YORK SQAURE

33 Avenue Road
148 Yorkville Ave

Reference Package
Part I

ARCHITECTURAL
CONSERVANCY
ONTARIO

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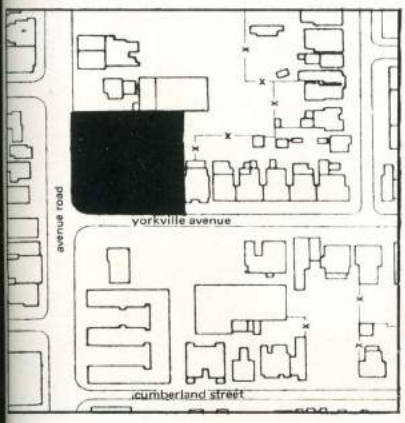
"York Square Toronto", *The Canadian Architect,* June 1969, pg. 36-38

YORK SQUARE, TORONTO. ARCHITECT: A.J.DIAMOND. ASSOCIATE DESIGNER: BARTON MYERS

Located near the University of Toronto and the fashionable Bay-Bloor-Yonge shopping and business district, Yorkville Village has become famous for its hippies, coffee houses, boutiques and good restaurants. The development of Lothian Mews in 1963 was an event in Toronto history: until that time, Bloor Street, with its strip-like drag of exclusive but drab stores, symbolized the dying age of genteel sophistication. (The following year, Toronto cinemas opened on Sundays).

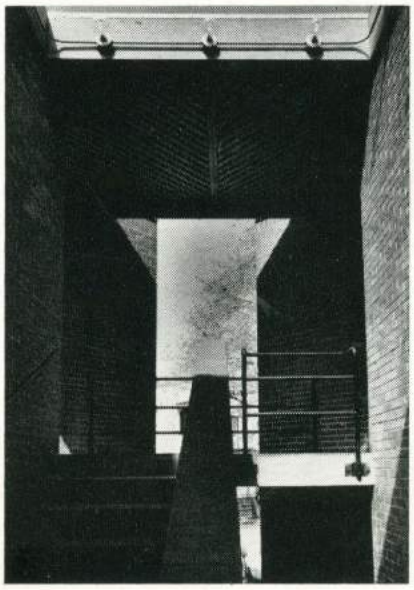
Six years later, York Square brings to the village a new degree of sophistication—a focal point, intimate in feeling and related to human scale and vistas. A court where people can meet for coffee, dinner and where the boutiques work beautifully (the best entrance to the square is through the bookshop).

In the square, warm red brick combines with the white of the older buildings and the stark relief of fire escapes. Above all, a magnificent tree has been retained, its branches extending to the eye level of diners on The Terrace and in Le Coin.



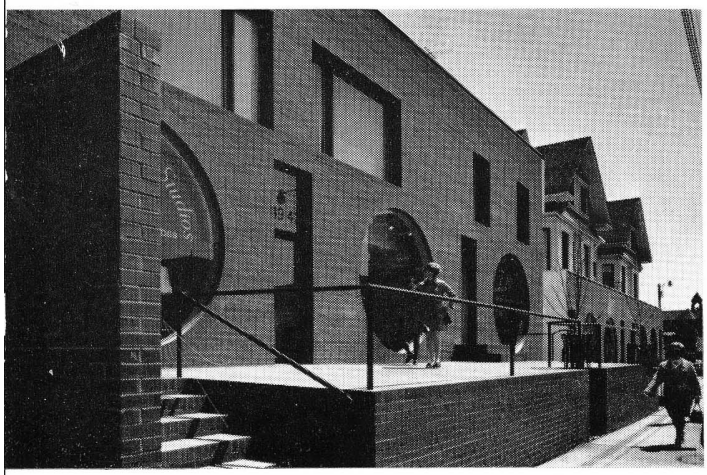
From the exterior, super graphics across the face of the building mar the surface—a fad of our times—which will no doubt be mercifully painted out as the fashion subsides with bell bottom pants. Who really says, "Look for the sign YORK SQUARE", when the distinctive round windows make it unique in the area?

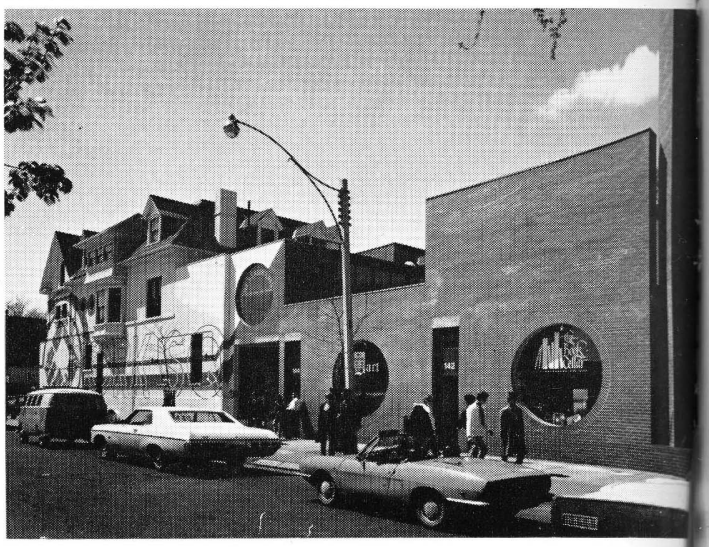
These same round windows will bother architects who visit the square, but all will admit that the project is a courageous excursion into the commercial world, a tribute to both developer, I. R. Wookey and the architects. Right now, hippies and solid citizens are protesting the building of a nearby high rise office block—let's hope that York Square will continue to live on in the face of long term commercial pressure.



"York Square Toronto", *The Canadian Architect,* June 1969, pg. 36-38

York Square





"Urban Supertoy Subdues Renewal Bulldozer"
Progressive Architecture 50, 1969, pg. 144-153.

Photos, except as noted: Ian Samson

Urban Supertoy Subdues Renewal Bulldozer

The first urban development to be designed in the new aesthetic idiom proves that bulldozer levelling is not the only means to popular – or financial – success

With the twinkle-eyed daring of donning Mod in her advancing years, York Square is swinging like a flapper again, and luring the action — and the money — to her seasoned, but restyled doorsteps. The name for a new center of commercial buildings in Toronto, York Square is on the main strip of Yorkville — where the action is. As in New York's Greenwich Village and San Francisco's Waterfront, most of what's happening in Yorkville is housed in old buildings.

York Square, also, was originally a half-block site

"Urban Supertoy Subdues Renewal Bulldozer"
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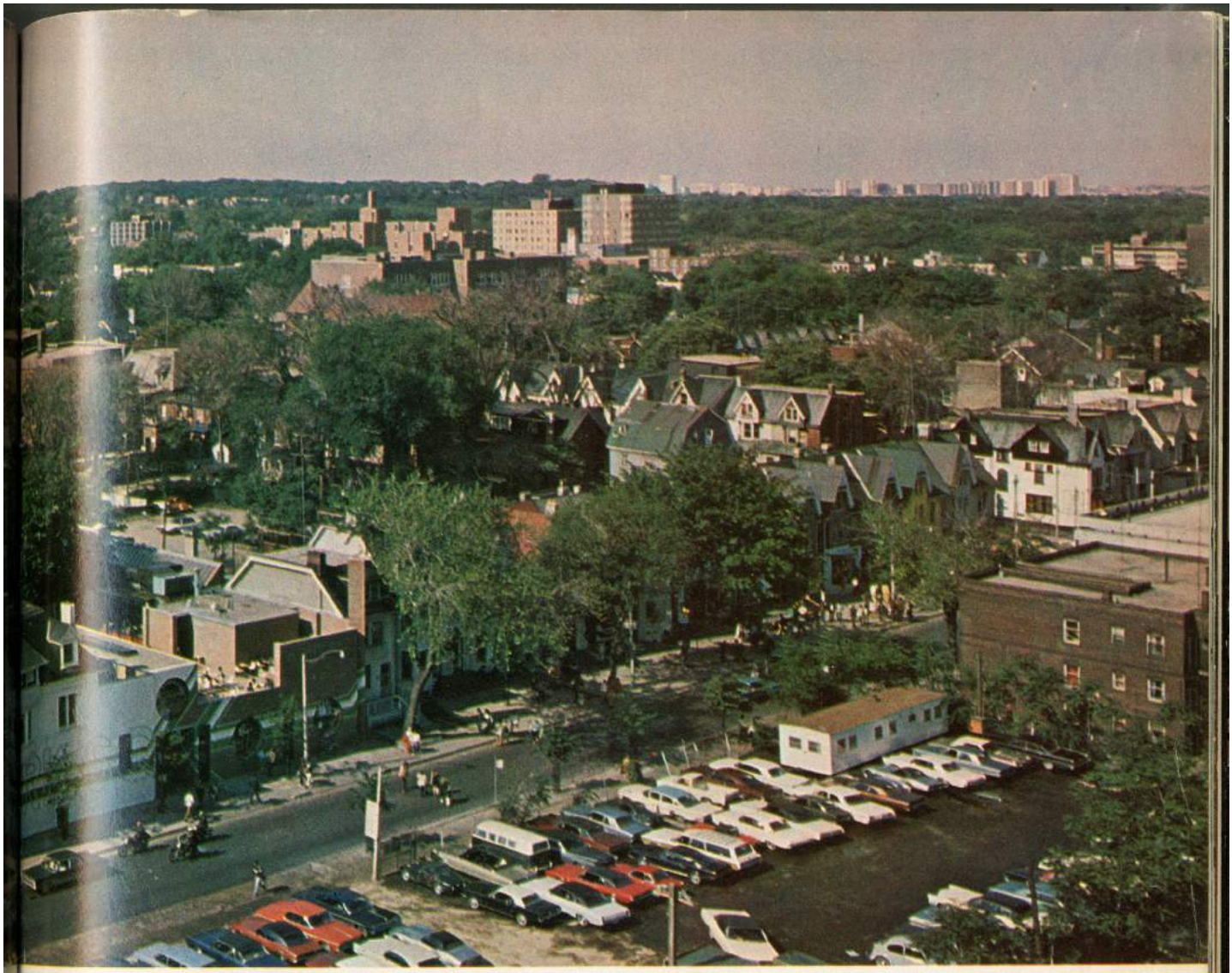


Photo: David Sierens

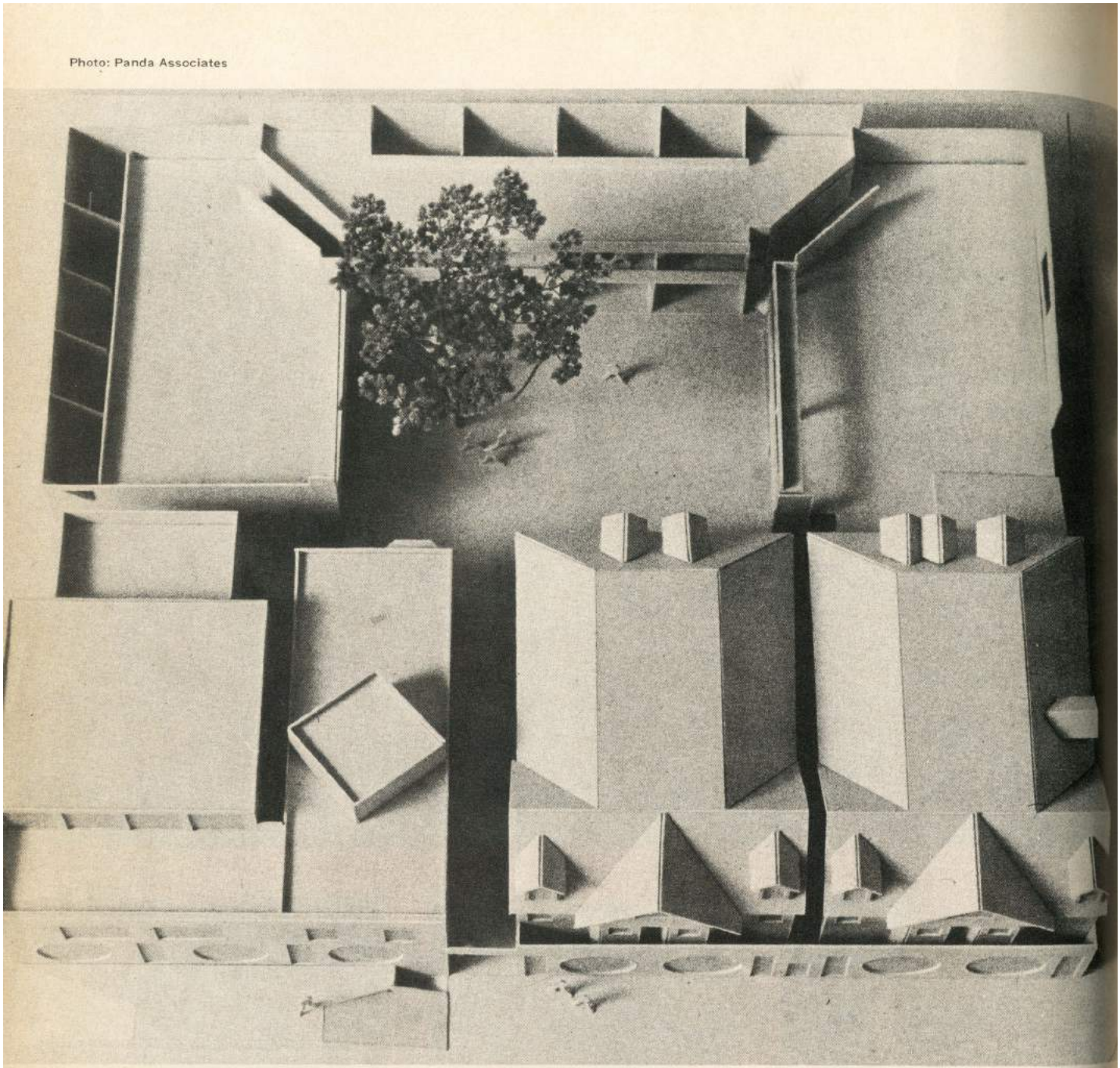
Photo: Robert Title

Photo: Robert Title

Urban Supertoy 145

“Urban Supertoy Subdues Renewal Bulldozer”
Progressive Architecture 50, 1969, pg. 144-153.

Photo: Panda Associates



Birds-eye view of York Square model shows the central courtyard, the U-plan building that encloses the back of the site, and the main passageway to the court from Yorkville Avenue (bottom center of photo).

When developer I.R. Wookey took over the site, the Yorkville Avenue front was a ricky-ticky row of undistinguished buildings.

