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[See table of contents](#)

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By Marc-K. BÉDARD

One of the most recent of architect Arthur Erickson's works is, without doubt, among the best examples of the concept of man in his environment and, in the case we are considering, of man in the city.

A structure of simple, light lines at first glance, this ensemble reveals itself of a great complexity when viewed more closely.

A green tower fifty-five storeys high was to be erected instead of this magnificent work rising from the earth after five years of construction. But in fact two decades elapsed between the desire to enlarge the premises of the court-house and the materialization of this ensemble comprising a new court-house, government offices and a media centre, the whole surrounded and surmounted by gardens. The highest part of the complex has only seven storeys, while some activities take place below ground.

In 1959, it was foreseen that, sooner or later, the existing courts would no longer fulfill the needs of justice. During the middle of the sixties, Prime Minister W.A.C. Bennett proudly unveiled a scale model of what he called "the highest structure in the Commonwealth". This was a court-house with restrained lines, flanked by a tower almost 200 metres high housing government offices and premises, the revenue from which would be deposited into a fund for universities.

Such a project could not materialize so easily. Here and there, people were worried and wondering what would be the impact of a building of this kind. The ideas of grandeur of some became the baleful visions of others.

The plan for the development of the centre of the city envisioned by the municipal officials of that time foresaw the creation of a public square. One of the members of the Creditist government was very troubled at the idea of this project; he wondered what kind of people would visit this square (he thought of hippies) and felt that it would be exactly the place for a beginning of riots... A few months later, in 1972, the New Democratic Party came into power. A municipal councillor of Vancouver who had been opposed to the construction of the tower was now a member of the new government. From that time the wind changed direction, blowing away the old plan. The architects of the tower were thanked and replaced with Arthur Erickson and his team, who had already acquired fame by works as revolutionary as Simon Fraser University. They had finally found a man who understood the relationship between the city, its inhabitants and its landscape. After two years of preparatory work, the construction began in December of 1974. "A hole that promises a magnificent city" was the headline in the *Vancouver Sun* one day in June, 1977.

An Enchanting Heart

Robson Square (the name by which this ensemble is known), which extends over three quadrilaterals, was conceived in terms of the general context of the city's centre and represents, beyond any doubt, an important step in the concretization of the planning objectives of the heart of the metropolis of the West. The low population density (1000 persons on two of the three subdivisions of the complex) and the emphasis placed on the pedestrian and the landscape are in the forefront on the city's new norms. The matter of low density of occupation itself provoked a debate. It must be believed that neodemocratic and creditist philosophies differ somewhat in this regard...

Costs of construction, estimated at the outset at 50 million dollars, climbed to 70, then to 80 and, later, to 120 million. Inspired by the increasing costs and the change of government, in March of 1976 the former president of B.C. Hydro, Gordon Shrum, eighty years of age at the time, was named director of a corporation newly created by the Creditist government in order to assure good management of the construction of the new complex. The costs did not stop climbing, nonetheless, since from 120 million estimates went to 135 and then, finally, to 160 million. However, the final cost would be 139 million in September 1979.

Robson Square complex is also known to its builders by the name of *Block 51-61-71*, which corresponds to the numbers of the three quadrilaterals where the ensemble is located. Each section possesses its own character, while at the same time integrating perfectly with the ensemble.

Number 51 designates the quadrilateral occupied by the former court-house. Erected at the beginning of the century, it was in an

A RESURGENT ART

By Andrée PARADIS

Judging by a number of recent events — exhibitions, lectures and publications — the art of collecting is once more resurfacing. Linked to evolution in business, it contributes to the increase of the consumption of cultural assets and, in our country which has had to undertake a serious recovery during the last thirty years, it demonstrates the maturity of the market in the matter of the object of art.

The conference of the fourteenth of last April, organized jointly by the *Financial Post*, the *Business World* and Canadian Art Council, with the cooperation of Air Canada, allowed sixteen lecturers to examine the different problems presented at this time by the formation of a collection. Is it possible to add to the enjoyment of a work of art the assurance of a considerable eventual profit? It seems that from the answers to this question, the suggestions and the warnings, a consensus has finally been established among the participants. Arnold Edinborough, the tireless builder of good relations between the world of business and that of art, has summed it up in this way: "One must be cautious, seek advice fully, collect with enthusiasm and be lucky."

Peter C. Wilson, director and former president of Sotheby Park Bernet of London, had previously recalled that the need to collect goes back to the beginning of time, that man loves to surround himself with things that serve him as memory and that he unconsciously allows himself to be fascinated by their beauty. Many civilizations buried the deceased with objects endowed with the power to drive out demons and to bring the dead back to a new life. The treasure of Tutankhamen is eloquent on this point.

