

MARKET PLAYHOUSE IS EXCITING PROJECT

FEB 24 1964

A visit to Toronto's next theatre finds one surrounded by masonry and scaffolding, but the prospect is already exciting. The Colonnade Theatre is being created behind wooden partitions in the middle of the second-story shopping mall. It will be very much part of that mall when it is finished, sometime in April, for more little shops will be created around it in its construction. In form, the Colonnade is, in fact, theatre in the market place, which is George Luscombe's name for it. Irwin Burns, who is the president, general manager and owner of the Colonnade Building, is apt to call it "a display salon" when he is trying to explain its presence to city officials, but he has had it in mind as a theatre since he conceived the Colonnade as a miniature city within a city and brought it to existence with the help of his architect, Gerald Robinson (another friend, incidentally, of Luscombe, who is director of Workshop Productions). The Colonnade Theatre is to have multiple uses, to hedge the financial loss that Burns recognizes as inevitable in theatre. It will be used for children's programs, fashion shows, lectures and concerts in the daytime. In the evening it will be a theatre, used by groups which will maintain its standard or possibly by one repertory group. In plan, the new theatre is to be a very intimate (190-seat) theatre in the round. In form it is a reinforced concrete bowl cantilevered on four legs, which are four great posts. A steep amphitheatre is wrapped three-quarters of a circle around a generous apron stage, backed by a small proscenium opening with an upper stage above it. The whole construction fits into a space of 50 feet square by 25 feet high.



Irwin Burns

The Burns appreciation of theatre is not new. As producer for the Arts Theatre Club he presented Bertolt Brecht's *The Great Scholar Wu*, with Leon Major directing, and Len Petersen's Eskimo play, *The Great Hunger*. He has had experience, therefore, in two intimate theatres—the Central Library and Centre Stage.

He reports that he has had generous advice from Toronto theatre people but that his major help has been from George Luscombe and from Jack Winter, who is dramaturge of Workshop Productions.

How will Workshop Productions fit into the Colonnade, we wondered? Luscombe and Winter were available to explain: Workshop Productions will retain its basement home at 47 Fraser Ave., create and try out its productions there, then (if they are satisfactory) bring them to the Bloor Street show-shop. In fact, papers were signed this week for the April opening of the Colonnade Theatre by Workshop Productions with its last play, *After Compeigne*. And Luscombe and Winter are working on their next new creation, as yet untitled, which will be ready for the Colonnade in June.

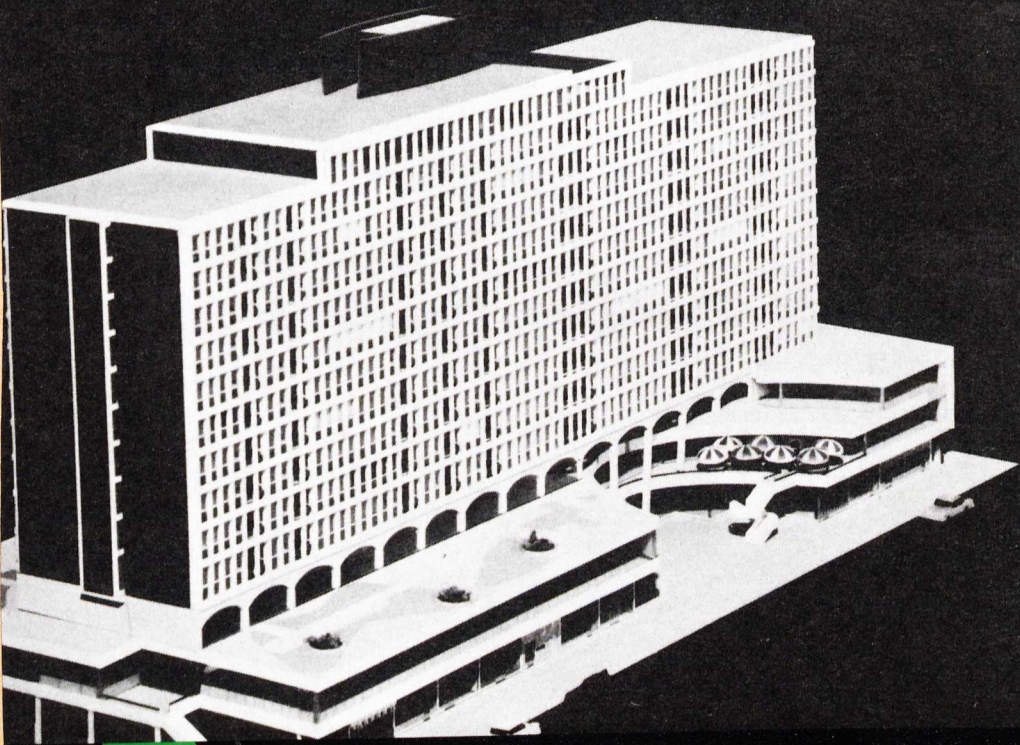
Other groups will be invited to the Colonnade. Already George McCowan has expressed an interest in presenting *The Knack* there, as has Tony Ferry in presenting Brecht on Brecht. But Workshop Productions has the veto on other Colonnade presentations, so that a standard can be kept.