CREDITS

LOCATION — Yorkville Avenue and Avenue Road, Toronto, Ontario

CLIENT & BUILDER — Iaver Investments (1963) Ltd. I. R. Wookey, President

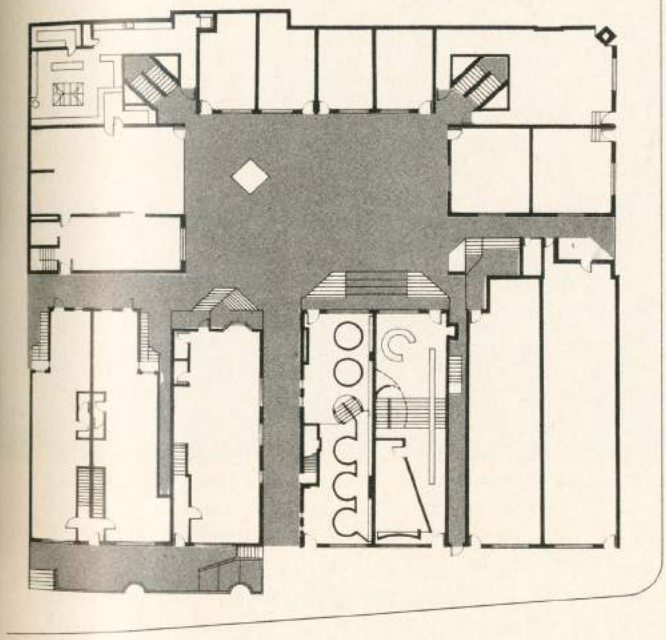
ARCHITECTURAL, PLANNING & INTERIOR DESIGN — A. J. Diamond and Barton Myers

GRAPHICS — Barrie Briscoe; A. J. Diamond and Barton Myers

FURNITURE DESIGN — Muller & Stewart; A. J. Diamond and Barton Myers

ENGINEERING — M. S. Yolles Associates Limited

MECHANICAL & ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING — Rybka, Smith & Ginsler Ltd.



of decayed and mutilated structures when Toronto developer I. R. Wookey commissioned architects A. J. Diamond and Barton Myers to plan and design a scheme to renovate the site and make it an economically viable urban commercial center.

As Diamond & Myers point out, when development capital is invested in a decaying urban area, usually the bulldozer is brought in immediately to level and destroy whatever made the area attractive in the first place. The reasoning behind this still prevalent "urban renewal" methodology is that renovation is more expensive than new construction and that, in any case, maximum coverage of a site must be accomplished in order to amortize the current high cost of new construction. "The consequence is," say the architects, "that maximum capital outlay is required for competitive rental returns."

This is the "urban renewal" method that Jane Jacobs so vehemently and outspokenly opposed in New York and other great American cities. If Toronto has lured urbanist Jacobs as a resident, York Square can show why. It will warm the hearts of all city dwellers for whom she has been the popular spokesman.

At York Square, the general condition and the scale of single buildings, "which were arrived at empirically," as the architects point out, were maintained specifically so as not to disturb the established flow of already interested people to the location. In fact, York Square now increasingly attracts a true urban mix of Toronto's population to its shops, activities, and restaurants: the young and the old, the curious and the dedicated, the window-shopper and the spender, the square and the hip.

This alternative renewal method — preserving the continuum of urban growth — minimizes fiendish leaps of scale in both size and financing. It is a method "that ought to be obvious," the architects say, "since, if pursued successfully, it allows high rental returns for small capital outlay, making the economic venture more feasible on smaller capital outlay."

York Square, therefore, advocates urban evolution over urban revolution. Although the mainstream of

Architects Barton & Myers faced Yorkville Avenue with a screen of shopfronts that unifies the facade.

Photos: McAlister/Van Nostrand

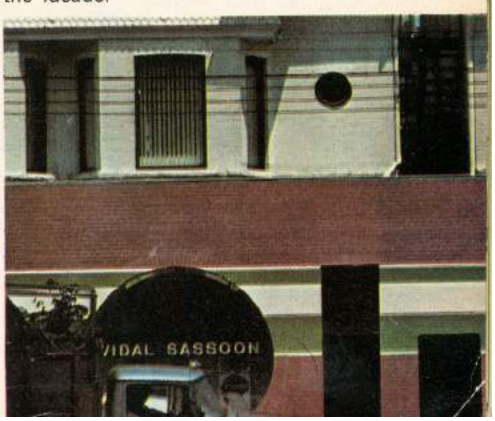


Photo: McAlister/Van Nostrand

Artist Barrie Briscoe painted a giant logo — the ochre plan of York Square on the diagonal — along with green signage and green-and-white circulation graphics on the Avenue Road facade.

current activism is against this approach, the development is an undeniable urban and commercial success. One store that was in operation before the renovation, for example, now reports that its sales have increased, first to 40 per cent, then to 100 per cent of its original figures.

The method used at York Square preserves the character and familiar charm of the old and adds a seductive set of hippy new accoutrements to make people take notice of it again, see it afresh, and therefore be attracted to it. This statement, in fact, is a basic definition of all art. In addition, as South African architect Diamond points out, "What is new today is old tomorrow; therefore, working with the old is perhaps the single most important aspect of design in cities." On the other hand, urban designers must always bear in mind that the only thing permanent in life is change.

Supertoy Shopfront

To change the old brick buildings on Yorkville Avenue, which were painted white, Diamond & Myers have overlaid a new row of shopfronts — "replacing the tickytacky stores that had collected over time," as they recall (see p. 146). The new fronts are designed as a one-story high, perforated screen, linked to the old buildings by skylighted roofs.

The design motif of this peek-a-boo facade is that of a simple primitive signage at giant scale: huge, circular openings for show windows alternate with rectangular openings for doorways. Circles say "look through"; rectangles say "walk through." It is a Supertoy billboard.

"The language of the openings is really dumb," says Barton Myers, who not surprisingly studied with Kahn and Venturi at the University of Pennsyl-

vania. Its geometry separates the shops from the customary, undifferentiated, continuous glass shopfronts and focuses on individual establishments, since the architects see small openings as being no longer relevant to the scale of the new urban street. The geometry therefore also relates the Victorian detached and semidetached structures to the megascale of the new metropolis and the new mobile scale of the speeding auto. Everyone can read it. It is a linear motif that ties together a number of disparate elements and unifies the complex. An unflinchingly modern addition to the old buildings, York Square's shopfront screen is in the best traditions of Supermannerism.

Supergraphics

In collaboration with Barrie Briscoe, whose wraparound murals we have seen before (October 1968 P/A), the architects have superimposed Supergraphics on the Avenue Road and Yorkville Avenue facades, both as signage and as circulation indicators. On the wall of Bill Brady's Men's Wear, the Avenue Road corner store, a diagrammatic site plan of York Square set on the diagonal is painted in ochre inside a giant green circle — "the O of York," Briscoe says. Alongside, the name of the area is telegraphically billboarded in green letters. The entire design is superimposed over walls, windows, and doors indiscriminately — or "permissively," to use the language of the new idiom.

The overlayed site plan is about one-eighth the actual size of the site itself, but it is mammoth compared to the usual orientation diagram on a signpost, and even compared to an architect's customary documents. As a result, it makes a new-scale transition between the physical actuality and the in-orbit view of it, as well as providing a logo and identifying signage. Although this double-scale interaction is fundamental to all Supergraphics, the painted superimposition of representational material is a device that Briscoe has made particularly his own.

In the architects' minds, this technique is associated with the integral decoration of brick stringcourses that unifies single Victorian structures nearby (photo right); they also see it as related to the more modern stripes on airplanes. At York Square, as they intended, the Supergraphics are at a new giant scale that not only ties together the entire half-block complex, but, like the supertoy shopfront screen, relates the complex to the superscale of the street and the city. This is an exterior use of the technique that is exemplary of its potential in economically brightening our too-often drab urban environments.

A final element of the Supergraphic design — a

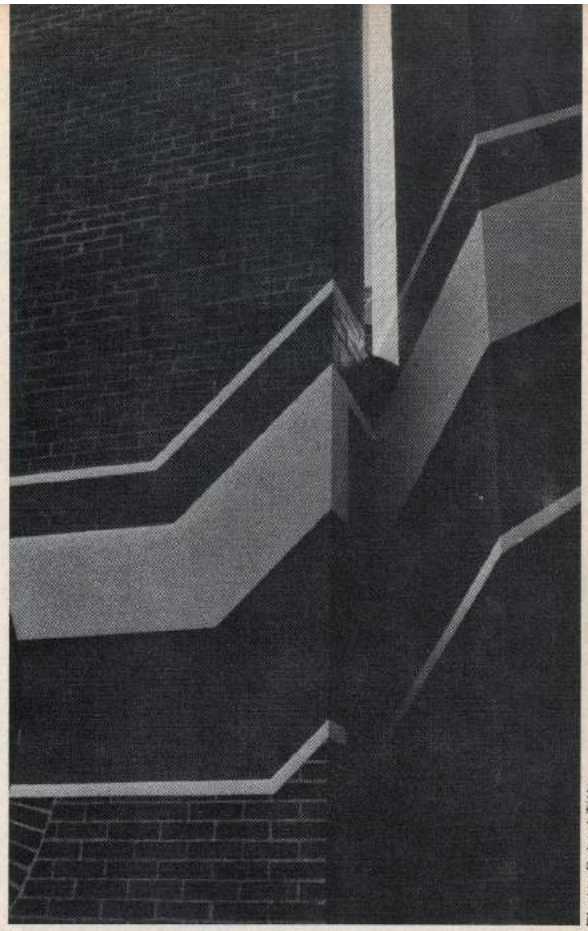
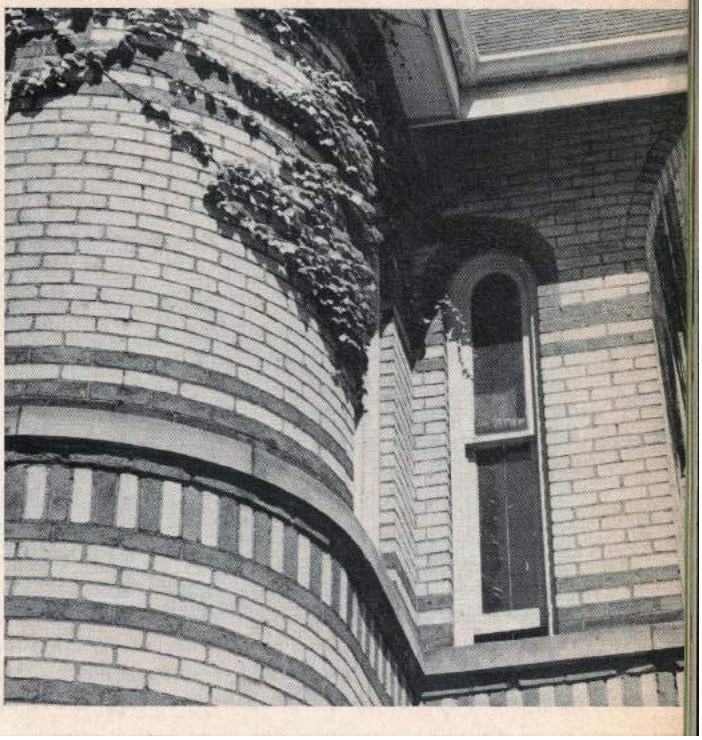


Photo: Robert Title

Architects Barton & Myers see the exterior graphics, which were done in collaboration with Barrie Briscoe, as a device that enhances the larger scale of the new complex and ties it together, "much as the Victorian string course once did," they say. "Toronto is rich in such examples of Victoriana (photo below) "the architects explain," but where once diverse building elements were combined into a whole, now groups of buildings are united together for the superscale of the street."



green circulation strip — leads the eye around the corner to an arrowhead indicator toward a passageway at the center of the Yorkville Avenue facade.

York Square's Square

The passageway between the stores leads past the irregular backs of the old buildings to a brick-paved courtyard that gives York Square its "square." It is a more pastoral respite than the busy street traffic can provide — "a place for pedestrians away from the automobile," as the architects say — presided over by a grand old maple tree, perfectly sited years ago, which spreads a leafy shade over the court.

Already the court has become a popular place for performing groups: carollers at Christmastime, and, during this summer, the recitals of the Toronto Dance Theatre. Local papers have acclaimed this sequestered open-air arena as Toronto's "mini-center for the performing arts."

To frame this courtyard, Diamond & Myers demolished half of a semidetached house and designed a new two-story brick building at the back of the deep site as a social center; it houses ground floor shops (with large circular shop windows such as those on the street front) and a restaurant, a glass-enclosed lunch terrace, open-roof coffee terraces, and a small fondue-and-chocolate shop. This U-plan building has stairs set in its corners diagonally, "making obvious by breaking the building, where the access to the roof is," the architects explain. Since the corners are the dark spots in the square plan, they are also used for the service cores. Industrial designer Earl Helland executed the restaurant interiors.

Diamond & Myers in addition designed the interiors of two of the old buildings, one for Vidal Sassoon, the English hairdresser of Mod-bob fame, and one for the Poupee Rouge Boutiuqe, a woman's dress shop. Both of these interiors (see next pages) fulfill the promise of the exterior with its permissive interflow of scales and history.

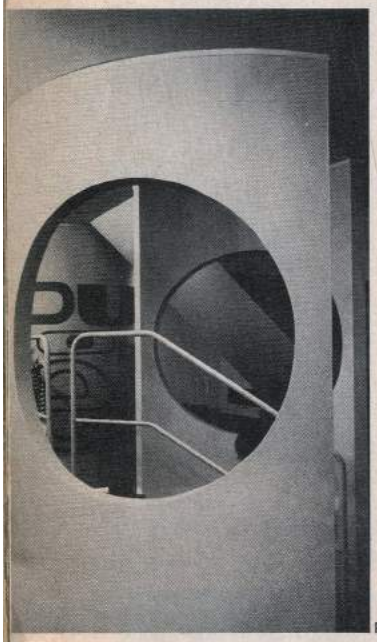
Conclusion

York Square, then, is a paradigm of our inclusive design age: it exhibits the double scale of our all-at-

"Urban Supertoy Subdues Renewal Bulldozer"
Progressive Architecture 50, 1969, pg. 144-153.

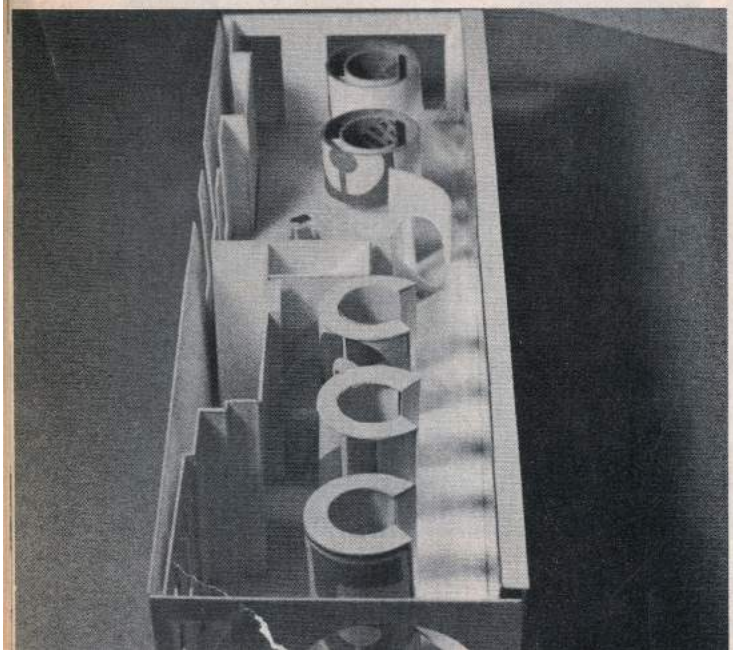
Photo: Robert Title

The courtyard at York Square (this and facing page) is a social center that is also becoming an outdoor setting for the performing arts. Shops, restaurants, and open-roof terraces surround the tree-shaded court — all with the motif of the street-front screen.