The collector's virus is contagious; it influences potential collectors. Ron Longstaffe of Vancouver is one of these enthusiasts. His collection of Canadian and international works is one of the most important known. According to him, the collector has many advantages: he is not a member of committees; he acts as an individual; he is master of his choices. Aware of the share of the irrational that this demanding adventure requires, he tries to obtain the desired object at any price. Longstaffe advises buying regularly, while taking care to view several works by the same artist before making a choice. A collector has never finished his collection; until the last moment he increases it, improves it and does not worry about the errors he may commit. If the future proves that he has been farsighted half the time, this is already an excellent average. One must not hesitate to go back and take an interest in works that one had originally put aside. One must, if possible, develop the intelligence of the eye, the perception of the work¹ demanding time and thought, but from the moment when the *encounter* takes place, pleasure has no limits. Further, the size of the collection is not important, provided that it is meaningful. Finally, it is not desirable to limit oneself to purchases of regional works; on the contrary, it is necessary to have the curiosity to go and view elsewhere. Works live better in a climate of confrontation.

These words of an authentic collector certainly point out that no preparation is required to become a collector, no more than to have talent. It is enough to begin with what is needed: to evaluate one's aptitudes and to plunge into the adventure¹.

1. Cf. the article by Sylvie Halpern in the present issue, p. 78.

(Translation by Mildred Grand)

uncertain style related to neo-classicism. This ensemble is to become the next home of the Vancouver Museum.

Number 61 designates the central building which houses part of the offices of the government at Vancouver, a skating rink and an outdoor public square, conventional and fast-service restaurants, an inside public square, a media centre that groups two auditoriums, an exhibition hall and six lecture halls, all topped by gardens (whose installation has cost more than 20 million dollars) and, naturally, waterfalls that add great charm to a site already fairly enchanting.

From White to Pink

The idea of building a skating rink in this complex gave rise to another controversy, still bearing on the value of the land. However, since the skating rink was to be built under the street, the dispute did not last long.

Emphasis has been placed on ease of access for the public; the corridors leading to the government offices are wide and attractive and, aside from a few exceptions, the offices are separated only by screens. Everywhere in the interior we find leisure spaces provided with trees and lit by natural light.

Here is an interesting feature: the architects demanded a special concrete mixture for the construction of the complex. A disused quarry in the Okanagan Valley was re-opened to allow the extraction of a material that, at the time of its commercial exploitation, carried the revealing name of *Okanagan Sunset*. This material, of a rosy tone when dry, becomes pink when wet. All the concrete of the complex, therefore, is of a whitish shade turning to pink in the rain, which is unique and contrasts strongly with the gray and dreary colour of conventional concrete. The transport of this material by railroad over more than 500 kilometres swelled the cost of the structure of the complex by 25 per cent.

The View at Night

It is during an evening stroll in Robson Street, through the centre of the complex, that we savour all the grandeur of Arthur Erickson's last masterpiece. Facing us is a scene difficult to express in words without lessening the visual impression. Between three veils of water, three majestic stairways of four levels develop, which each lead to landings that cut the steps on the diagonal. Behind the three veils of water there appear windows through which can be seen the furnishings of the offices. The ensemble sparkles in the light, with the profile of the monumental court-house as its background.

The conception of the new court-house and its location at the southern end of the complex (in quadrilateral 71) "reflects the necessity of a distinct, strong identity", although a bridge situated over Smithe Street links it to the rest of the ensemble.

Traditionally, the architecture of the court-house in North America took on an aspect of dignity and solemnity. In order to present a more contemporary image of the premises where justice is done, some persons recently decided to give a heavy, massive appearance to the building that houses these premises, or to stop only at the administrative aspect of the law, by setting up the hearing chambers in buildings for ordinary offices.

Nonetheless, Arthur Erickson devised a new concept that he summarizes in this way: "The proceeding of justice, the very essence of ethics at the heart of a society, bear enough importance that we give them a very special significance in the city, a symbolical presence. To offer an image of the dignity of the law, the courtroom should not exclude the participation of the public. The law is derived from the customs of a society, not the other way round. The effectiveness of the exercise of justice depends on its availability to the public. The court, by reason of its architecture, frequently and involuntarily intimidates and confuses many persons who must spend long hours at the court-house."

