” The anthem was played across Canada on 2 November 1936 by bands at the main broadcasting centres to inaugurate the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation as the latest of the infrastructures, or in this instance, virtual systems or fabrics, uniting the dispersed population and territory of Canada (its television service began in 1952). This anthem recited the transposition onto “Canada’s fair domain” of British paradigms after General James Wolfe’s conquest of New France in 1759. Since well before the repatriation of the Constitution in 1982, the official anthem had become “O Canada,” with its bilingual wording of nation as the “true north strong and free” in spite of the increasingly diverse demographic and ethnicity of its population.

Yet the imaginary nation of each anthem was nonetheless founded on erasure, exclusion, and discrimination, evincing the French political theorist Ernest Renan’s observation, made in 1882, that an ability to forget is one requisite of national development.²⁷ These more melancholy pillars of Canadian nationalism – and indeed of most nationalisms – are depicted with brilliant clarity and ongoing irony in Ken Lum’s 2001 sculptural group *Four Boats Stranded: Red and Yellow, Black and White*, which sits atop the rotunda of Francis Rattenbury’s third Vancouver Courthouse (1906-11, remodelled as the Vancouver Art Gallery by Arthur Erickson and Associates, 1979-81).²⁸ In precise form, yet spectral presence, the models of vessels signifying Aboriginal community, imperial discovery, racial discrimination (the infamous *Komagata Maru*), or globalized labour migration surmount the erstwhile architectural housing of one engine of property acquisition and trading that continues to determine much of the nation’s material and mental fabric. The compounding appetite for resources and profit as well as newer concepts of national purpose and citizen rights have, nevertheless, brought fuller recognition of the indigenous contribution to the structuration of Canada.

A major feature of this structuration is the construction of history.²⁹ By this is meant the definition not merely of chronologies but also of topics, issues, and analytics. In Canada the writing of history is still predominantly a framing of knowing founded in Eurocentric fabrics of thought and action. Even in 1991 the British Columbia Supreme Court could, in the *Delgamuukw* case, determine that the absence of written history and of documented economic and technical

systems excluded First Nations peoples from modern society and full political recognition.³⁰ This judgment articulated a cornerstone – or, in more recent thinking, a weak foundation – of everyday Canadian practice even into the twenty-first century; the deeds to the first house I purchased in 1988 on the University Endowment Lands in Vancouver forbade my selling the property to anyone of Asian origin despite the increasingly Pacific-Asian structure of the local and regional economy. The Eurocentric framework of Canada had been proudly stated in the history published in 1941 by the celebrated Canadian humorist and political economist Stephen Leacock. The “silent growth of a nation,” he wrote in the “Foreword” to *Canada: The Foundations of Its Future*, was a consequence of the “very lack of history” in North America, if yet simultaneously the “foundation of history itself.”³¹ Indeed, Leacock entitled his first chapter “The Empty Continent.” This phrase recalls the importance of natural or artificial transportation systems intended to speed transit across the land mass that became Canada, as exemplified by the quest for the North West Passage. The phrase also houses an implicit epistemological fabric of explicit exclusion. Consequently, it is a highly revealing statement of the desire for evident signifiers of legitimacy – of the array of fabricated tradition, technology, taste, and testament built into architecture.

Architecture, apart from erecting visible infrastructure that stakes claims to possession and authority, has traditionally asserted cultural instrumentality, spanning the past, present, and future – compare Leacock’s Canadian *tabula rasa* awaiting symbolic signification and functional ordering: “Our country waited [for European settlement], its mighty rivers moved, silent and mysterious, from the heart of an unknown continent.”³² Nation for Leacock required the self-conscious assertion of material and mental forms of meaning and technique that he considered absent from the kinship societies of First Nations. A similar chasm of understanding and action attached to the respective significance for indigenes and immigrants of “nature” – a word justifiably identified as the most complex in the English language by the cultural historian and theorist Raymond Williams.³³ Generally, the natural environment for the former enshrined every aspect of their existence, whereas for most of the latter it presented both problem and opportunity: a phenomenon to be controlled and commodified. The hold of nature is manifest in the prominence of natural features or conditions in the symbolic and literary statement of national identity – from the Maple Leaf flag to the mythologies of Canadian consciousness.³⁴ The natural order has regained its pre-eminence in both political debate and professional practice through recognition of environmental fragility. Among progressive design practitioners, nature has become less a phenomenon to

be surmounted than a priority to be sustained through architectural and urban development.

