



CANADIAN MODERN

PUBLISHER Dalhousie Architectural Press

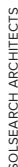
REVIEW Graham Livesey

During the last 15 years, there has been a renaissance in Canadian architectural publishing, supported by the efforts of the Canada Council and other funding agencies, private sponsors, and numerous dedicated journalists, scholars, curators and architects. In particular, the intrepid publishers must be commended. This includes stalwarts such as Douglas & McIntyre, newcomers like Figure 1 Publishing, and international houses such as Princeton Architectural Press.

One of the key players in this vital landscape is Dalhousie Architectural Press, established over 35 years ago in Halifax, originally as TUNS Press. Landmark books by the press include *Patkau Architects: Selected Projects 1983-1993* (1994), which did much to put Canadian architecture on the map. In 2013, the press began a series called Can-

adian Modern, overseen by Michelangelo Sabatino. Numbering six books to date, the series is effectively a set of exhibition catalogues that concentrate on archival material.

George Thomas Kapelos's *Competing Modernisms: Toronto's New City Hall and Square* (2015) and Steven Mannell's *"Living Lightly on the Earth": Building an Ark for Prince Edward Island, 1974-76* (2018) provide detailed documentation of two crucial, and yet opposite, buildings in Canadian history. Kapelos's book, which complements an exhibition held at Ryerson University in 2015, comprehensively presents the Toronto City Hall competition of 1958. He includes a fine essay on the history of design competitions in Canada (especially city hall competitions), along with spreads on the finalists and 50 other entries. What is missing is a more lengthy description and analysis of the winning entry, a building that has since achieved iconic status. Nevertheless, the book is a significant contribution to the study of Canadian architecture.



ABOVE A 1976 poster by Solsearch Architects describes their P.E.I. Ark project. It was an insert in the *Journal of the New Alchemists* in 1977, and available by mail order. **TOP RIGHT** Submissions for Toronto's New City Hall and Square competition were arranged for adjudication in the Horticulture Building on the grounds of the Canadian National Exhibition. **BOTTOM RIGHT** The 1959 Canadian Trade Pavilion in Kingston, Jamaica, was a geodesic structure designed by Jeffrey Lindsay, who founded the Fuller Research Foundation Canadian Division.

The most unfamiliar story in the series is told in Cammie McAtee's *Montreal's Geodesic Dreams: Jeffrey Lindsay and the Fuller Research Foundation Canadian Division* (2017). Lindsay was a Montreal-born engineer who became enamoured with the work of U.S. inventor Buckminster Fuller. He established a Canadian arm of Fuller's research outfit in 1949, and experimented with geodesic structures in the following years. Notably, he also provided structural design services for Erickson and Massey's mall at Simon Fraser University, and the firm's projects for Expo 67.

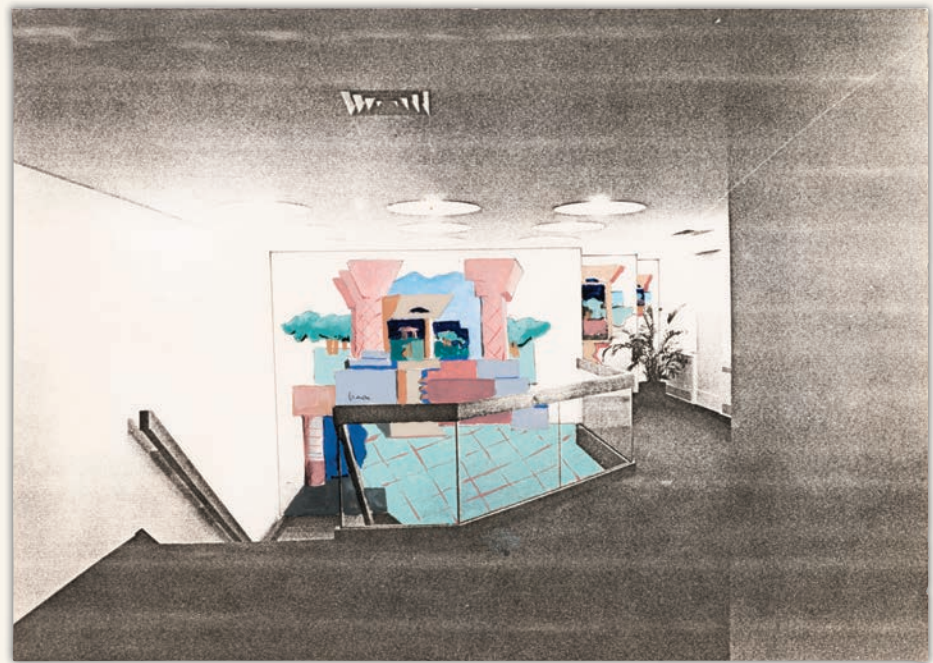


Michael Windover and Anne F. MacLennan's *Seeing, Selling, and Situating Radio in Canada, 1922-1956* (2017) explores the early social and spatial territories of radio. The authors, an architectural historian and a communications historian, cover topics such as the modern architecture of radio broadcast stations, and the prominence of radio consoles in the sitting rooms of Canadian homes. The book accompanied an exhibition held at Carleton University in 2017.