Watering by Computer

It seems that, in the case of the new court-house at Vancouver, they have tried to answer this question. First, they made sure that interior communication problems were solved in such a way as to assure the security of the members of the administration. In this way they dissociated the private element from the public one while allowing free movement of the public to the court area, which became the only place to which the *private* and *public* sectors led. The court chamber resembles a little amphitheatre; it is furnished with comfortable seats, and its décor is severe. For the same reason, the chambers all open onto the interior public promenade. This is planned in such a way as to give an overall view on the rooms, which rise in front of the spectator on five storeys. From the mall, we discover a real hanging garden. Each landing is amply supplied with

plants that a computer waters at different times in accordance with the diversity of the species that grow there.

Above us there is an immense glass roof, supported by a multitude of intertwined tubes. This metallic framework of very geometric lines gives to this space a majestic appearance and leads the viewer to experience a feeling of extraordinary size. Outside, there is the city with its buildings and, like a canvas in the background, the mountains that endow Vancouver with a peculiar uniqueness. Finally, to complete the picture, there is the sun that, at the end of the afternoon, flashes its rays through the windows and the tubes, creating shadows that only further accentuate the complexity of the image.

(Translation by Mildred Grand)

THE PARALLEL REALITY OF CARL CHAPLIN

By Michel MILLETTE

Realist, futurist, naturalist and optimist: these epithets describe Carl Chaplin. On account of his way of perceiving reality, some persons, including Chaplin himself, describe his style as an approach to graphic journalism. His canvases, indeed, are more than works of art; they are definite options.

From photographs, Chaplin combines, modifies, displays and succeeds in composing a great variety of subjects. He has set up files by compiling samples of temperature, spectacular landscapes, advanced technological studies and the actions of several human groups, as strange as they are unusual. These assembled elements permit him to paint around a central theme: evolution.

The theme is so universal that it probably enables the artist to paint in perfect freedom on innumerable subjects. However, most of Chaplin's works, if not all of them, are specifically centred on the forces of nature.

An Atomic World

Inscribed in the tradition of dreamers, Chaplin has created a world particularly his own, another planet, similar to ours, with an identical biochemistry but following evolution of a different kind. Thus his works do not resemble narratives. Maps, graphics, stories and ecological systems developed by him are used as background for his whimsical universe.

"Because I have painted atomically bombarded cities," Chaplin says, "I have often been called a pessimist. Nonetheless, strange as it may seem, I have always considered myself an optimist. Human and natural forces are real, threatening and frightening, but I survive all their vagaries."

Questioned about his illustrations on postcards, Chaplin answered that an atomic war would put an end to his project. He has just finished one titled *Bombarded at Moscow*. *Wish you were here*, which is to be added to a series on the same theme based on various cities. The next one will sentence Washington to a similar fate.

"Living on our planet is an adventure," thinks Chaplin, adding, "Events nowadays take place very rapidly and with great power, which makes them as exciting as they are entertaining." It is this spirit of adventure that is the driving force of his work.

At the age of thirty-three, Chaplin divides his life between the north of British Columbia and Vancouver, where he has his studio. Hailing from Windsor and Detroit, he went to British Columbia to satisfy his thirst for nature — which inspired him — while remaining near the cities where he could enjoy the benefits of technology.

Chaplin uses various techniques: coloured pencils, serigraphy, pen and spray-gun. Those he makes use of as a commercial artist influence his work to a great degree, to such a point that some apply the term "photographism" to describe his productions.

It is almost impossible to distinguish the works of the painter from those of the illustrator and both are equally known. "The world of fine arts rejects me because I use my talents as an illustrator and

I stand apart from traditional style," says Chaplin. For their part, commercial artists do not consider him one of them because he is devoted to fine arts.

This artist constantly blends shadow and light, nature and technology, joy of living and terror, as well as fantasy and reality.

There are many who think that Chaplin's canvases are terrifying on account of the subjects he treats. He is of the opposite opinion. "What frightens me is to see people frustrated or hurt by bad use of technology."

Pastime: The Dream

Chaplin realizes that he was attempting to balance two states of mind. "I did not want to lose control by using reality improperly; on the other hand, I did not want to move too far away from the concrete by going deeply into fantasy. But it was too late. I had jumped at both extremes. My brain has been irrevocably insensitized, to the point where I cannot say if I am dreaming or awake."

Many of Chaplin's canvases have current events as subjects. Therefore, at the beginning of the American-Iranian crisis he produced shirts on which could be read, below the American eagle, "Iran, don't trample on me".