The contrast had been articulated during the era of negotiating Confederation by an anonymous botanist in a review printed in the 1858 *Canadian Nationalist and Geologist*. “Physically considered,” the reviewer commented, “British America is noble territory, grand in its natural features, rich in its varied resources. Politically, it is a loosely united aggregate of petty states, separated by banners of race, local interest, distance and insufficient means of communication.”³⁵ Architecture, and its ascending professional associate, engineering, appeared to most contemporaries capable of resolving this abundance of opportunity but insufficiency of capacity. Architecture could supply artefacts of, as well as for, unified national purpose and organization worthy of “its natural features as fixing its future destiny.” And the role assigned to architecture in consensus and country building was indicated by one of those active in fabricating the political architecture of Confederation and a national citizenry, Thomas D’Arcy McGee. In his article “A Further Plea for British American Nationality,” written for the October 1863 issue of the *British American Magazine*, McGee averred that the idea of Confederation “begats a whole progeny, kindred to itself – such as ideas of extension, construction, permanence, grandeur and historical renown.”³⁶

The long and conflicted history of the territories and peoples grouped under the geo-political structure of Canada produced a diverse built fabric and related array of architectural or planning projects. These represent the processes, powers, and peoples involved in its evolving (re)fabrication. As argued above, the terms “fabric” and “fabrication” capture the artifice underlying national policy no less than architectural, cultural, or commercial enterprise. They also allude to the scripting and imaging preceding the aesthetic, ideological, and technical enactment of collective – including architectural – development.

As noted, back in 1811 Sir George Prevost, the governor-in-chief of Lower Canada, confronted United States aggression leading to the War of 1812. He clearly regarded the construction of government buildings for Lower Canada (only designs for the Government House and the New Senate House apparently survive) as the emblematic, yet also real, statement of strategic purpose (see Figure 0.2). These would visualize and organize the military and governmental infrastructures required to defend the geographical colonial construct of Quebec, the former New France contiguous with Upper Canada (later consolidated as the province of Ontario). The architects Joseph Gandy and Jeffrey Wyatt understood their role, or rather the role to be performed by the imagined facility of governance. It was to represent the origins, as well as the assertion,

of British colonial *puissance*. So they appropriated historical architectural iconography favoured in contemporary British privileged society. Even if the Classical Orders – and the Medieval Gothic also presciently proposed by Wyatt in advance of the neo-Gothic Houses of Parliament at London (1837-65) – could be modified to the United Kingdom, their formal language and structural logic were alien to British North American conditions. However, architecture has always served the causes of cultural transfer and/or power projection through surmounting as much as appropriating the natural domain and local conditions. That no set of designs for the Lower Canada Parliament was implemented and no building begun does not diminish the signification of architecture's work in the fashioning of collective identity and in the formation of society. The drive for what became the United Province of Canada was accompanied by the appropriation of Classic Revival edifices in urban centres such as Kingston and in Montreal for its legislature; and the creation of the Dominion of Canada in 1867 had been preceded by legislation commissioning a new federal administrative complex of impressive buildings at Ottawa.

Comparable interplays between imported architectural convention and adapted architectural idiom grew alongside immigration. The rapid diversification of the Canadian demographic occurred against the backdrop of sheer territorial size, stimulating the ambition for uniform national *and* distinctive regional architectural idioms. This divergence is evident in one major component of the confederated regime. The construction of the transcontinental railway and telegraph system became architecturally, and even culturally, objectified in the series of hotels built successively by the Canadian Pacific, Canadian Northern, and Grand Trunk Pacific Railways. Hotels, alongside rail tracks and telegraph lines, enabled the consumption of geographical resources. This in turn opened up new spaces of commercial and social enterprise, which were central to modernity; to its chief modality, commodification; and to its main construct, the nation. In moving goods and, more so, people and capital across territory and time, the railway and the telegraph created new, and reinforced older, economies of land that stimulated the development of other building types. Most visible among these were tourist facilities ranging from grand hotels to therapeutic facilities and mountain lodges (Figure 0.4).³⁷