Poupee Rouge Boutique is one of two interiors at York Square designed by Barton & Myers. For a long narrow space, which had been completed to the point of wall-restoration and electrical and air-conditioning work, the architects designed a series of cylindrical "dress towers" to display the stock and to serve as changing booths. The straight long wall is mirrored; the irregular one painted Poupee-Rouge rouge. The circle motif of York Square is reiterated.

Photo: Soltay



once vision — the overlay of old and new, preservation and construction, pedestrians and cars, bustle and peace, facade and mass, structure and paint. All are put at the service of urban revitalization. If last month P/A published two different banks to show the widely separate dual design directions current today, this month we show these two dualities in the same project.

Furthermore, York Square is not merely a project entirely within today's most avant-garde aesthetic; it is also the first large-scale exterior project in that idiom. As the first urban renewal development in the idiom, it helps to prove, at last, that the "super games" (as the *Architectural Review* has sardonically dubbed them) are valid and meaningful when put to urban uses.

This artistic contemporaneity is responsible not only for the artistic success of York Square's design, but for its popularity with the citizenry of Toronto — however controversial the new idiom, mysteriously remains within the architecture profession.

Jane Jacobs told P/A that she is highly gratified by York Square. "It is a Pygmalion operation. Inevitably, in a healthy, developing city," she explains, "buildings built for one purpose are transformed for other purposes. Diamond & Myers have sensitively used the old buildings without trying to pretend they are something else; they have made them not in the least bit quaintsy, but of our times. To see the possibilities in what to most people would have appeared the most humdrum materials is one of the great contributions that architects can make." Urbanist Jacobs concluded, "The uniqueness and promise of York Square, though it cannot and should not be copied in carbon, should be an example to all developers."

These are meaningful words, especially to Toronto's Yorkville, which is even now threatened by other developers who want to demolish blocks of old buildings under the ironic guise of cleaning up the hippies. Those developers propose, as one solution, a 21-story apartment hotel on a sweetly arcaded, one-story podium — that high-rise towers can "preserve the character" of the present low-density, low-rise area. Nor have Toronto civic officials been exactly the watchdogs of urban continuity, since they have somehow permitted an unsympathetic parking garage to rise in the midst of Yorkville.

York Square, however, sets a better example. And developer Wookey and his architects, Diamond & Myers, can be proud of their achievement. Other developers and architects, and especially other civic officials, would be well advised to consider York Square's respectful yet hip new example.—**CRS**

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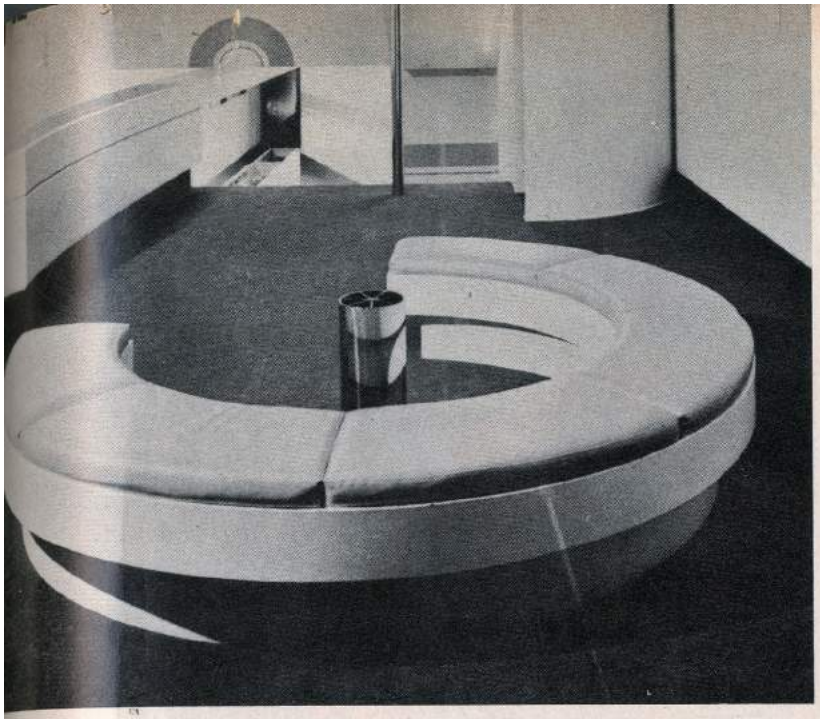
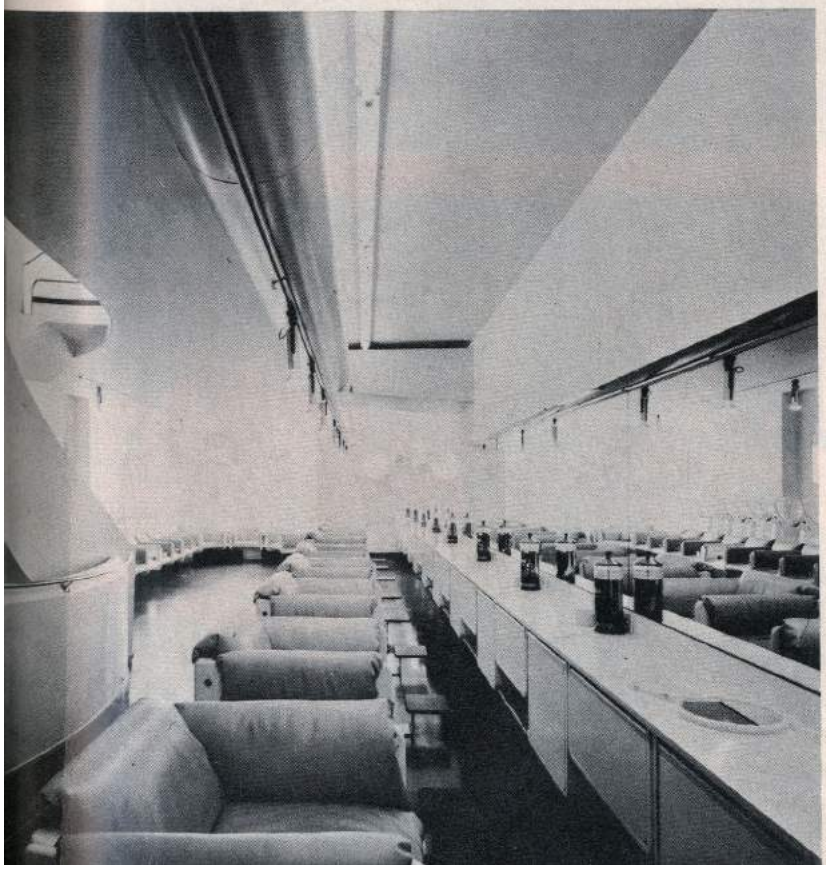
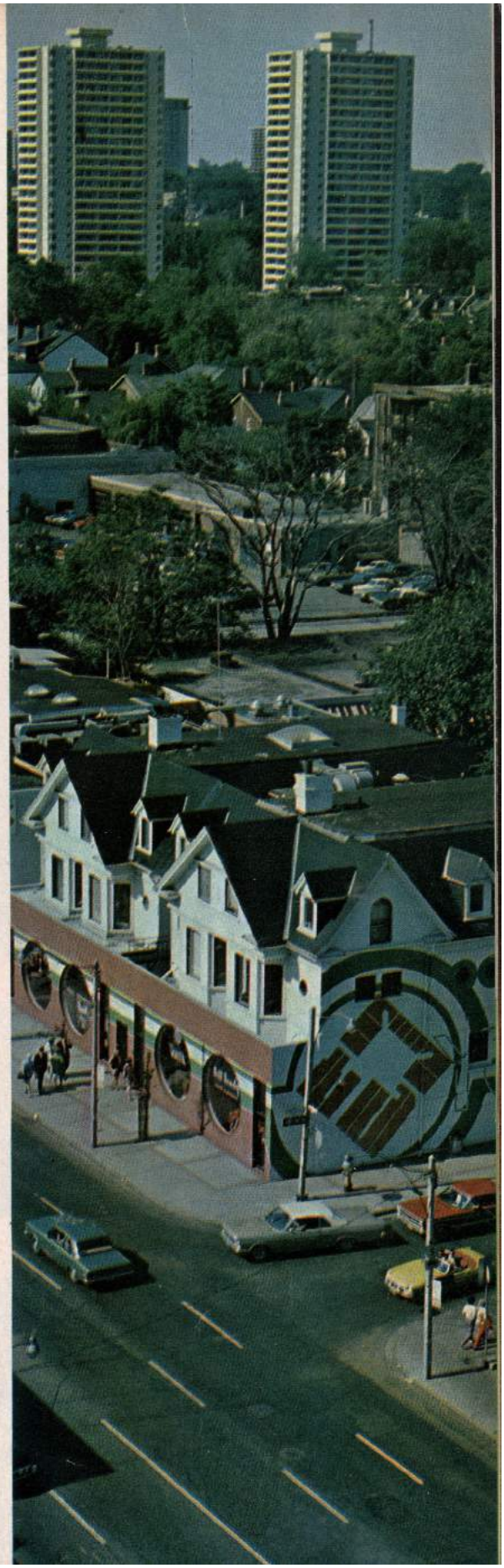
Progressive Architecture 50, 1969, pg. 144-153.



For the Vidal Sassoon Salon, another branch of the English hairdresser who popularized the mod-bob, Barton & Myers continue the circular motif of the complex and give the salon a distinct look at the same time. The salon is unified by the stair that penetrates the entire building. "This is the vertical extension of the horizontal street-square movement," according to the architects. The stair rises in a cylindrical well to a skylight; it connect floors in an ascending order of privacy and function — from entrance on the ground floor to changing on the mezzanine, to cutting and shampoo on the second floor, and so on. Landings are made when the stair intersects the curved well, which maintains the continuity of each floor. All furniture was designed in collaboration with industrial designers Mike Stewart and Keith Muller.





"Toronto 1970 Design Awards,"
Architecture Canada RAIC/IRAC, April 13, 1970, pg. 535.

May 13–16 RAIC, Winnipeg

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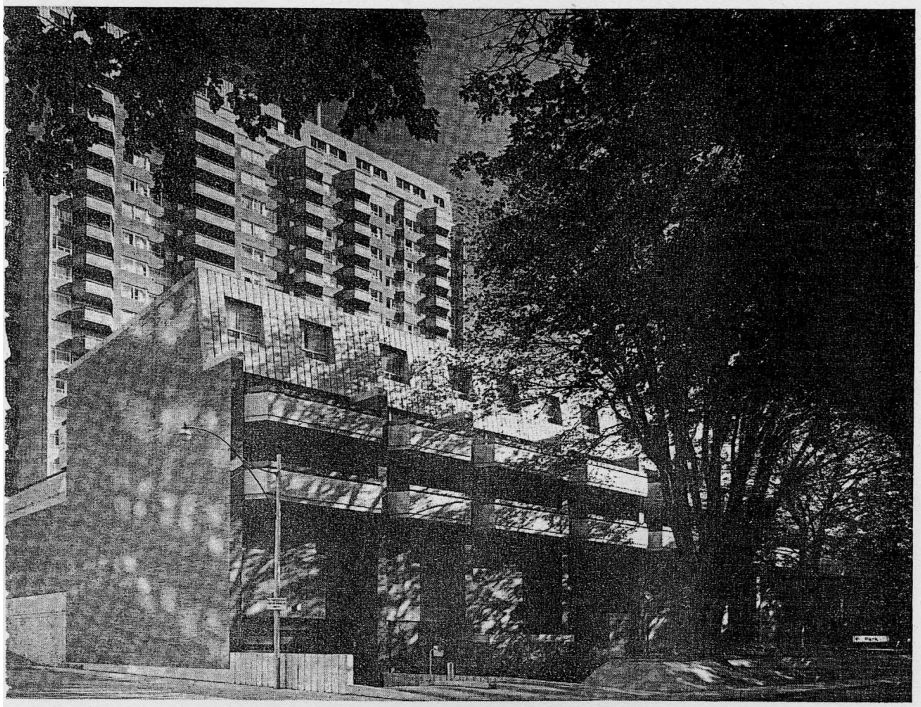
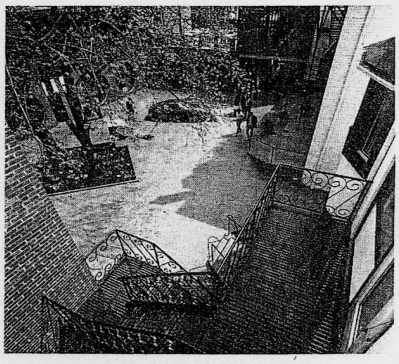
Architecture Canada
NEWSMAGAZINE
Published every two weeks by RAIC/IRAC April 13, 1970



The Towne (above) by Henry Fliess and James A. Murray shows "that it is not necessary to arbitrarily separate various activities of city life". The Gray Coach Terminal (below) by Shore & Moffat & Partners, was commended for its "use of directional graphics as art forms".

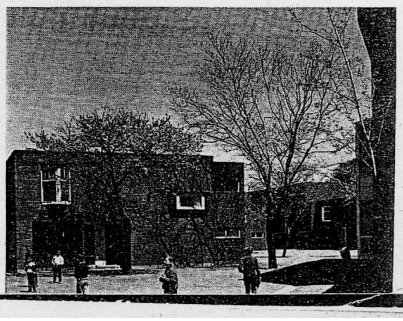
Toronto 1970 design awards

"Prototypes of a new breed of urban buildings" was how the jury described these four winners of the six 1970 design awards made by OAA's Toronto chapter. The awards were chosen with the hope that "the ideas that made them outstanding could contribute to the future development of our environment," said the jury. "These awards could create a public awareness of the social patterns that create our environment." Two educational buildings were also honored, "because both in a different way attempted to bring a human scale into institutional buildings". The two: Ron Thom's Thomas J. Bata Library at Trent, and Fairfield & Dubois's New College at the University of Toronto. Making the choices were: Eberhard H. Zeidler, Ray Affleck and Prof. Douglas Shadbolt.

