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Médailles Massey Medals 1964

Report of the Jury/Rapport du jury

The 18 Massey Medal Awards for 1964 are all works of very high quality, and taken as a group they show that Canadian architecture has an enormous range, not only in scale and importance, but also much diversity due to climatic and cultural differences, plus variety in formal expression as is the case with recent work in Europe and the US.

There are works that restate in a most expert manner a classicism of Miesian origin, such as John B. Parkin and Associates' Headquarters Building for Imperial Oil; a house in Rockcliffe by Hart Massey, and LeMoynes, Edwards, Shine and Charles Elliott Trudeau's Laboratories and Dormitories for McGill University. At the other extreme, stylistically speaking, are designs in which the architect has sought a freer and less abstracted solution to program, where at its best the interplay of form, volume, and light is intimately based on function. As examples of the latter we have especially The Group Health Centre of Jerome Markson, and The Central Technical School Art Centre of Fairfield and DuBois. We might also include in this category two of John B. Parkin and Associates' medal winners, the Airport Control Tower at Toronto, and the Administrative Wing of the Thomas J. Lipton Plant and Offices at Bramalea. In still another idiom, Ian Davidson in his house on Bowen Island, and McCarter Nairne and Partners in the C. G. Brown Memorial Pool, adopt static square or rectangular forms, compose them elegantly with ancillary spaces, to produce serene and dignified environments. Both of these projects are object lessons in the expert use of ordinary materials.

A number of churches had been earmarked for inclusion in the exhibition, some of them exemplifying considerable refinement, others more notable for their

daring and flamboyance. The Jury selected the Church of St Gerard Majella by Affleck, Desbarats, Dimakopoulos, Lebensold, Sise to be a medal winner by virtue of both strength of idea and completeness in execution; it successfully exploits the nature and technology of materials to control form and light.

Among all of the high and elementary schools that had been presented for consideration St Paul's High School in Winnipeg, by Libling Michener and Associates, stood out as most satisfyingly consistent and competently treated. This represents a superior statement of what has now become a familiar prototype. On the other hand, the Footbridge in Bowring Park, designed by Blanche van Ginkel in collaboration with the structural engineer, Ove Arup, is a completely unique thing. It demonstrates how a relatively minor work of civil engineering can by sensitive handling become an object as perfect and satisfying as a jewel or a hand tool. The load balances elegantly at one point; the deck between the ribs is arranged not only for the convenience of the pedestrian but so as to follow the bending moments, and its alignment is echoed by the handrail.

Generally speaking, we were not surprised to find the outstanding institutional buildings to be in or near the large cities of the industrialized East; but the overwhelming pre-eminence of the Vancouver architects in free-standing house design is an even more conspicuous fact. The Forrest and Grinnell houses of Thompson, Berwick, Pratt and Partners, and the Maltby and Rayer houses by Fred Thornton Hollingsworth and Barry Vance Downs, illustrate this style at its best. Obviously terrain, climate, and vegetation play a very large part in facilitating the success of these houses, yet the mastery shown in their design and construction still seems

astonishing. A perfect and rare relationship seems to exist between the creative imagination of the architect and the technical skills for effective execution. To a large degree a vernacular architecture, the outstanding examples are also very original and personal.

Two of the medal winning projects are of particular importance as milestones in the development of prototype solutions to the pressing contemporary social and economic problems of urban development. Lothian Mews by Webb Zerafa Menkes, besides being very expertly handled architecturally, has proved its high appropriateness as an intimate specialty shopping centre. Jack Klein and Henry Sears' Don Valley Woods Phase I is the latest of a number of projects in suburban Toronto that confront the problem of high-density town house development, making of the continuous basement garage the means toward creation of a significant pedestrian street uniting the houses above ground. In this low-cost architecture, great refinement of detail may be impossible, and consequently the ability to think through a clear general concept becomes all the more essential.

The Jury has found that all of the entries were of a quality that made studying them a rewarding experience, and feel they have been able to premiate a group of projects each of which shows a high level of professional artistic and technical competence, and the ability to follow through a consistent development of good basic ideas to competent realization in detail.

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