Their function was compound, serving not only as commercial platforms but also as corporate symbols *and* national icons. The intermixture of financial with ideological imperatives typified the imbrication of economy with nation during the later-modern era. Similarly, the Canadian railway hotels – castles, for one insightful historian of architecture aware of their regulatory and mythic



Figure 0.4 Aerial view of the Château Frontenac Hotel, Quebec City, drawn by the architect Bruce Price in 1886. | Reproduced by permission of the Maxwell Archive, John Bland Canadian Architecture Collection, McGill University Library.

operation – interwove current stylistic fashion in hotel design with local or localizing precedent.³⁸ Generally, the commissions derived from a comparable confluence of complex motive or heritage. For instance, the Château Frontenac, built in 1892-93 on a commanding eminence above and alongside the historic capital of New France, was commissioned by the Canadian Pacific Railway's Yankee chief executive, William Van Horne (who took British [Canadian] citizenship to receive his knighthood) and designed by his Yankee architect, Bruce Price. It was purportedly modelled on the nearby Château St. Louis in Quebec City but primarily derived from the Scots Baronial conventions of British and US urban and tourist railway hotels. These Baronial hotels had aped the town houses and country mansions that the Scottish nobility could afford to build partly as a consequence of the second wave of industrial expansion in Britain. Whereas they had reinvented the French Renaissance-inspired tradition of their architectural patrimony, the railway entrepreneurs in Canada endeavoured to create an instant patrimony of national enterprise.



Figure 0.5 Exterior of the Supreme Court of Canada, from *The Supreme Court of Canada and Its Justices*. | Photograph by Philippe Landreville. Reproduced with the permission of the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, and courtesy of Health Canada, 2010.

The hotels aestheticized the harsher appropriation of place being enacted by resource and agricultural development alongside the rail and telegraph lines. Simultaneously, they accommodated the mobile middle and leisured classes plus the agents of external and internal empire; their basements usually included larger rooms for travelling salesmen to display merchandise to local merchants.

Thus these apparently benign monuments of economic growth and civic pride indirectly proliferated the tensions of national fabrication, particularly via the process of immigrant settlement and further alienation of Aboriginal traditional lands. Nonetheless, the touristic consumption of topography enabled by the railway hostleries conveyed the simulacra of national identity founded on external economic and governmental forces.³⁹ Eventually, the architectural mode assumed a nationalist marque by virtue of longevity in Canada. This nationalism was exemplified by the Château-Baronial visage of the Confederation Building (Department of Public Works, 1928-31) and of the Supreme Court of Canada (Ernest Cormier, 1938-46), each built west of Parliament in Ottawa (Figure 0.5). Other nationalist cultural manifestations, exemplified by the officially endorsed Group of Seven painters, depended on imported techniques of a privileged consumption of landscape that thereby assumed complementary and complementary characteristics of identity.⁴⁰

These mechanisms of nation-state have continued into late/postmodern conditions and are evident in architecture's integration into our present fame economy/culture, as encapsulated in the epithet "starchitecture." This has accompanied the re-emergence of the city-state and urban region in the physical manifestation of nationhood (exemplified by patriotism engendered by the 2010 Winter Olympics held at Vancouver). Metropolitan and national status requires the centring of real cultural mass on signature architectural edifices as part of acceptance onto the global stage of international political economy. With respect to Canada, the narrative began in the post-Second World War decades, signalled by the flurry of international press coverage on the design of the Kitimat townsite for Alcan in northern British Columbia (1952-53) (Figure 0.6).⁴¹ Appropriately for Canadian socio-economic history, its original conception melded company town with utopian community, blending architectural modernity with architectural Modernism. A comparable admixture of universalist and regionalist civic nationalism occurred in the redevelopment of Canada's major urban sites: Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver. Schemes for large-scale commercial and, latterly, market housing accommodated local and national ambition through the attraction of offshore capital and high-profile architects. Examples in Montreal are the Place Ville Marie office complex (1958-62) and Stock Exchange (Victoria) Tower (1962-66), respectively designed by the (Chinese) American architect I.M. Pei and Italian architect-engineer P.L. Nervi (Figure 0.7).