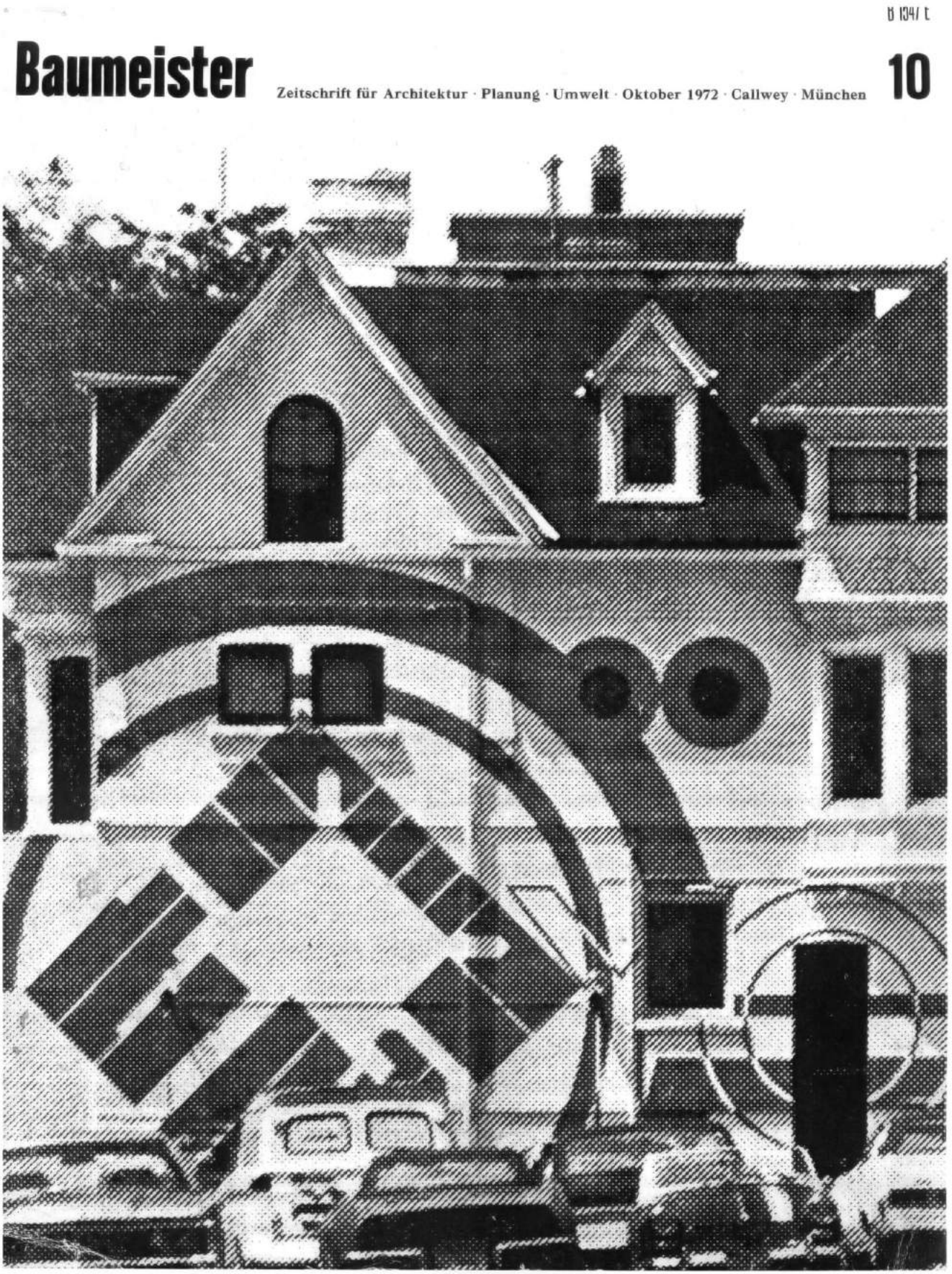


York Square, by A. J. Diamond and Barton Myers, was called "an outstanding example of infusing new life into an old neighborhood".

Alexandra Park, by Webb, Zarafa & Menkes, was noted as "a viable example of urban renewal that has attempted to maintain a human scale".



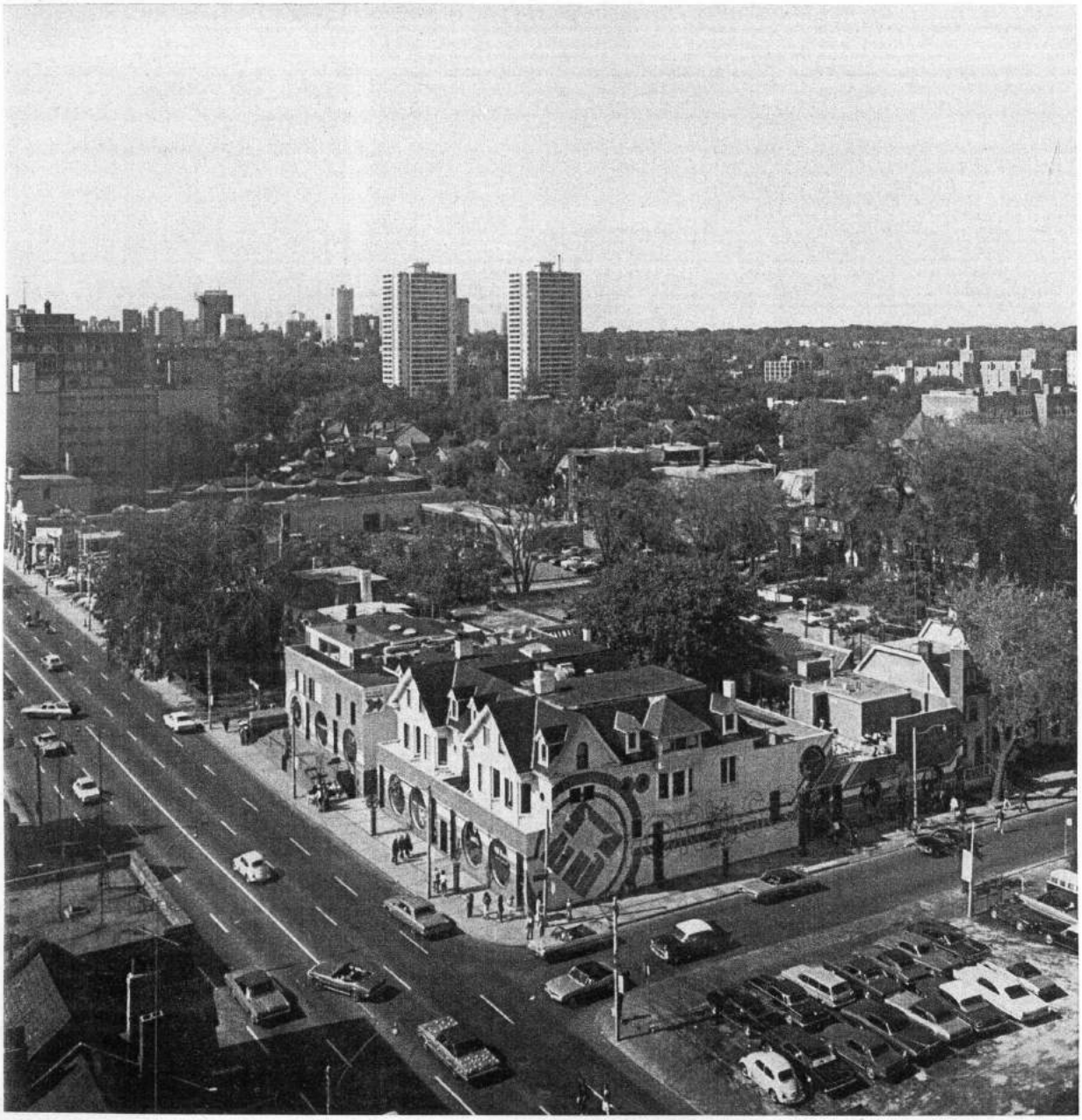
"York Square in Toronto", *Baumeister 69 (Munich),* October 1972.



"York Square in Toronto", *Baumeister 69 (Munich),* October 1972.

York Square in Toronto

Architekten: A. J. Diamond und Barton Myers, Toronto



Ist es Sentimentalität, an dieser Stelle kein 21geschossiges Apartmenthotel auf ein schönes Podium mit Arkaden zu setzen (was in der Nachbarschaft vorgesehen ist), sondern die Maßstäblichkeit der Stadt zu wahren? Und ob der Bulldozer die Antwort auf ein langsam absinkendes Stadtviertel ist, der zuerst radikal alles das wegschiebt, was einmal das Quartier interessant gemacht hat, kann auch bezweifelt werden. Und letztlich: die Neubauten sind immer so teuer, daß eine möglichst hohe Dichte erreicht werden muß, damit die Kosten wieder hereinkommen.

Stadt-Erneuerung endet oft mit Stadt-Tod. York Square ist den anderen Weg gegangen. Man hat möglichst viel von der alten Bausubstanz erhalten und ihr das Neue im Maßstab angepaßt. Nirgendwo ging man über zwei Obergeschosse hinaus, und nirgendwo hat man den alten Rhythmus der Einzelhäuser verlassen. Die Prozedur war verhältnismäßig einfach. Die alten Häuser auf der Yorkville Avenue waren das, was man auch städtebauliches Gerümpel nennen könnte. Da sie im Innern aber neuen Funktionen gerecht werden konnten, ließ man sie stehen, blendete ihnen nur eine neue Ladenfassade vor, eingeschossig mit großen Kreisen als

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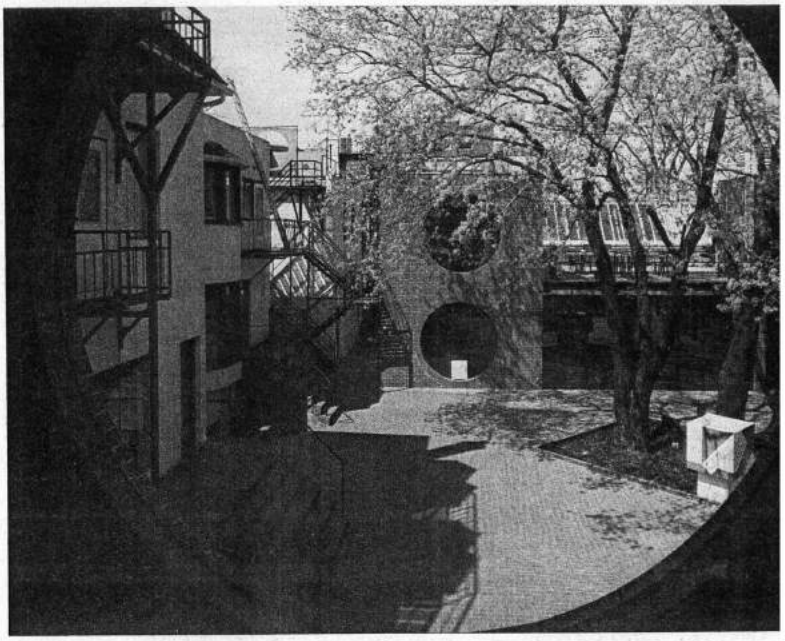
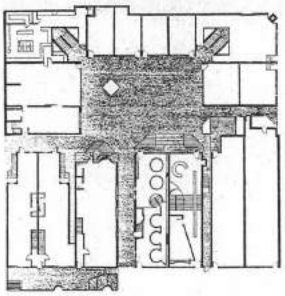
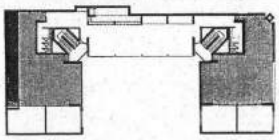
"York Square in Toronto", *Baumeister 69 (Munich),* October 1972.





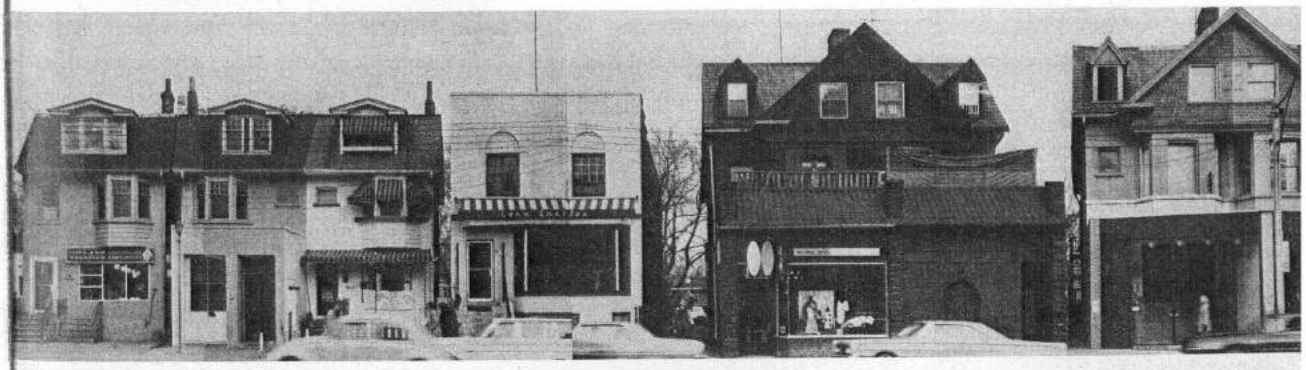
Erdgeschoß

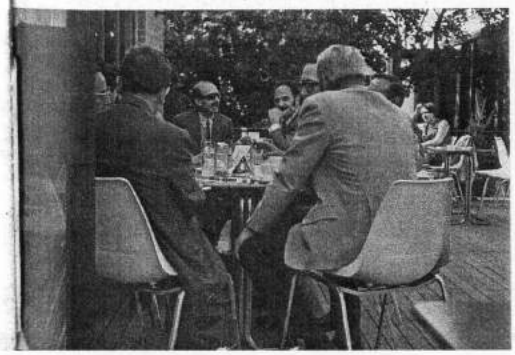


Obergeschoß △

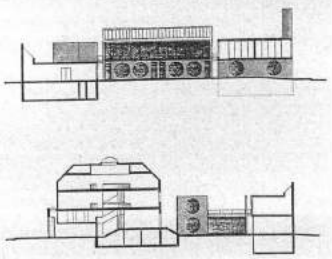
Grundrisse und Schnitte M 1:1000

Fotos: Ian Sampson, Carl Sliva, Robert Tittle (11)





Schaufenstern und rechteckigen Öffnungen als Zugängen. Diese Lösung ist sehr simpel, hat aber eine überraschende Steigerung der Attraktivität zur Folge. Vielleicht deshalb, weil einfache Figuren wie Kreise schon von weitem wie Signale, auf jeden Fall auffällig, wirken, ohne maßstabbestimmend zu sein. Dieses Motiv setzten die Architekten auch im Innenhof fort, der sich dadurch so vorteilhaft von