Carl Chaplin began to take up drawing at the age of four or five, without much realizing what was happening to him. "It was a matter of a natural extension of my favourite pastime . . . dreaming." The neighbourhood children escaped through television. As his family was the last to acquire a set, Chaplin had to call on his own resources in order to express his fantasies. The only means of assessing the images that came to him was to transpose them onto paper as precisely as possible.

His work as a commercial illustrator brought him international acclaim. His ecological involvement, which is reflected in his canvases, opened new fanciful horizons to him. Chaplin has to his credit some twelve solo exhibitions and his pictures are to be found in collections in Alaska and in the Caribbean; they are known from London to Hawaii.

Chaplin's illustrations have appeared in *Playboy*, *Vancouver Magazine*, *Owl* and *Communications Art Magazine*. He has produced posters for the Greenpeace Movement, the provincial government of British Columbia, educational books and sleeves for records.

A graduate in biology, Chaplin is very conscious of man's influence on the evolution of his planet in this twentieth century.

(Translation by Mildred Grand)

toward the essential according to a rational system of registering iconographic documents.

Public Archives have been collecting manuscript works, both sound and visual, since 1872 in order to fulfill their mandate, which consists of assembling the documentation and the illustration required for a better knowledge of Canadian life. In most countries, archives are limited to public documents. Canadian Archives have expanded this programme. Besides the divisions of federal archives, manuscripts, computerized archives, library, and national collection of maps and plans, we find that of the national archives of film, the national photograph collection and, finally the Department of Iconography.

The collection of the Department of Iconography directed by Georges Delisle is estimated at 67,000 documents. Judged on the number and the quality of works of art of a documentary character this collection, according to its director, is one of the finest and most complete in America and one of the most important in Canada, where there are also four other institutions specializing in Canadian iconography: the McCord Museum in Montreal, the Museum of New Brunswick in St. John, the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto and the Glenbow-Alberta Museum in Calgary.

It is surprising that this rich iconography is little known by the milieu interested in the aesthetic. And yet some discoveries can be made from the abundance of graphic works of the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries. Unique in its genre, the collection of water-colours produced by the British army topographers comprises several sketch-books or small albums. Raymond Vézina, curator of works of art at the Department of Iconography, remarks that, on account of their fragility, these works do not bear handling and exhibition well; this explains the attitude of the Archives curators which, for a long time, led them to put the emphasis on conservation rather than on distribution. We must also take into account the scanty interest bestowed on the subject of the work of art by historians and art critics of the 19th century, their preoccupations being directed more toward its formal side. Many methods succeeded each other and are still in use to understand the multiple aspects of the work of art. We owe to Erwin Panofsky a method of interpretation which he also called iconography and which recommends analyzing the contents of the work while recognizing the value and the necessity of formal analyses.

We must also mention that the time has now passed when, at the Archives, iconography lived on the margin of cultural trends. The situation changed in 1972, at the moment when National Monuments established the Programme of the National Index in order to computerize it¹.

Concerned about decentralization, the secretary of state at the time, Gérard Pelletier, had wished that a general inventory of Canadian museums collections be undertaken. Since then, in spite of the scepticism of many, the gigantic task, which consists of indexing millions of objects across Canada, has been continuing with the help of the computer. The programme works well. One hundred fifty museums were participating in it by the end of 1978, and the network included thirty-four terminals². Very quickly it became evident that Public Archives should take advantage of this climate of good will and proceed with the production of a computerized thesaurus of iconographic terms required to create a general inventory of collections by computer.

The great collection fever has now lessened considerably, in view of the rarity of works of good quality. On other hand, distribution is in full swing. Recent developments in the technique of information have made possible the use of practical machines at an affordable price, thanks to which information is becoming easily accessible. The computer is able to store and instantly locate the most minute details. However, it tolerates neither good will nor chance. It is necessary to describe the data precisely according to established norms. Those which the Department has defined are divided into five categories: archive description; physical description; iconographic description, nerve centre of the whole system, since the analysis of the subject is the objective of iconographic collections; description of the artist; and historical description.

When technology permits the recording and the transmission of good images, the Department intends to add reproductions of physical description to the computerized catalogue. Experiments carried on at present with holographic documents and video-records will bring fundamental changes in the distribution of works of art.

At present, researchers can find documentation with the assistance of 40,000 black and white negatives, some 1,300 colour transparencies and 95,000 cards of the old catalogue progressively replaced by computerized data. To this can be added works on colour microcards, slides and the 9,000 files on works of art. Finally, there are excellent works or publications in the form of catalogues.