The necessity of international sanction is equally evident in Toronto. There, Viljo Revell's competition-winning 1958 scheme for the new City Hall elevated the architecturally undistinguished town into the realm of transoceanic celebrity

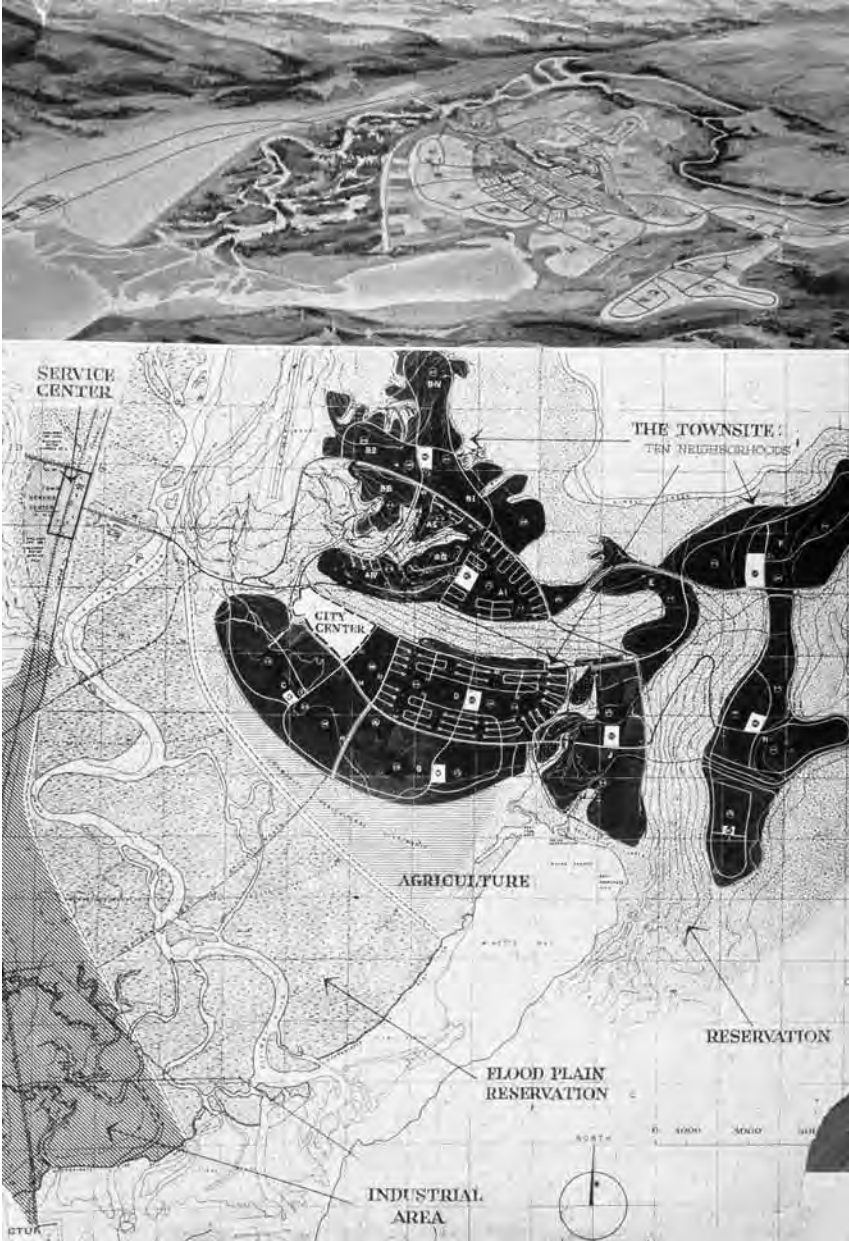


Figure 0.6 Planning map and scheme for the Kitimat townsite in northern British Columbia. | Published in *Architectural Forum*, July 1954.



Figure 0.7 Aerial view of Montreal showing the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce (lower right), architects Peter Dickinson with Ross, Fish, Duchenes and Barrett, 1958-63; and Place Ville Marie office complex (centre), architect I.M. Pei, 1958-62. | Reproduced by permission of the Visual Resources Centre, University of British Columbia.

upon completion in 1965 (in collaboration with the local firm of J.B. Parkin Associates) (Figure 0.8).⁴² Revell's twin elliptical office stacks sheltering the visibly accessible domed civic debating chamber heralded an ongoing series of instant concoctions of civic/national identity through signature, chiefly commercial, architectural commissions. These superseded the prestige briefly accruing to the series of public-housing schemes managed by the federal Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (Figure 0.9). Typical of the iconic commercial complexes were the elegantly functionalist dark glazed towers of the Toronto Dominion Centre (1963-69), designed by the German-born American architect Mies van der Rohe.