The book that launched the series, Linda Fraser and Michelangelo Sabatino's *Arthur Erickson: Layered Landscapes—Drawings from the Canadian Architectural Archives* (2013), presents drawings from the Arthur

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Postmodernist Myths

and Other

Michael Graves, Claghorn House sketch © Michael Graves Architecture & Design. Michael Graves, Concept for murals in Associated Metals and Minerals Offices, 1979, image source © Michael Graves Architecture & Design. Trashpak home waste compactor advertisement © Trashpak Inc.

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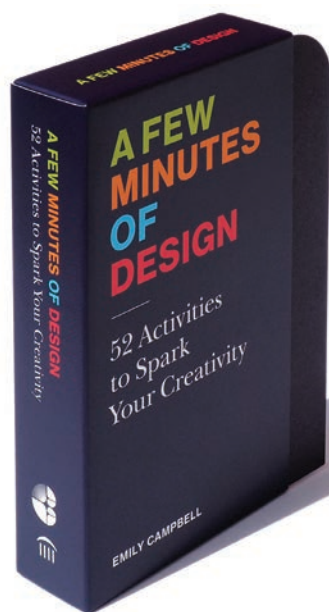
Erickson collection at the Canadian Architectural Archives. The material was showcased in a small exhibition designed by the Marc Boutin Architectural Collaborative and held at the Nickle Galleries on the University of Calgary campus in 2013. Featuring projects from 1953–1968, the catalogue's highlights include pencil and ink renderings of the Stegeman House (1954), the Filberg House (1958), the Dyde House (1960), the Thomas House (1960), and the Graham House (1966). These are interspersed with drawings of larger projects from the period.

Arguably, the most important book published so far in the Canadian Modern series is Marco Polo and Colin Ripley's *Architecture and National Identity: The Centennial Projects 50 Years On* (2014). Elegantly written, the text explains the history leading up to 1967, and documents key buildings across the country constructed to mark a most

auspicious year in Canadian history. The publication matches an exhibition held at the Confederation Centre of the Arts in 2014. In this case, the subject deserves the treatment of a more extensive publication, as many of the projects remain institutions of provincial and national import.

Dalhousie Architectural Press continues to produce timely and important books in its recognizable 8" x 8" format. The quality of the books is generally high, although the format seems dated at this juncture. Nevertheless, the books contribute to an overall view of Canadian architectural culture that is essential to promote.

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A Few Minutes of Design

By Emily Campbell (Princeton Architectural Press, 2018)

REVIEW Lawrence Bird

This new set of cards offers 52 activities intended to “Spark Your Creativity.” The cards run the gamut of design, from typeface to architecture, divided into colour-coded suites on different themes. Their appearance is engaging—colourful, with attractive, vivid photographs. Unfortunately, the activities are less so. This reviewer field-tested the cards with two groups: a gathering of architects, and a family of kids who aren’t especially focused on design. The response was lukewarm, which is not what you want from a set of cards meant to excite people about design.

The set is by Emily Campbell, who has a background in design and the design education of children. Perhaps for this reason the cards serve more as a meditation on what makes design tick, rather than engaging users in the design process. Many of the tasks seem condensed from what might be a week-long project—for example, look for forms in a picture of an engine, and then create a new form based on them. Distilling this to an ostensibly five-minute task robs it of its potential richness.

The bigger problem is that the assignments (because this is what they often feel like) use examples of design—a set of icons, a typeface—as the basis for instructions like “What rules would govern the shape

of nos. 2 and 3? Draw them.” There may be such a thing as “design principles”—this set seems to assert that design should be logical and pleasing. But that’s not where design generally starts.

A few of the problems are open-ended in the right way—for example, jumbles of lines that the reader is encouraged to join together. But most seem quite proscriptive, even when not trying to be. While as a writer I like words, the accompanying texts hem in the reader. They could be edited down by half, which would help make the tasks more open. Other activities are too abstract. If you want to explore how two objects might be joined together, the way to do it is by playing with the objects themselves, not by drawing them from photographs.

Considering that the set is clearly conceived as a pack of cards, it is a lost opportunity that there doesn’t seem to be any way to turn them into a game. Or to use the cards themselves as tools—stencils perhaps, or building blocks to be stacked or slotted together. That was the approach taken by Charles and Ray Eames’s *House of Cards*, an altogether more playful (and oblique) introduction to design.

However, this card set did generate in each test group a discussion of “what is design?” These cards, while trying hard, don’t have the answer. Perhaps raising the question is enough.

Lawrence Bird, MRAIC is an architect, planner and visual artist. He works at pico Architecture in Winnipeg.