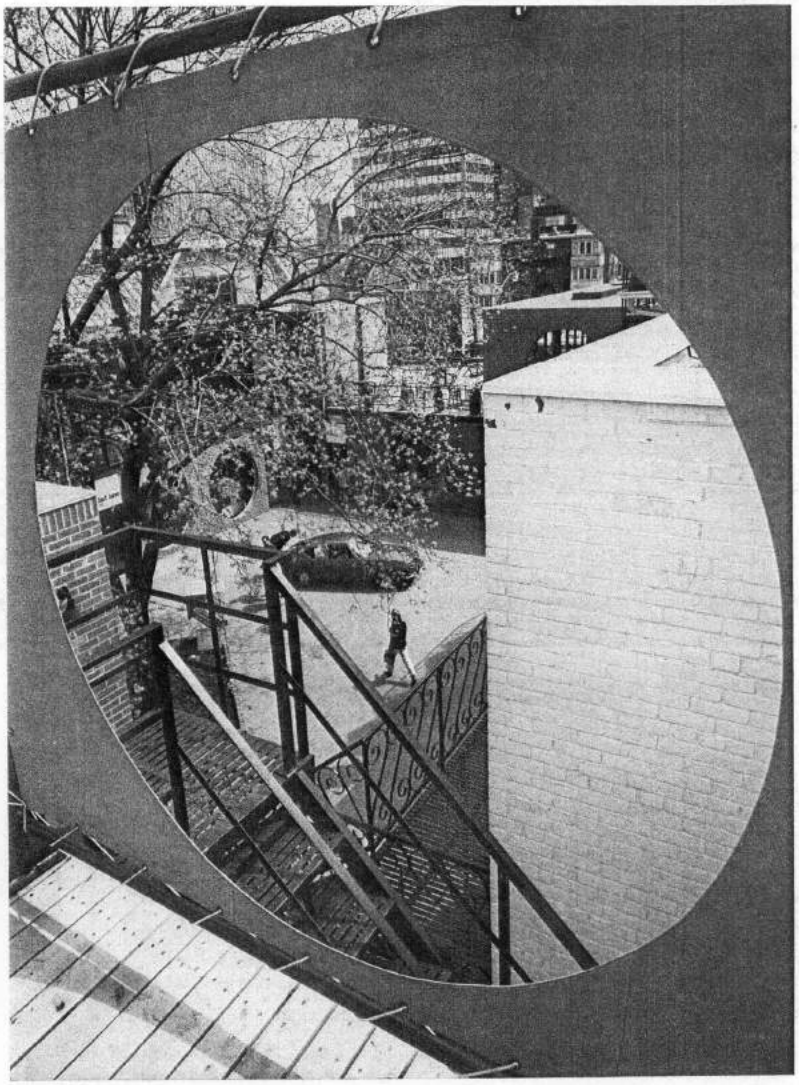


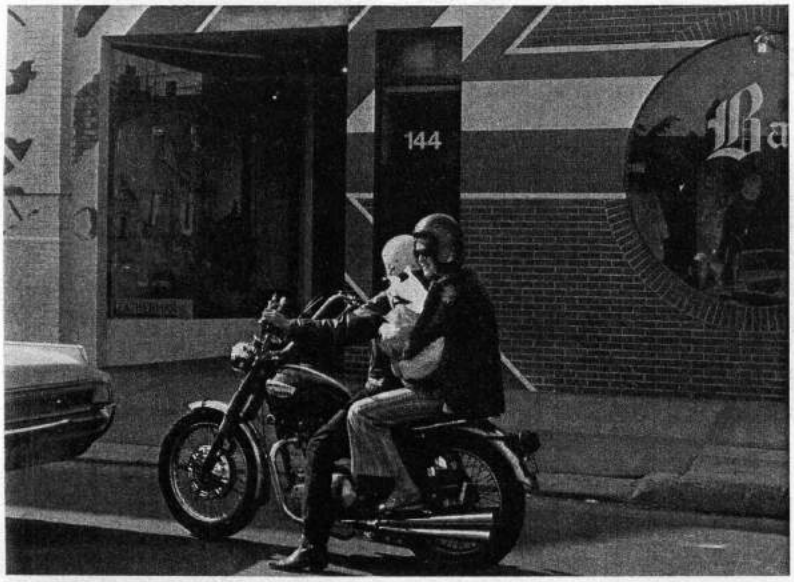
York Square in Toronto 10

allen endlosen Glasfassaden, die Architekten heute immer noch für modern halten, absetzt. Die Kreise sind Öffnungen, die groß genug sind, hinter ihnen viel auszustellen, sie sind aber nur schwer in ihrer absoluten Größe ablesbar und als solche sowohl für den großstädtischen Maßstab der Yorkville Avenue geeignet als auch im Innenhof richtig. Als Spaß und Attraktion pinselte Barrie Briscoe noch einen Superkreis auf das Eckhaus, das auf der Südseite keine vorgeblendete Ladenfront erhielt.

Im Blockinnern entstand der York Square, eine Mischung aus Hof und Platz, halböffentlich, zugänglich von zwei Straßen, gebildet aus den unregelmäßigen Rückfronten der straßenseitigen Bebauung (ohne Kosmetik der Fassaden jedoch), und dem U-förmigen Neubau mit Läden im Erdgeschoß, einem Restaurant, glasgeschlossener Lunch-Terrasse, freier Kaffee-Terrasse und einer kleinen Cafeteria. In den Ecken führen Treppen nach oben. Zentrum des Hofes ist die Gruppe alter Ahornbäume (Kanadas Nationalbaum).

Was alte deutsche Innenstädte seit Jahren praktizieren, hat Toronto auf seine Weise

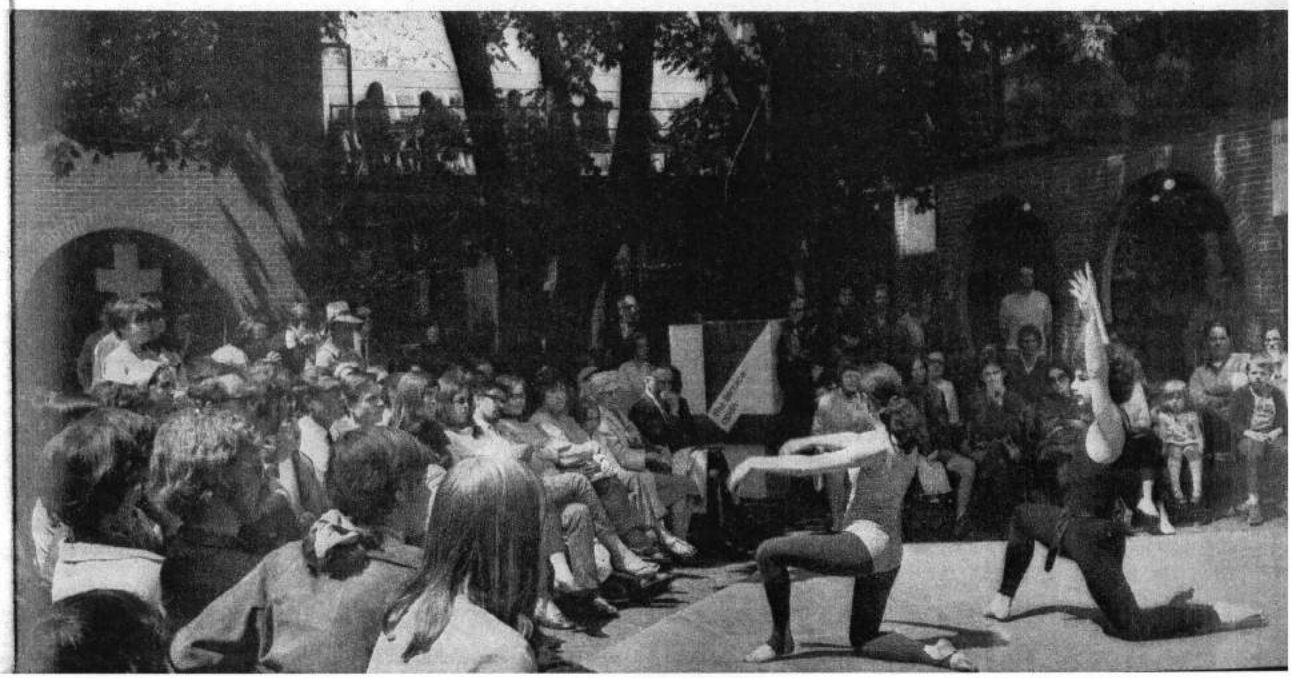




nachgeholt und die gleichen Erfahrungen gemacht: Es wird nicht nur von den Besuchern »angenommen«, sondern, weil es Raum bietet, entstehen neue Aktivitäten, die nicht geplant waren, Tanzgruppen, Folkloresänger haben eine neue, ihnen gemäße Bühne gefunden.

Vielleicht ist das Geheimnis des Erfolges von York Square das Neben- und Durcheinander von alt und neu, Stadtverkehr und Intimität, Inszenierung und Happening, von Wechsel und Ahorn-Beharrlichkeit. Vielleicht gehört auch dazu, daß die Architekten weder einen Raster über das Ganze gebreitet haben, was ja der Tod der Abwechslung ist, noch gezeigt haben: Schaut, was uns alles eingefallen ist, was der Tod der Aktivität der Benutzer ist. Es sind nur wenige Elemente, nur wenige Motive und wenig Raum, die York Square zum Prototyp eines städtischen Freiraumes gemacht haben.

"York Square in Toronto", *Baumeister 69 (Munich),* October 1972.



Summary

"Rollberge" redevelopment in Berlin-Neukölln (p. 1091)
The area is a typical worker district in the south of Berlin, dating from the turn of the century. The houses are in such bad shape that the piecemeal renovation of single houses would be too costly. Therefore the whole area is to be torn down bit by bit and replaced by a scheme more suitable to modern social structures and planned with an eye to traffic requirements and ecological protection as well as to the more valuable traditional factors (e.g., the street as place of encounter).

"Barberaren" - redevelopment scheme in Sandviken (p. 1096)
The district is in the town centre, near the main shopping street, market place and town hall. Therefore the scheme includes several elements which only make sense in downtown areas, like office blocks, public health service, kindergartens, savings-banks, etc.

York Square in Toronto (p. 1098)
City redevelopment often means the death of a city. York Square has taken another course: instead of using the bulldozer, old buildings have been reshaped and new ones adapted to the 3-storey scale, resulting in a mixture of urbanity and intimacy, of variability and the cosiness of maple-tree courtyards.

Youth club in Wellingborough (p. 1102)
The building is a former school for girls dating from 1873. Conversion work was confined to the creation of a larger hall by hollowing out the interior, by the addition of a mezzanine level and the construction of a fire-escape.

"Banneker Homes" in San Francisco (p. 1104)
The project was realized with the simplest means (wooden skeleton construction) and yet has none of the usual elements of downtown redevelopment: there are no multi-storey blocks, no desolate front spaces and no disruption of the local atmosphere. Parts of a former brewery and bottling plant have been cleverly incorporated.

Competition ideas for redeveloping "Ritterhof" in Eschborn (p. 1107)
The "Ritterhof" project is to include a large number of freehold flats of various sizes, a kindergarten with four classes, some special-line shops, offices, doctors' consultation rooms, a wine-tavern, a newspaper stand, etc. Some of the winning designs are published here.

Who are the multi-service residential hotels being built for? (p. 1115)
Self-contained towns like the Arabella House in Munich or the Hancock Centre in Chicago, instead of engendering communal living, offer one social class the desired isolation from others. Such houses fill the gap on the market between luxury apartments and hotel suites for well situated social groups without collectivising their way of life.

Mother-and-child home in Stockholm (p. 1116)
The scheme includes a children's home in three sections corresponding to the needs of different age groups, and a home for unmarried mothers.

Children's Town [illegible]nna (p. 1118)
This town for [illegible]ns has been designed in such a [illegible]hat the inhabitants can continue [illegible]ve there as adults, thus ensuri[illegible]rmanency of environment.

[illegible]hof Students' Hostel, [illegible]stadt (p. 1120)
In this new hostel for 830 students, the architects hope to avoid the usual disadvantages of dormitories, such as monotony or the isolation of the individual despite communal facilities.

Students' dwellings at Bradford Junior College (p. 1122)
This group of prefabricated houses in a lightly wooded area near Haverhill, Mass., has the atmosphere of an old New England settlement. The T-shaped wooden house-units can be assembled so as to form detached or terrace-houses.

Student housing at the University of Surrey (p. 1124)
The aim of this design was to build something that would avoid the depersonalized accommodation usually offered by students' hostels; the layout of the houses and the spaces between them promote a feeling of community, lend optical definition to the environment and make personal contact inevitable.

Student housing in California (p. 1128)
The 2-storey wooden buildings are arranged around gardens. The loggias which stretch along the whole length of the houses are particularly suitable to the local climate, affording additional studying and recreational space for most of the year and casting necessary shade in the hot months.

Student settlement in Hönggerberg, Zurich (p. 1130)
When all four construction stages have been completed, the settlement will include accommodation for 800 students (mostly bed-sitters but also apartments for married students), an infirmary, a restaurant, sports facilities with gymnasia and a swimming-pool, a kindergarten, common rooms and administration offices.

Hellebo and Birkebo (p. 1132)
Both institutions are situated a couple of miles from the town centre of Helsingör. Hellebo is a housing scheme for elderly people who are still capable of being independent, Birkebo an old-age home. Occupants of both institutions can make use of the community centre with restaurant, pub, recreation rooms and an infirmary.

Rosa Spier House, Laren, Netherlands (p. 1134)
The Rosa Spier House is an old-age home for artists who want to remain productive as long as possible. The home includes ateliers, workrooms, exhibition rooms and a hall for 150 people.

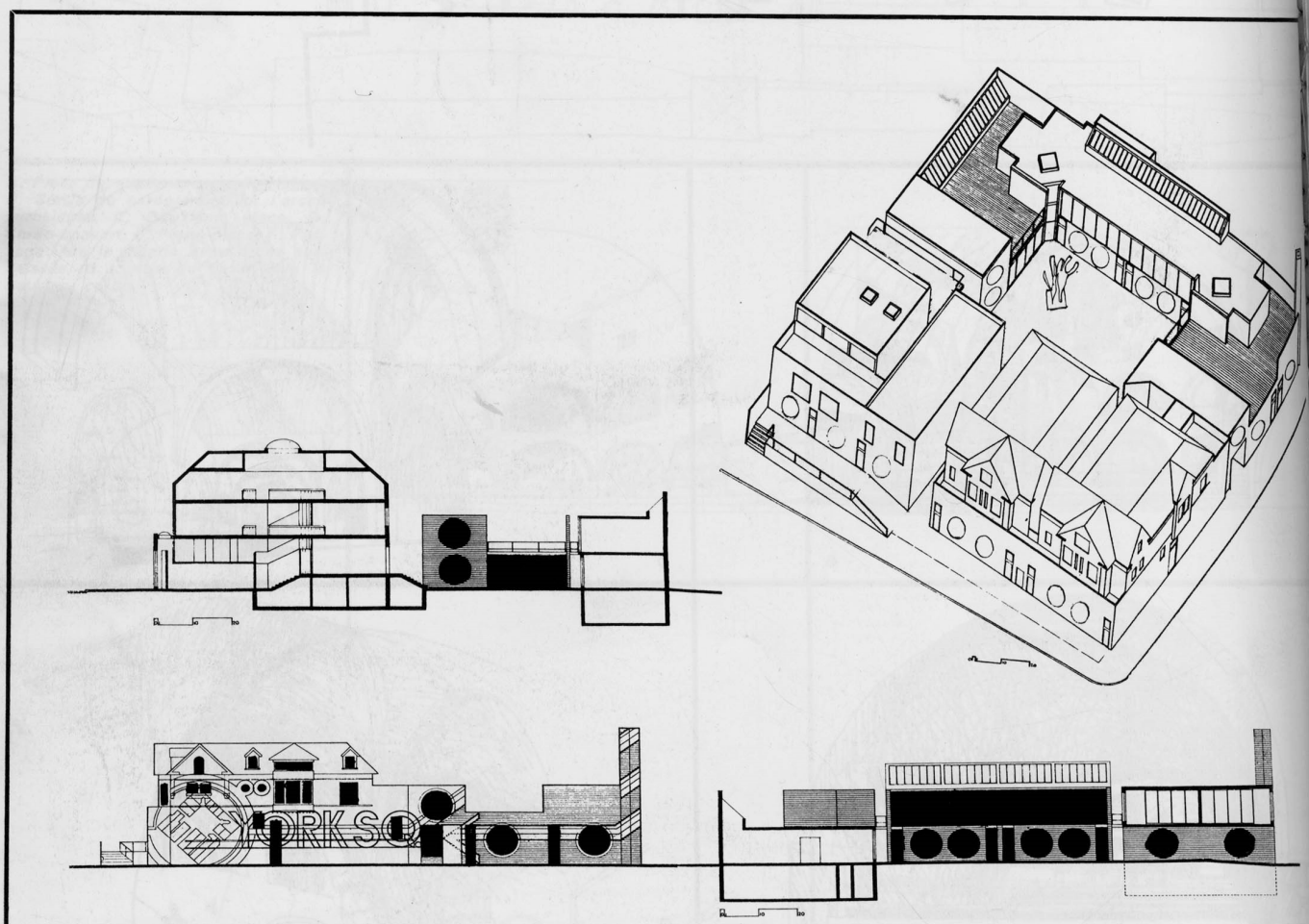
Old-age centre, Hürth (p. 1136)
The old-age home is situated on a green belt south-west of Cologne. A school, kindergarten and sportsgrounds are in the immediate vicinity. The occupants of surrounding dwellings cross through the old-age centre on their way to the shopping centre.