Figure o.8 Toronto City Hall, architects Viljo Revell with J.B. Parkin Associates, 1962-65. |
Reproduced by permission of the Visual Resources Centre, University of British Columbia.



Figure 0.9 Model of the Jeanne Mance Housing Project, Montreal, 1958, designed by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation in conjunction with Greenspoon, Friedlander and Dunn, and Jacques Morin. | Courtesy of *Canadian Architect*.

The sanction of international prestige has continued in three more recent commissions in which overseas architects have collaborated with local firms: the British architect Will Alsop with Robbie, Young and Wright on the Sharp Centre for Design at the Ontario College of Art and Design (2001-04) (Figure 0.10); the American Daniel Libeskind with Bregman and Hamann on the Michael Lee-Chin “Crystal” at the Royal Ontario Museum (2007-09); and the Canadian-born American Frank Gehry, who returned to his native city when designing the major refurbishment of the Art Gallery of Ontario (2004-08). An opposite flow is typified by the Uruguayan-born Canadian Carlos Ott, whose international renown began after he won the competition for the Bastille Opera at Paris in 1983.

The story continues in the furious redevelopment of downtown Vancouver as a high-density, high-rise residential precinct affording safe haven to the capital and persons of the global elite in Canada’s western domain. One episode in what has come to be termed “Vancouverism” is the hiring of the world-renowned UK firm created by Norman Foster to design Jameson Tower.⁴³ Although slowed by the 2008-09 financial collapse, the tower’s financial and aesthetic remit is its status as a skyscraping lynchpin of development intended to transform a section



Figure 0.10 The Sharp Centre for Design, Ontario College of Art and Design, Toronto. | Photograph by Richard Johnson, www.interiorimages.ca.

of the city into Rodeo Drive North (a financial extension of Vancouver’s reputation as Canada’s less clement northern outpost of the American movie industry, popularized as “Bollywood”) (Figure 0.11). Foster’s name, almost more than his architectural creativity, is deployed to assure developer and prospective purchaser that they have invested wisely in this civic site of national participation in the grounding of world capital flow. The concrete architectural but also populist cultural dimension of capitalism is typified in one accoutrement – beyond the plethora of high-end appliances – supplied for the denizens of a hotel-cum-residential condominium constructed several city blocks to the northwest of the Jameson. This condominium, the Shangri-La (designed in 2004 by James Cheng, a successful Vancouver neo-Modernist, and opened in 2009), was planned to include an outpost of the Vancouver Art Gallery. A kiosk for works from its collection, this facility recalls the longstanding social cachet of the fine arts, one that corresponds with architecture’s continuing heritage of transforming wealth into gentility and power into civilization.