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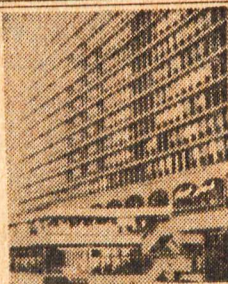
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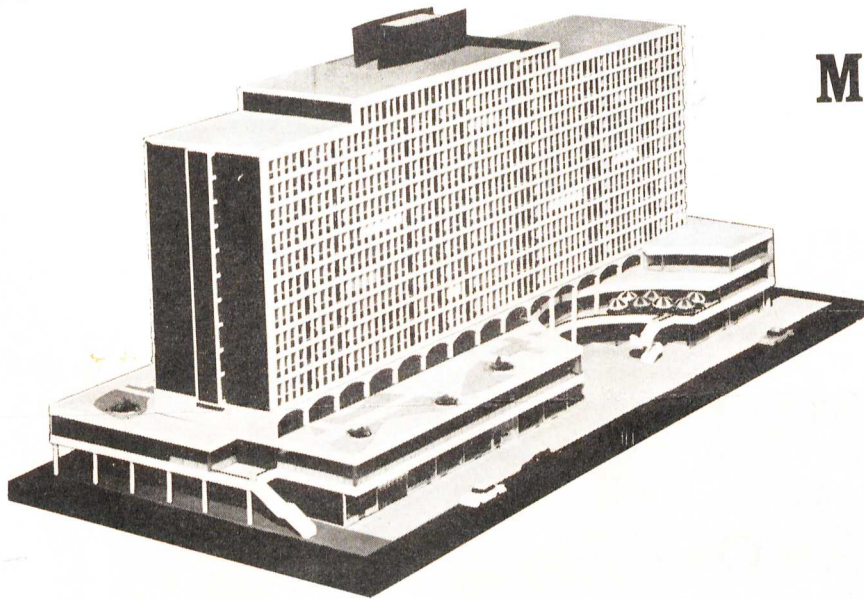
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The Colonnade is an exciting new building under construction on Bloor Street West in Toronto less than ten minutes' walk from The Manufacturers Life Head Office, described as a 14-storey apartment and shopping complex that marks a "return to gracious living." So unusual was the Colonnade in its conception that the partners in the company (known as One Thirty One Bloor West Limited) believed they might have a selling job facing them before financing could be secured. However when their representative approached the Manufacturers Life Mortgage people, he found an appreciative audience.

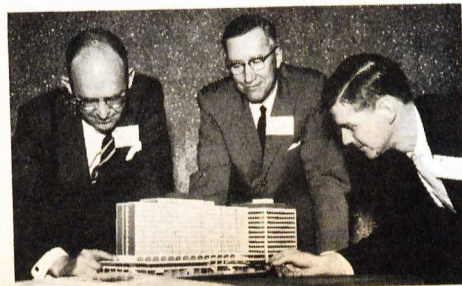
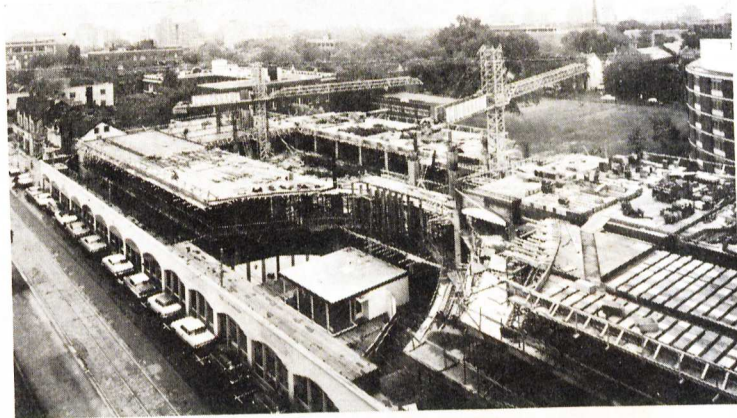
Mr. Irwin Burns, president and general manager of the company, has been quoted (in another publication) as saying, "The company (MLI) could see what we were trying to do from the start. It understood the entire concept and went along with us 100%."

What stamps the Colonnade as a departure from "modern" trends is that it will be the first major residential-retail complex to be established in Toronto since the rush to

the suburbs began in the '50's. Disenchantment with suburbia combined with a fresh appreciation of the excitement and convenience of downtown city living is expected to fill the Colonnade's ten-and-a-half storeys of apartments. Residents will enjoy a luxurious one-stop mall where they can shop and dine without leaving their own "castle." The Colonnade will feature: two-level underground parking; street-level

specialty shops; public area bordered by a terraced restaurant and twenty exclusive independent stores, with a central dais for lunch-time musical recitals.

As the building takes shape, the increasing number of inquiries for apartments indicates that the Colonnade has caught the imagination of Torontonians. Manufacturers Life is pleased to be associated in this forward-looking enterprise.



Top right: Colonnade construction had progressed this far in August. Note the eye-catching hoardings which give a foretaste of design features to be incorporated in the building . . . and the convenient sales office in the semi-circular forecourt. Bottom right: Looking over the model of the Colonnade here are Mortgage Superintendent T. L. Taylor; Financial Vice-President L. S. Davis; and Assistant Superintendent, Real Estate, E. A. Bastedo.