St. Birgitta C.O.S. Home, Bremen (p. 1138)
The building has a dwelling zone for more independent old people, each apartment consisting of 1 or 2 bed-sitters, a small lobby and a bath and WC, as well as a section for the sick and disabled in the form of a modern geriatric clinic.

The redevelopment of the old town of Karlsruhe (p. 1087)
In the unique situation now facing the planners in Karlsruhe the worst thing that can happen is that the planner wants to make a name, or that the official in charge hopes for promotion without indulging in any risks, or that the politician wants to be voted in again but does not care about the historical moment. Although this is impossible without clear planning and financial funds, too much planning and financial security can lead to half-hearted urban development.

RENOVATION DE YORK SQUARE, TORONTO, CANADA

A.J. DIAMOND, B. MYERS, architectes



Une axonométrique, coupe et façade.

Cette première expérience d'aménagement urbain, fondée sur un vocabulaire esthétique inédit démontre que « l'urbanisme au bull-dozer » n'est pas la seule voie vers une réussite populaire ou financière.

York Square — c'est le nom d'un nouveau quartier à vocation commerciale à Toronto, Canada. Et ici, comme à Greenwich Village. comme sur le Waterfront de San Francisco, beaucoup de ce qui fonctionne bien, fonctionne dans le cadre d'un tissu urbain, ancien.

York Square, au départ, c'était un groupe de bâtiments en piteux état, à la limite du taudis, lorsque les architectes A. J. Diamond et Barton Myers furent chargés par les autorités de la ville de Toronto d'entreprendre une étude afin de rénover le site pour en faire un secteur à vocation commerciale.

Diamond et Myers étaient parfaitement conscients que d'ordinaire, lorsque des investissements sont consentis pour la rénovation d'un quartier déshérité, la procédure classique consiste à faire appel aux bull-dozers pour dégager le terrain, fut-ce au détriment des éléments qui avaient donné à l'endroit son caractère spécifique. Cette manière « radicale » de procéder s'appuyait sur un principe vivace et jamais remis en question, établissant que les opérations de rénovation sont plus onéreuses que de nouvelles constructions. En conséquence, table rase était faite du passé, dans la recherche d'une nouvelle densité, construite maximum, afin d'amortir le coût de l'entreprise.

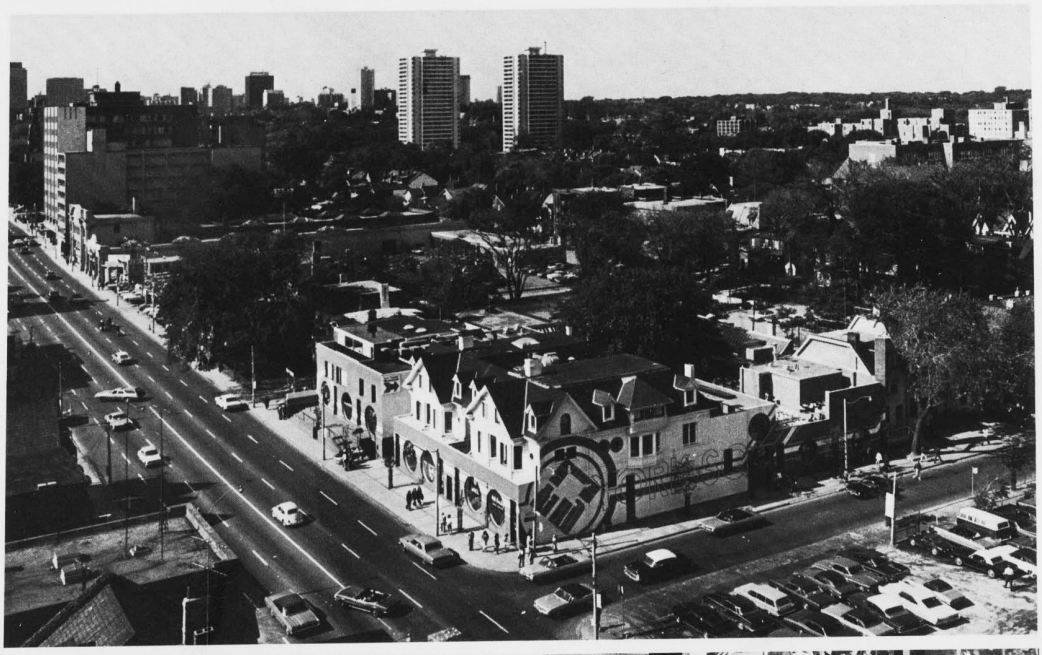
C'est cette manière d'aborder la rénovation urbaine que Jane Jacobs combat depuis plusieurs années aux U.S.A.

A York Square, le caractère spontané de l'organisation des bâtiments entre eux fut préservé, ainsi que fut respectée l'échelle générale des constructions, et la totalité de l'intervention fut menée dans le souci de ne pas interrompre l'activité du secteur.

De fait, York Square réussit maintenant à rassembler sur son territoire, un authentique mélange de population : allant de ceux qui sont dans le coup aux parfaits étrangers, jeunes et vieux, acteurs et spectateurs, indigènes et curieux, tenanciers de boutiques et acheteurs.

Cette approche originale du problème de la rénovation, soucieuse avant tout de permettre à la cr
sance urbaine de se développer
turellement et sans entraves, ré
au minimum les erreurs d'ap
ciations, aussi bien dans le dom
des interventions sur le terrain
dans celui de leur financement.
« Cette méthode relève du si
bon sens » précisent les architec
« à partir du moment où, si
fait ce qu'il faut pour la men
bien, elle autorise d'excellents
ports pour de faibles invest
ments, et favorise d'autant m
la suite de l'opération que ce
peut être menée avec un petit c
tal ».

Ainsi, contre la « révolution ur
ne », remède qui fait parfois
de dégâts que de mal, York Sq
plaide, à partir de sa propre ré
la cause de « l'évolution urbain



Quoique en la matière l'attitude courante soit de tenir en suspicion ce type de démarche, force est de constater que le bilan de l'opération York Square se solde par un succès urbanistique et commercial indéniable.

La méthode expérimentée à York Square conserve le caractère et le charme familier de l'ensemble bâti existant tout en revivifiant l'image. Ce simple rajeunissement au niveau de l'apparence suscite dès lors un intérêt renouvelé.

Ainsi que le souligne un des architectes : « Ce qui paraît inédit aujourd'hui sera peut-être caduc demain, en conséquence, intervenir judicieusement sur un contexte ancien et prendre en charge sans altérer son identité propre est peut-être l'aspect le plus important de l'urbanisme ».

En d'autres termes, les responsables de nos villes ne devraient jamais perdre de vue que dans la vie, le seul élément permanent c'est... le changement.

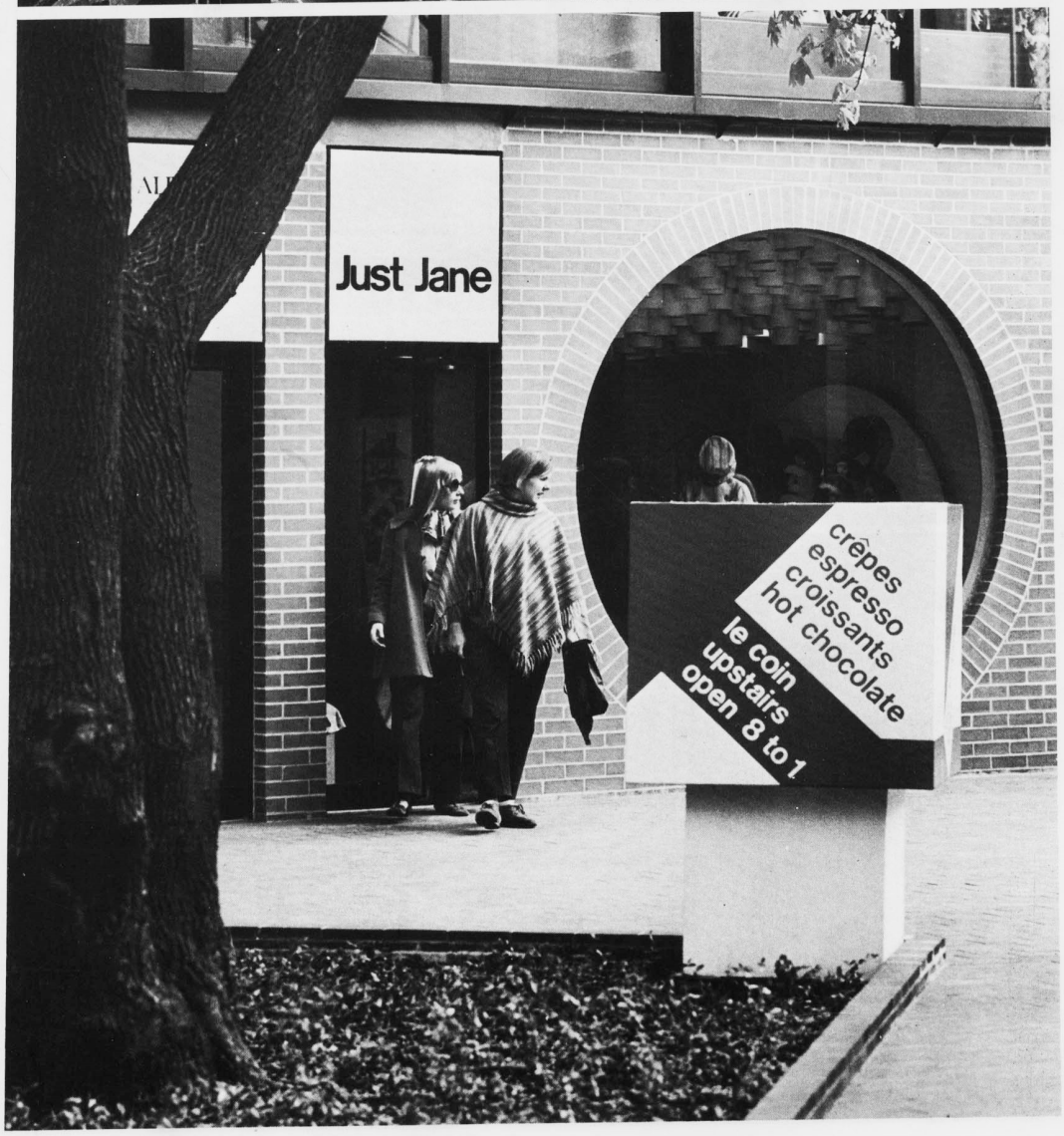
Pour transformer les anciens bâtiments de briques antérieurement peints en blanc, le long de Yorkville Avenue, Diamond et Myers ont proposé un traitement global des façades de magasins : le dénominateur commun se résume à un système de vastes ouvertures basé sur le cercle et le rectangle.

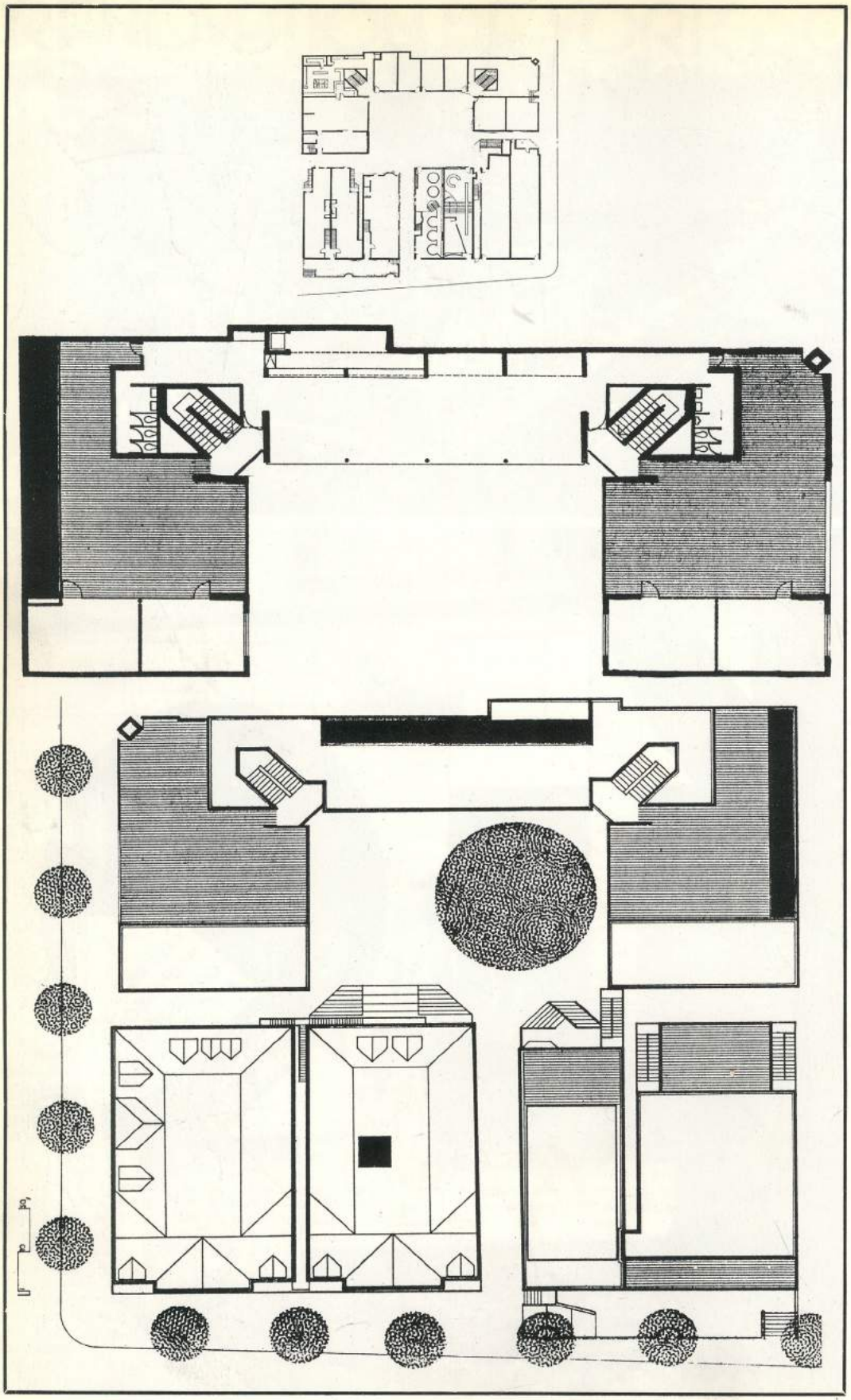
Les ouvertures circulaires employées pour les vitrines signifient : « regardez à travers », les ouvertures rectangulaires sont utilisées pour les portes et proclament : « entrez donc par ici ».

Cette géométrie sommaire mais efficace assure en même temps la transition entre les volumes relativement individualisés de l'architecture victorienne existante, les masses considérables du contexte architectural plus récent et les volumes en mouvement que sont les automobiles.