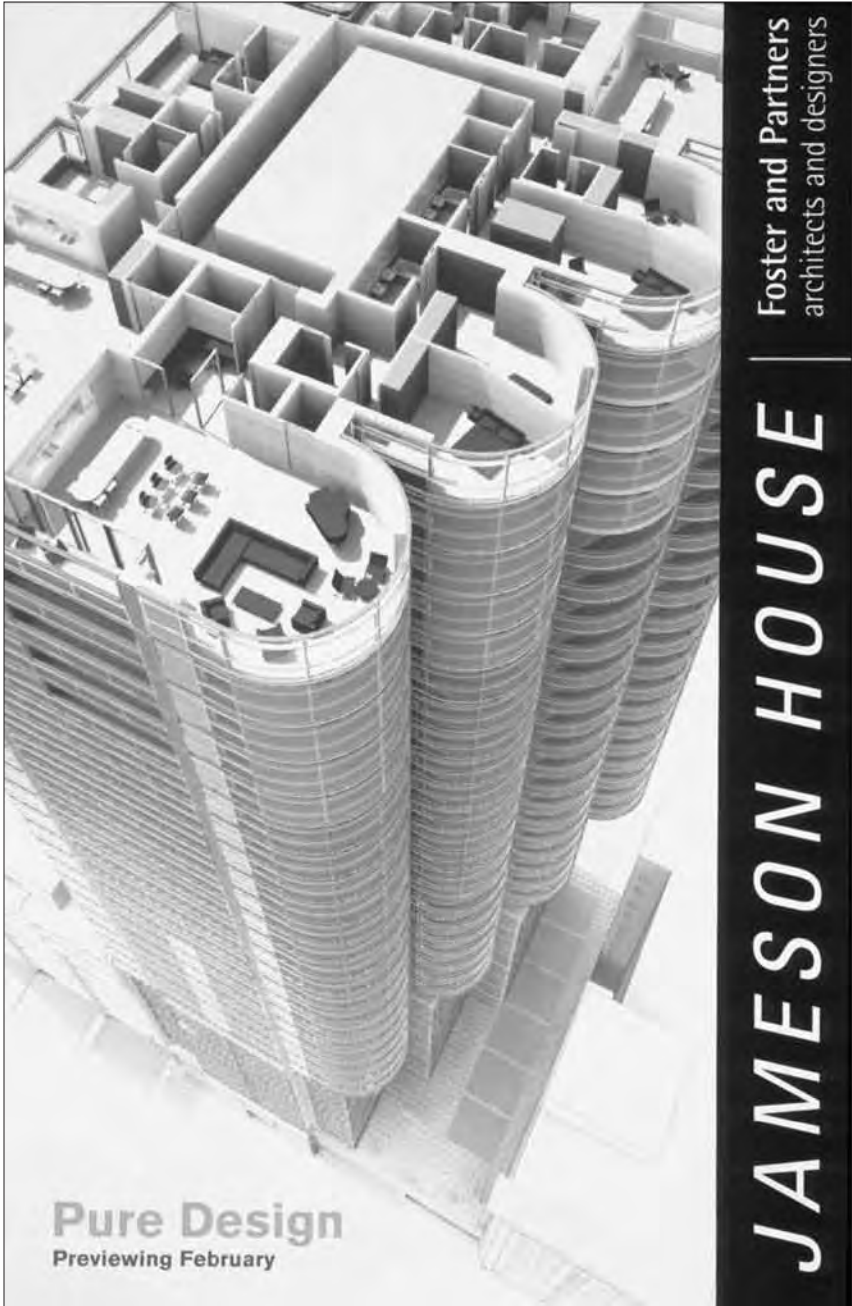


Figure 0.11 Advertisement for Jameson House Condominium, Vancouver, architects Norman Foster and Partners. | Published in the *Vancouver Sun*, 2 November 2006.



Figure 0.12 Courtyard and upper terrace of the Canadian Chancery, Washington, DC, architect Arthur Erickson, 1983-86. | Photograph by Ricardo L. Castro.



Cultural institutions have performed a comparable function of national political validation. In the context of Canada, Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau sought to validate full Canadian independence as much through the fast-tracked commissions for the National Gallery of Canada and Museum of Civilization (originally of Man) in Ottawa as through repatriation of the Constitution or the erection of Arthur Erickson's Canadian Chancery in Washington, DC.⁴⁴ The chancery's architectural reconfiguration of the neo-imperialist Classicism of the adjacent Republican bureaux is matched by the parodic alignment of its facades with the focal point of the US Capitol (Figure 0.12). Erickson's inventive response to detailed specification and overwhelming context was matched by Safdie's modernization of Gothic and Château-Baronial iconography in the National Gallery. The historical referencing manifested the intersection of mutually validating international and national visual culture on display in its galleries.

The problem of art collecting and cultural property is more apparent in the ethnographic displays within the Museum of Civilization. It was designed by Douglas Cardinal, whose ancestry interweaves that of indigene and immigrant. He conceived a building that purportedly synthesized the great compositional themes of northern American landscape as the proper formal expression of postcolonial multicultural nationhood.⁴⁵ Howsoever inspired by his own reverence for nature, Cardinal's design concept depends upon the range of technical and visual formulas that constitute the communicative force of architecture. The museum and gallery operate as conveyors of meaning that replicate the cultural politics of collective economy in company with most legislative, institutional, and corporate architecture. Their material presence corresponds, indeed, with the nation-building mythic power Fitchett invested in military deeds such as the Battle of the Heights of Abraham.