A conference on the development of norms required to establish a computerized inventory of works of art was held at the Public Archives of Canada in Ottawa the first, second and third of last November. This conference, which assembled specialists from five countries, had been organized jointly by the Department of Iconography of the Public Archives of Canada, the Programme of the National Index of the National Museums and the Group of Iconographic Research by Computer of Laval University.

DISSEMINATION BY COMPUTER

By Andrée PARADIS

To orientate iconography toward automation in order to better disseminate it is to give a greater number of research workers and enlightened amateurs access to an important visual documentation. It is to assure at the same time the protection of the treasure that, usually, poorly endures handling and ageing. This conversion of direct use to an electronic image with the aim of attracting new users demands a profound knowledge of the very nature of the medium, of its astonishing possibilities and also of its limits.

Before entering objects in the index it is necessary first to find norms more precise than those used until to-day (in the Archives, by historians and keepers of records), which leads to a reflection on the discipline itself in order to obtain new indices. On the other hand, it is necessary to learn how to limit the choice of codes so as to avoid confusion. Conversion to the computer should be directed

By Way of Example

One of the sectors of iconography that will benefit from the development proposed by the new techniques of distribution is that of the water-colour. This particularly involves water-colour of the 18th and 19th centuries, of which the Archives possess a remarkable collection. It is known that museums, as well as collectors, are more and more interested in this genre so long unappreciated; aquarellists are emerging from obscurity and are the object of new interest from a public feeling nostalgia for other times. Water-colour reached its zenith in England at the beginning of the last century. This technique arose in the Middle Ages, and later Raphael, Dürer, Holbein and Cranach used it. And then the Dutch at the beginning of the 17th century and, finally, the English, sensitive to the beauty of nature, adopted this form of expression and made it famous. In Canada, Champlain and others had painted in aquarelle. After the Conquest, the British, chiefly the garrison officers and the civil servants, as well as their wives, practised it. The taste for topographical description for rustic scenes developed, but the works kept their intimate character, being little distributed outside the circle of family and friends. To the most renowned aquarellists, Peachey, Fisher, Heriot and Cockburn, we must add Colonel Alexander Cavalie Mercer, a master still not well known, who had studied topographical drawing at Woolwich under Paul Sandby. He had an eventful career. He served in South America during the first decade of the 19th century and distinguished himself at the Battle of Waterloo. From 1823 to 1829 he was posted at Quebec. After another sojourn in Great Britain he returned to Canada in 1836, this time to Nova Scotia, and remained there until 1842. He retired to England, near Exeter, where he died at the age of eighty-five. Several of his water-colours have unfortunately suffered the ravages of time, but, on the whole, we find great finesse of interpretation and great intelligence in his choice of subjects; and there is a sense of space that relates him to Friedrich.

The subjects chosen by aquarellists are varied; they are principally scenery, waterfalls, rivers, lakes, mountains, flora, fauna,

landscapes inhabited or uninhabited, rural or urban. Portraits are rare, as are interior scenes. In other respects, they supply excellent documentation on the elements of urban architecture and on social conditions. All these aspects have been carefully studied; it remains to determine the aesthetic side of these works.

The Results of the Conference

The Conference gave rise to the formation of a working group on Canadian iconography which will contribute to fostering the establishment of lists of the sources which are already being produced for artists who appear in the collections of the Department of Public Archives of Canada as well as in those of various institutions specializing in Canadian iconography. To establish these lists, they will begin with the work itself, dictionaries, works of reference and, if necessary, the document from the archives. This group consists of twenty-five persons who represent institutions specializing in Canadian iconography, universities, museums and archives not specializing in iconography, and an art magazine.

In conclusion we mention another positive element of the Conference, the announcement of the coming publication of the Guide of the Department of Iconography by Raymond Vézina, a genuine bible which will inform on the collection and its means of dissemination.

1. See the article by Michel Gauquelin, *Le Programme du Répertoire National — Un peu moins de fouillis dans les musées*, in *Vie des Arts*, Vol. XXII, No. 90, p. 78.

2. Here follows the list of the nineteen art institutions that participate in the programme: Art Bank of the Canada Arts Council, Agnes Etherington and Confederation Art Centres; Galleries: National, Owens at Mount Allison University, Simon Fraser University, Sir Wilfred Laurier and Stratford Universities; the Glenbow-Alberta Institute; Fine Arts Museums: Beaverbrook at Fredericton, Edmonton, Hamilton, Kitchener, Waterloo, New Brunswick, Montreal, Ontario, Nova Scotia, Vancouver and Winnipeg.

(Translation by Mildred Grand)

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