Clairement perceptible par chacun, ce parti assure la cohérence d'un ensemble complexe en établissant un système de liaison entre les éléments disparates, lorsque considérés indépendamment les uns des autres. Mais l'intervention ne s'est pas limitée à la mise en place d'un simple système d'ouvertures. En collaboration avec Barrie Briscoe, les architectes ont élaboré une série de supergraphismes, fondés aussi bien sur la typographie que sur la couleur.

Ainsi un graphisme ocre dans un énorme cercle vert, gigantesque mais stylisé de York Square, a été peint sur toute la façade d'un bâtiment.



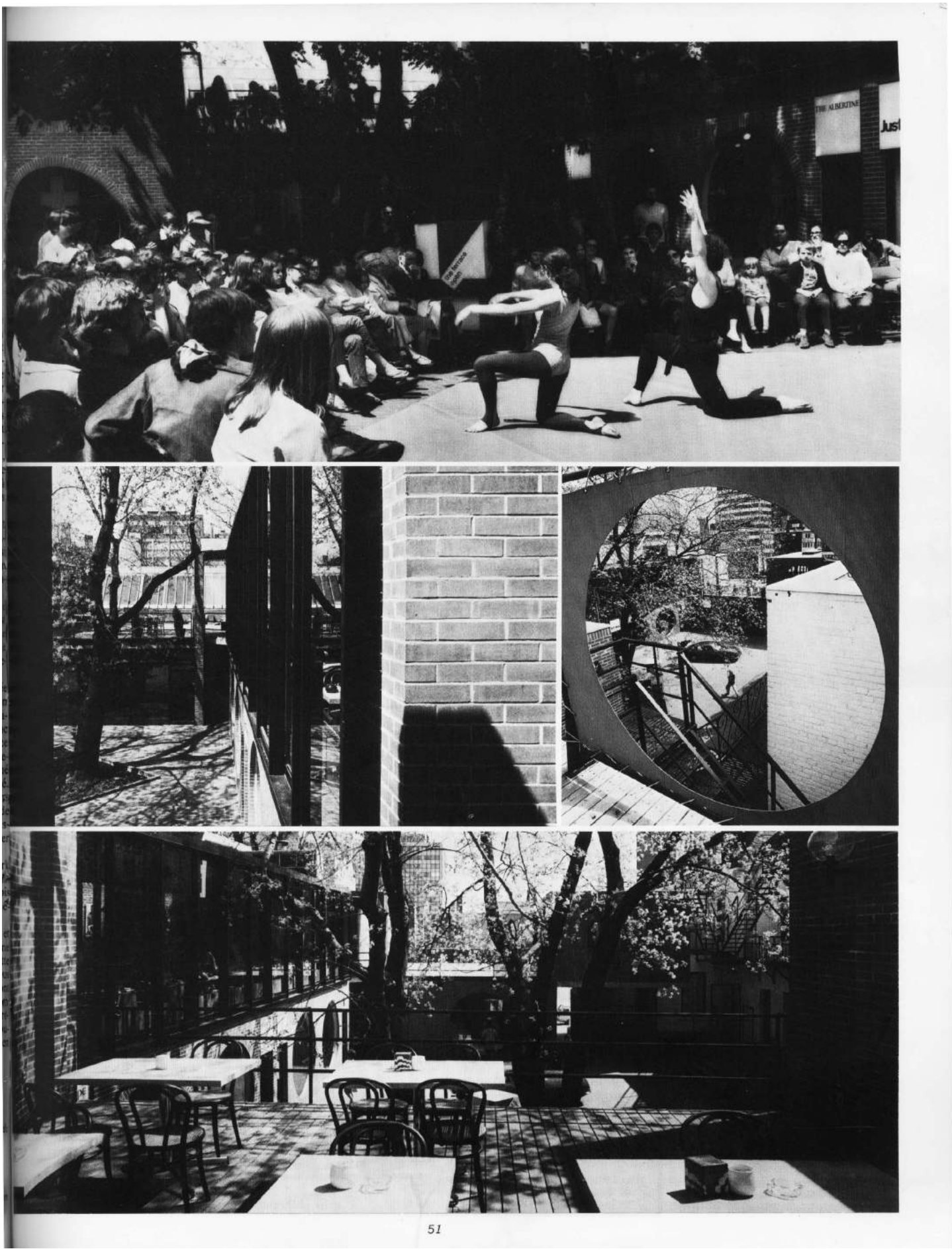


Ailleurs, c'est en lettres d'un étag
que le mot YORK SQUARE en
plit une façade, la typographie
couvrant sans discrimination mur
portes ou fenêtres.
Autre élément du système graph
que, une large bande de coule
verte, située à hauteur des yeu
sert de fil conducteur jusqu'à u
passage permettant de gagner l
espaces aménagés à l'intérieur d
l'îlot.
Un espace collectif, réservé au
piétons, a été créé en réunissan
entre elles plusieurs cours autrefo
privées.
Un certain nombre d'équipement
ont été construits en périphérie d
cet espace intérieur, échoppes, re
taurants, bistrots, etc.
York Square peut être considér
comme le concentré d'un certa
nombre de situations types : il me
en évidence la dualité de notre dé
marche dans les contradictions d
notre époque, l'obligation de teni
compte d'éléments parfois antago
nistes : l'ancien et le nouveau, l
voitures et les piétons, le calme d
la frénésie, les façades et les vo
lumes, la structure et le revêtement
et d'organiser tout cela dans le
cadre d'interventions bénéfiques
une revitalisation urbaine parfo
nécessaire.
York Square n'est pas simplemen
un projet nourri de recherches e
thétiques d'avant-garde, c'est aus
la première réalisation menée à bie
d'une recherche fondée sur ce no
veau langage plastique.
En tant que projet-pilote dans
cadre de ce genre d'approche, c'e
aussi la démonstration probante qu
« l'élément ludique » est valab
et positif, lorsqu'il est convenabl
ment mis en œuvre.
Jane Jacobs s'est d'ailleurs déclar
fervente partisane de l'opératio
menée à York Square : « Inévita
blement, dans une ville saine, do
dans une ville qui se développe, c
qui est bâti dans une intention pr
mière est rapidement transform
pour répondre à une autre finalité
En l'occurrence, Diamond et Myer
se sont servi avec beaucoup d
discernement des bâtiments exis
tants sans prétendre les détourner
de leur usage primitif.
L'originalité de l'opération Yor
Square, sans demander à être tran
posée telle quelle, mérite toutefo
de servir d'exemple à tous les am
nageurs.
Ces paroles sont significatives
particulièrement à Toronto mêm
où paradoxalement en dépit de ce
tentative réussie pratiquement so
leurs yeux, certains promoteurs o
récemment proposé la démolitio
de quartiers anciens sous le p
texte, se voulant ironique sans d
te, d'en chasser les hippies qui
sont les habitants...

*De haut en bas : plan au niveau
sol, plan de l'étage, plan masse.*

*Vues du quartier rénové à di
moments de la journée.*

"Renovation urbane," Renovation de York Square, Toronto, Canada, *L' Architecture Aujourd'hui, Vol.169*, October 1973, pg. 47-53.



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Kilbourn, William P., Dendy, William: Toronto Observed: its architecture, patrons and history; Oxford University Press, 1986, pg. 297-98.

162. *The Avenue Road front of York Square, showing the renovated Victorian buildings. Hazelton Lanes is on the left.*

YORK SQUARE

Yorkville Avenue at Avenue Road (NE)

1968 by A.J. Diamond & Barton Myers

Since the 1960s the growth of Toronto's several commercial districts has tended to result from the gradual conversion of existing houses, warehouses, and occasionally churches—for use as restaurants, offices, and stores—rather than from replacing old buildings with new. This tendency has created new commercial space while preserving much of the local character that originally drew businessmen and their customers to a particular area. Nowhere in Toronto has the trend resulted in a wider range of solutions than in Yorkville, along the streets immediately north of Bloor West, between Yonge and Avenue Road—a district long associated with luxury retailing. York Square, with its mix of new construction and renovation, is the most attractive of these modern extensions of Yorkville.

Originally a village just north of the toll-gate at Bloor, Yorkville was annexed to the city in 1883 and became a comfortable middle- and working-class suburb, crowded with houses dating from the 1850s through to the First World War. Between the wars it acquired a vaguely artistic and Bohemian reputation, and in the late 1950s—when redevelopment began to destroy the artistic community of Toronto's 'Greenwich Village' on Gerrard Street—it blossomed with art galleries, restaurants, antique stores, and coffee houses. Though still a residential neighbourhood, Yorkville played host first to the folk-music culture (from which came Gordon Lightfoot, Malka and Joso, Ian and Sylvia, and Joni Mitchell) and then, in the late sixties, to Flower Power and hippie culture.

During most of this time Bloor Street, only two blocks away, was becoming the centre of fashionable retailing. The large stores along Bloor presented one aspect of this enterprise. The other aspect—established first by art galleries and antique dealers, and then by a variety of modish purveyors—was seen in the boutique, the small specialty shop, often located in an old house and informally grouped with similar stores along Cumberland, Yorkville, and Hazelton. Here trees

and small-scale buildings preserved the village atmosphere (like that of New York's Greenwich Village, which many Torontonians knew and appreciated), though the district was clearly becoming commercial. An early and effective attempt to complement the old flavour of Yorkville in a new commercial complex was Lothian Mews (1963, by Webb, Zerafa & Housden; mostly destroyed by later renovation), between Bloor and Cumberland—shops grouped around a galleried court, with a fountain and a restaurant.

Of the new developments York Square, which still retains much of its original character, was the most successful. The site, at the north corner of Yorkville and Avenue Road—owned by Laver Investments, whose president was Richard Wookey—was originally occupied by seven Late Victorian brick houses facing Avenue Road. Current theory would likely have proposed a monolithic high-rise building. But Wookey was attuned to the village ambience of Yorkville and hired as his architects Jack Diamond and Barton Myers. Though new to Toronto, they were well acquainted with American, English, and European architecture and to them, Toronto's nineteenth-century buildings (which many Toronto architects of the previous generation had been taught to despise or ignore) were aesthetically pleasing and offered possibilities for combining new functions with old architectural forms.

The four brick houses on the corner of the site were retained and renovated with ground-floor additions for shops, and offices upstairs; the three other houses were completely refaced. Behind them a U-shaped two-storey building was erected to contain shops and restaurants around a brick-paved square, entered from both Yorkville and Avenue Road. Constructed of red brick, in homage to the old houses, it has stark rectilinear windows on the upper floors, and circular shop windows that were originally tied together with large-scale two-dimensional super-graphics that spread across the sidewall of the corner house. The old houses were painted white, and their bays and tile-hung gables became a decorative part of the complex. Inside the square the exterior window forms were repeated on the ground floor; on the second floor a light grid of windows was framed in thin steel. The square itself, shaded by a rangy maple tree, is a quiet haven similar to an urban backyard.

York Square succeeded largely because of its stylized village atmosphere and air of casual commercialism. Some of its basic ideas were borrowed for the larger Hazelton Lanes development to the north, also completed in 1976 (by Webb Zerafa Menkes & Housden, again for a consortium headed

by Richard Wookey). In the early 1970s Wookey had purchased many of the Late Victorian houses on Hazelton Avenue and renovated them as luxurious shops and apartments. On the west side they form a screen for Hazelton Lanes: two long blocks of brick apartments, stepped back with spacious balconies, that rise above two levels of shops. The eastern block is almost invisible from the street; the western acts as a buffer against the Avenue Road traffic. Between is a courtyard—in summer a restaurant and in winter a skating rink—that, unlike the one in York Square, is not casually accessible because of the building's design; and the shopping corridors, though sumptuous, are so labyrinthine as to be disorienting and confining. Unfortunately this development led to the removal of the super-graphics from the walls of York Square, which for much of the year is now merely a passageway to Hazelton Lanes.

York Square provided an object lesson for renovators by successfully using modern materials in the restoration of old buildings—reworking but preserving the original atmosphere of Yorkville—but it was ignored by property owners in the area. Shortly after, a long row of houses on the north side of Yorkville Street was veneered with rough brick and fronted with phony Victorian lamp-posts. Also slotted into the streetscape were three-storey split-level structures that tried to imitate the pattern of bay windows under a gable—traditional in Toronto houses of the 1880s and 1890s. Such changes have given Yorkville a synthetic period flavour—appreciated more by tourists and suburban visitors than by those who are aware of its history and enjoy such authentic architecture as York Square.

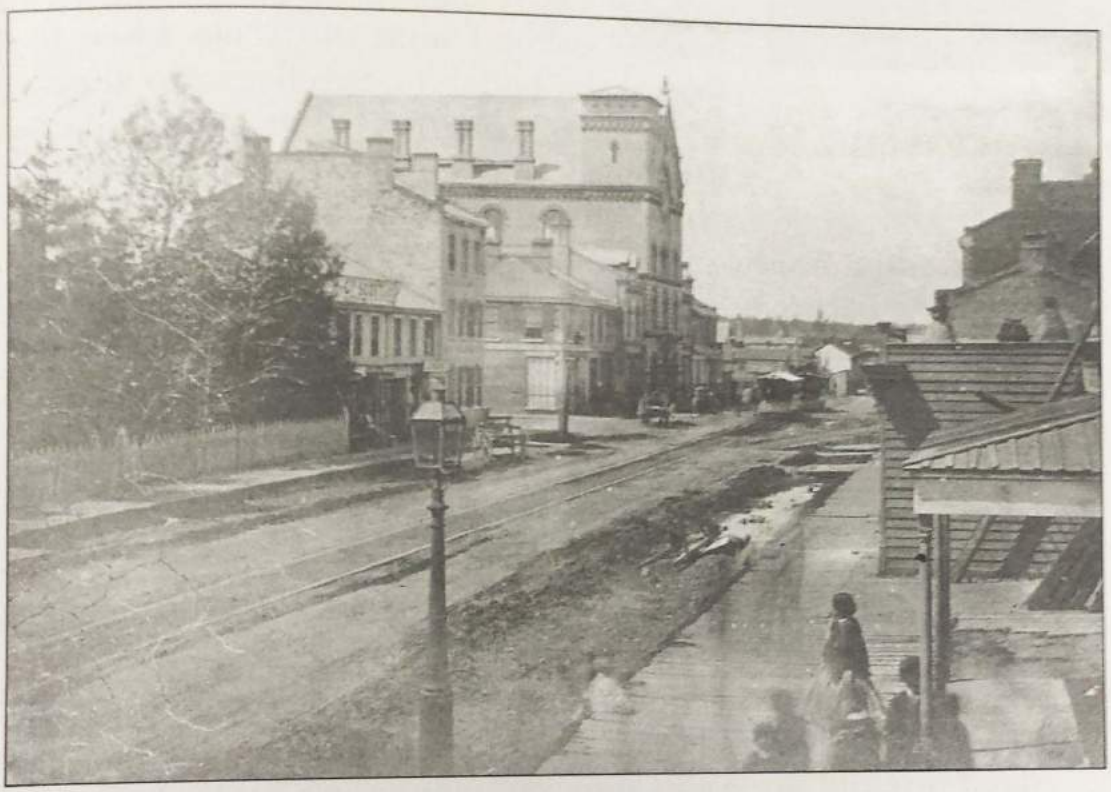
His health failing, Simcoe ordered the Rangers to continue where Berczy had left off. He then returned home to England where he died shortly thereafter. By 1800 Yonge Street was officially open, but was ". . . as yet very bad; pools of water roots of trees and fallen logs, being half frozen render them still more disagreeable when horses plunge into them." Eventually conditions improved and it became the main artery that Simcoe had intended, attracting an average of a tavern a mile. Around these all-important watering holes, hamlets developed. Some of them grew while others stagnated, and a few quickly dropped from sight. Today, they count among Toronto's lost villages. Most, however, have left some vestiges of their days as separate little pioneer gathering spots.