In some respects, Fitchett's interpretation of the constitutive power of events can be compared with the societal impact of architecture. The power of architecture in imposing the claims of regime, objectifying collective values, and asserting belief or status or identity has been central to its theorization. Vitruvius, Alberti, Palladio, Chambers, Ledoux, Semper, Le Corbusier, and Rossi represent those more readily recognizable writers on the socio-cultural performance of architecture.⁴⁶ The potent and pervasive conveyance, or visual/spatial coalescing, of meaning for publics and individuals was, for another example, aphorized by the celebrated Arts and Crafts architect and architectural theorist William Lethaby in a phrase from his 1891 book *An Introduction to the History and Theory of the Art of Building*: "Architecture is the matrix of civilization."⁴⁷ Part of architecture's power derives from its multidisciplinary practice and enterprise,

together with its close connection with the dynamics of social operation and individual subjectivity. The panoply of architectural design fabricates identity in constructing the built environment of community, including nation and state.

NOTES

- 1 These processes are examined in Colin Coates, ed., *Imperial Canada, 1867-1917* (Edinburgh: Centre of Canadian Studies, 1997). See also J.L. Granatstein and Norman Hilmer, *For Better or for Worse: Canada and the United States to the 1990s* (Toronto: Copp Clark, Pitman, 1991).
- 2 J.M. Bumsted, *The Peoples of Canada: A Pre-Confederation History* (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 2009); J.M. Bumsted, *The Peoples of Canada: A Post-Confederation History* (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 2008). See also Kenneth McNaught, *The Pelican History of Canada* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1982).
- 3 Tory, a faculty member at McGill University, was recommending the establishment of a provincial university for British Columbia, and his speech was repeated in the *Vancouver Daily News Advertiser*, 28 August 1907; see newspaper cutting, University of British Columbia Archives, President's Office Fonds, box 8, file 4. A more recent example is the advertisement for the AON Corporation on the 2007 in-flight entertainment aboard Air Canada airliners, which claims that the insurance and investment business has made AON "Part of the Fabric of Canada." The journal of the Society of Architectural Historians of Australia and New Zealand is entitled *Fabrications*, and Joseph Rosa, curator of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art exhibition *Glamour: Fashion + Industrial Design + Architecture*, entitled his introduction to the accompanying publication "Fabricating Affluence"; see Joseph Rosa, "Fabricating Affluence," in *Glamour: Fashion + Industrial Design + Architecture*, ed. Joseph Rosa, 16-23 (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004). In a similar vein, Ada Louise Huxtable has published *The Unreal America: Architecture and Illusion* (New York: New Press, 1997).
- 4 The literature on affect, and on the nature of affect in the everyday environment, is examined by Nigel Thrift, "Intensities of Feeling: Toward a Spatial Politics of Affect," *Geografiska Annaler, Series B*, 86, 1 (2004): 57-78. A related aspect of ordinary experience crossing into the architectural domain is lifestyle; see David Chaney, *Lifestyles* (London: Routledge, 1996), and David Bell and Joanne Hollows, *Historicizing Lifestyle: Mediating Taste, Consumption and Identity from the 1900s to the 1970s* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2006). Two other critical perspectives are offered by Witold Rybczynski, *Looking Around: A Journey through Architecture* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 1992), and Stewart Brand, *How Buildings Learn: What Happens after They're Built* (New York: Viking, 1994).
- 5 The complex processes outlined here receive more detailed analysis in a series of articles edited by Carmen Popescu for *National Identities* 8, 3 (2006). Also of particular relevance are Carmen Popescu, "Space, Time: Identity," *National Identities* 8, 3 (2006): 189-206; and Peter Scriver, "Placing In-between: Thinking through Architecture in the Construction of Colonial-Modern Identities," *National Identities* 8, 3 (2006): 207-23.
- 6 The visual aspects of architectural representation are dismissed in Kester Rattenbury, ed., *This Is Not Architecture: Media Constructions* (London: Routledge, 2002), most notably by Alberto Perez-Gomez, "The Revelation of Order: Perspective and Architectural Representation," 3-25.
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