

*Si requiris monumentum, circumspice*  
A happy remembrance of Roy Willwerth

A marble plaque above the simple tomb of Christopher Wren in the crypt of St Paul's Cathedral, London, tells the seeker that buried here is the "builder of this church and city." He was a man, it says, who devoted his life "not to himself but to the public good." For those looking for more, it admonishes: *Lector: Si requiris monumentum, circumspice*: "Reader, if you are seeking his monument, Look around you." The old-fashioned courtesy, tact, and fidelity which characterised Roy make Latin at his memorial requisite. These words came immediately to mind, though, just as with Wren, so with Roy, we must decline monument in the plural. His *monuments* are many. In these parts, if you come upon an edifice constructed in the last twenty-five years which stands out because it matches and exploits its site perfectly, because it serves its purpose exactly and makes those who use it happier, and because it edifies the souls of those looking upon it or passing their lives in it, probably Roy Willwerth built it. Consider this hotel and how it subordinates itself properly to Government House and conforms itself to Keith Hall, or remark how the Dartmouth Library ploughs like a ship towards the harbour mouth whose waters light it, alternately delighting and terrifying the readers, and contemplate the King's Library set as the jewel in the crown. Before I worked with Roy, I had defined an architect as someone using *your* money for *his* dream. While all of his buildings show his character, they are the results of his discerning and respectful listening to user and patron.

Talk of Soul requires a shift from Latin to Greek, for, though he was an engineer and had mastered the technicalities, Roy was the Archetype of the Architect, the master of the other arts, directing them and the whole to the good. He had the principles, the *archai*, as his methodical habits. He understood deeply that design and building were above all psychological processes serving psychic and communal ends and that architecture was first and foremost a political and psychological activity. That will come out in the two stories (of the many many stories I could tell!) with which I shall close.

**Wine and the Rococo.** We decided that the King's Library, in an altogether contemporary way, using the latest techniques, some developed here just for this building, and adapted to the site, would recall the 18<sup>th</sup>-century origins of the College and our Province. We borrowed ideas and techniques from everywhere between Province House (on which Dr Marie Elwood was indispensable), Harvard Yard, Quebec, the Residenz of the Prince Bishop of Wurzburg and beyond. Nonetheless, nothing was copied. We tried to learn from the happiest of architectural spirits, the 18<sup>th</sup>-century Rococo, which I had been studying for twenty years, so that those who worked in the Library would enjoy its lightness, harmony, and ease. Our idea seemed best expressed in the passage in Haydn's *Creation* where Adam and Eve awake and walk hand in hand in joyful wonder through the Garden of Eden. So Roy, Richard, and I met in two quite different places: their

offices at Cobourg and Robie whenever required, and every Tuesday at five in my rooms in the King's Quad. There we surrounded ourselves with reproductions of 18<sup>th</sup>-century art (of which I had a copious supply), listened to the music of the period, and shared a bottle of wine. Roy was always conscious that when builders change their minds, costs rise out of control. Thus we adopted the rule of the Medes and the Persians, whose laws, the Scriptures remind us, "do not change but standeth fast forever": to be final every decision had to have been made both in the sober prose of the architect's office and over wine and music. This certainty proved decisive at a crucial moment.

**Ratios.** After the plans were complete, the Provincial Government required us to submit them to the Librarian of a large technocratic university in Upper Canada. This lady was up-to-date in respect to libraries designed for the new technologies of information retrieval. Her preliminary report faulted our design because, in her view, the ratios between the spaces did not conform to the latest norms for their various uses. We had, however, made up our minds. Roy, with a skill I never ceased to admire, changed almost nothing; he simply reworked the values assigned to the spaces. The moment of reckoning came when the lady arrived at King's to view the reworked plans and discovered that they were the same as the ones she had been sent earlier. She was furious, and the King's President of the time was in a panic. Roy, Richard, and I, with the adamant certainty of the Medes and the Persians, insisted that the expert allow Richard to walk her through the plan explaining its reasons. Whether our reasoning or Richard's charm did the trick we shall never know, but this lady was for turning, and she not only approved the plan but persuaded both the then President and the current Librarian of Dalhousie, whose support we also required, to do the same! Thus we learned the virtue of the old Latin precept: *Stare super antiquas vias*.

Ingenuity, Fun, Lightness of Spirit, Determination, Courage, Loyalty.

I have never known a better man or a better architect, and I do not expect to see Roy's like again. I, and we all, have suffered a great loss but we are consoled because all around us we see and rejoice in his monuments. *Circumspice!*

Wayne Hankey

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