Yorkville

For many years, Yorkville, a country settlement well north of York, began, as did many early villages, around a toll gate. Toll gates more often than not led to taverns, and taverns to towns. Yorkville fit this pattern. The toll gate appeared around 1796 and within a dozen years, Daniel Tiers had opened the Red Lion Inn (on the east side of Yonge, just north of today's Bloor Street). A small stream known as Severn's Creek, a short distance to the northeast, contained enough flow of water to power industry. The first to locate there was a brewery erected by Joseph Bloor in 1830, which stood beside today's Rosedale Valley Road, west of the Sherbourne Street bridge. A few years later, closer to Yonge Street, John Severn added a second brewery. But along with industry came the land speculators, and Sheriff William Jarvis, after whom Jarvis Street is named, was one. On land northwest of the corner of Yonge and the First Concession (Bloor Street), Jarvis laid out Yorkville. Development, however, remained slow. It was too far to travel to the factories in Toronto, which were heavily concentrated along the lake. But in 1849 omnibus service made commuting easier and Yorkville began to grow. In 1852, "1,000" petitioners asked for village status although far fewer than that actually lived there. A nearby cemetery, it is speculated, "contributed"

heavily to the petition. Nevertheless, Yorkville officially became a village, with its shops concentrated largely on Yonge Street, although its village streets stretched as far west as today's Avenue Road, and north to Davenport. Bay Street had not been extended through the townsite at that time.

One of the first acts of the new council was to create a coat of arms, the second to commission the building of a town hall. Completed in 1860, the hall stood on Yonge opposite today's Collier Street, and was constructed of stone from the Credit Valley quarries. Its tower remained a Yonge Street landmark for many decades,with the coat of arms that included a symbol for the occupations of each member of that first council. The hall was gutted by fire in 1941, and demolished the following year. The coat of arms, however, was rescued and sits to this day on the tower of the Yorkville Fire Hall. Now the most prominent of Yorkville's landmarks, the fire tower, built in 1876, still stands on



Horsedrawn trolleys had just come to Yorkville when this photo looking north on Yonge Street from near Bloor was taken. The large building served as Yorkville's town hall. It burned in 1941.

Yorkville was built in 1881 but was best known as the Mount Sinai Hospital, a role it served from 1922 - 1952. During the heady hippy days of the sixties, it was a senior's home, where elderly citizens, some bewildered, others bemused, stared from their porch at an endless parade of "flower children."

Hazelton Avenue is Yorkville's historic north-south street, and several structures here also recall the place's more pastoral times. Houses at 49-51, 53-63, and 65-68, all date back to the 1870s. One of the most pleasing of the village's old buildings is that occupied by the Heliconian Club. Built as a Presbyterian Church, it was moved from the adjacent lot to its present site on the east side of Hazelton, a block from Yorkville Avenue. On Scollard Street, buildings at 99 - 101 and 105 were all built in the early 1870s. Most of the other houses, or converted versions, while old and attractive, followed rather than predated the urban boom.

In a way, Yorkville still serves a role much like that of its early days. Then it was an oasis, a country village far from the maddening crowd. Well, the crowds have arrived, but its pedestrian scale streetscape and its attempts at heritage preservation have kept Yorkville an oasis within what is often an overpowering urban environment.

Drummondville

From Yorkville, the early teams hauling wagons or stages would leave and struggle up the Yonge Street hill (today's Summerhill area) to a crossroads community once known as Drummondville. Here, three hotels clustered at the intersection of what became today's Yonge and St. Clair, (St. Clair being the second concession north of Lot Street). Sellers Hotel stood on the southwest corner, while that known as the Deer Park Hotel stood on the northeast. The hotel, and eventually the community itself, took its name from the Deer Park Estate that the Heath family established in 1837. The name was appropriate, for deer from the Heath estate would frequently wander over to the hotel, to the considerable amusement of the guests.

The intersection seemed important enough for one Baron Frederic de Hoen to try his hand at land speculation. At the

The tower from the old Yorkville fire station survives on today's fire station and contains the town's old coat of arms.

Yorkville Avenue west of Yonge. The main fire hall, however, was replaced in 1889.

By 1881, Toronto was closing in on Yorkville which by then had boomed to about 5,000 residents, and extended north up Yonge to almost the Summerhill area. East of Yonge, however, a subdivision of the Rosedale estate was slower to develop. Finally, in 1883, Toronto annexed the area, and Yorkville was swallowed by this surge of urban growth. New services, like sidewalks and paved streets, appeared, as did electric street railway service, and Bay Street was extended north from Bloor to meet Davenport. Vacant lots quickly filled, and new subdivisions appeared.

Yorkville remained a quiet residential neighbourhood until the 1960s when the first of the coffee houses began to appear. With names like the Chat Noir and the Riverboat, they attracted a group of budding young folk-singers like Gordon Lightfoot, Catherine McKinnon, and Arlo Guthrie. Inevitably the area began to attract the curious, and soon became a haven for "pot-smoking hippies." Proposals to turn this street of sin into a canyon of apartments were met with concerted opposition. The old houses were saved, and soon the neighbourhood evolved into one of the Toronto area's more upscale shopping districts, frequented by visiting Hollywood stars, and likened by some to Beverly Hills' Rodeo Drive.

Several buildings, however, from Yorkville's earlier village days still stand among the new and renewed. Although nothing of that period remains on Yonge Street (though several stores on the west side of Yonge do date from the early urban days), the old fire tower remains a landmark on Yorkville just west of Yonge. Number 77 Yorkville is another old building built in 1867 for saloon keeper John Daniels. Number 100

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STARS, IMPORTS AND OTHER PHENOMENA
A Reflection on an Aspect of the Evolution of Architectural Culture in Toronto

>GEORGE BAIRD

GEORGE BAIRD is the Dean Emeritus of the John H. Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape, and Design at the University of Toronto. He has published and lectured widely throughout most parts of the world. He is co-editor (with Charles Jencks) of *Meaning in Architecture* (1969), and (with Mark Lewis) of *Queues Rendezvous, Riots* (1995). He is author of *Alvar Aalto* (1969) and *The Space of Appearance* (1995). Most recently, his researches in architectural theory have focused on the question of the political and social status of urban public space, and on debates revolving around subject of "critical architecture." His consulting firm, Baird Sampson Neuert, is the winner of numerous design awards. He is a Fellow of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada and a member of the Royal Canadian Academy of Arts. He has been the recipient of numerous awards and distinctions, including, most recently, the 2010 Gold Medal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada.

Some recent architectural controversy in Canada has focused on the fact that many of the major architectural projects completed in Toronto in the past decade have been designed by architectural firms based elsewhere. Pessimistic observers have even regarded this as ominous for the ongoing development of architectural culture here. Such projects as Will Alsop's Sharp Centre for the Ontario College of Art and Design, Daniel Libeskind's addition to the Royal Ontario Museum, and Frank Gehry's additions and alterations of the Art Gallery of Ontario are usually cited as cases in point. At a public event in Vancouver some years back, the author of this paper was even challenged by a Vancouver colleague to explain why so many of the important projects from the era in question were designed by out-of-town architects, when, the questioner suggested, comparable projects built in Vancouver during the same period had largely been designed by locally-based architects. This short paper will seek to contextualize and historicize the discussion of this sensitive cultural question.

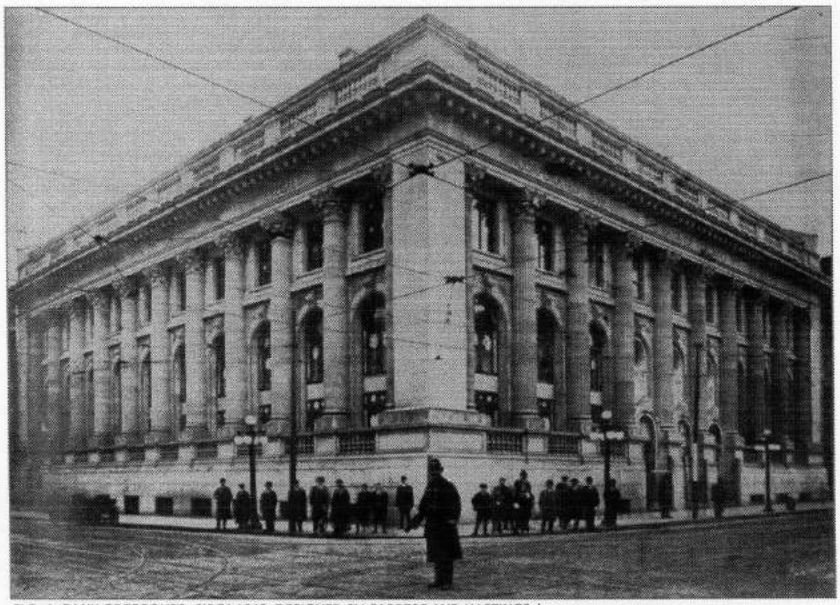

FIG. 1. BANK OF TORONTO *CIRCA* 1913, DESIGNED BY CARRERE AND HASTINGS. | IMAGE COURTESY OF PEAKE AND WHITTINGHAM COLLECTION, THE PUBLIC ARCHIVES OF CANADA.

In the first instance, it is important to recognize that architectural firms based outside of Toronto have been designing buildings here for a very long time. For example, the fine 1911 headquarters building for the Bank of Toronto, located on the south-west corner of King and Bay Streets (until its demolition in the 1960s for the creation of the Toronto-Dominion Centre), was designed by the well-known New York firm of Carrere and Hastings (fig. 1).

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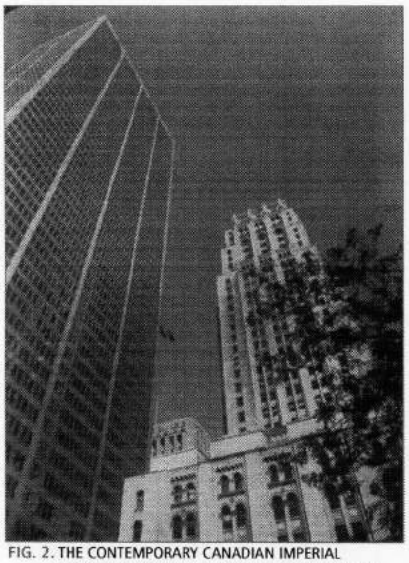

FIG. 2. THE CONTEMPORARY CANADIAN IMPERIAL BANK OF COMMERCE COMPLEX IN DOWNTOWN TORONTO, SHOWING TO THE RIGHT THE ORIGINAL HEADQUARTERS BUILDING OF THE CANADIAN BANK OF COMMERCE FROM 1929-1931, DESIGNED BY YORK & SAWYER FROM NEW YORK, WITH DARLING & PEARSON FROM TORONTO. | IMAGE COURTESY OF ESTATE OF WILLIAM DENDY AND OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS.

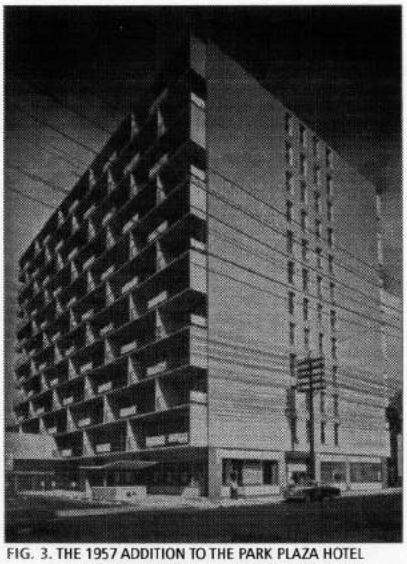

FIG. 3. THE 1957 ADDITION TO THE PARK PLAZA HOTEL (RECENTLY RENOVATED BEYOND RECOGNITION), DESIGNED BY PETER DICKINSON DURING THE PERIOD WHEN HE WAS THE DESIGN ARCHITECT AT THE FIRM OF PAGE & STEELE. | IMAGE COURTESY OF CANADIAN ARCHITECTURAL ARCHIVE, UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY.

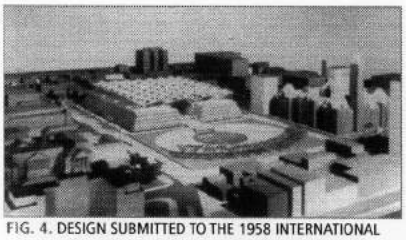

FIG. 4. DESIGN SUBMITTED TO THE 1958 INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION FOR THE DESIGN OF A NEW CITY HALL FOR TORONTO, BY JOHN ANDREWS AND MACY DUBOIS. | IMAGE COURTESY OF HELGA PLUMB.

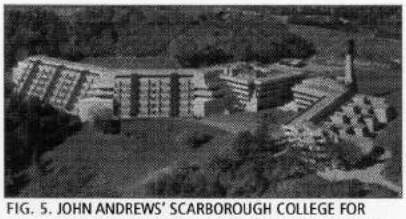

FIG. 5. JOHN ANDREWS' SCARBOROUGH COLLEGE FOR THE SCARBOROUGH CAMPUS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO, 1965. | IMAGE COURTESY OF KEN BELL, UNIVERSITY ADVANCEMENT AND UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO PRESS.

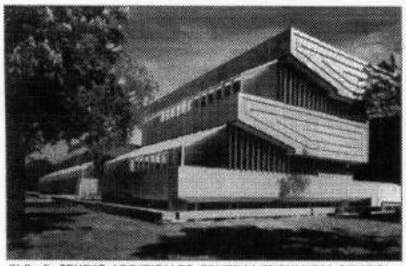

FIG. 6. STUDIO ADDITION TO CENTRAL TECHNICAL SCHOOL, TORONTO, BY MACY DUBOIS. | IMAGE COURTESY OF HELGA PLUMB.

FIG. 7. YORK SQUARE SHOPPING COMPLEX, TORONTO, 1968, DESIGNED BY A.J. DIAMOND AND BARTON MYERS. | IMAGE COURTESY OF ESTATE OF WILLIAM DENDY AND OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS.

Similarly, the 1929 head office building of the Canadian Bank of Commerce (still standing today as Commerce Court East), just east of the south-east corner of the same intersection, was designed by the New York firm of York & Sawyer, in collaboration with the Toronto firm of Darling & Pearson (fig. 2).

Then too, Toronto has been welcoming architects as immigrants to this city for almost as long as it has had architects from elsewhere designing buildings here. Notable examples of such immigrants are Peter Dickinson (from Britain) in the early 1950s, John Andrews and Macy Dubois (from the United States) in the late 1950s, and A.J. Diamond and Barton Myers (also from the United States) in the late 1960s. First as a lead designer at Page & Steele Architects, and later in his own firm, Dickinson designed such major Toronto projects as the Benvenuto Place Apartments, the addition to the Park Plaza Hotel (fig. 3), and the Ontario Teachers College. John Andrews and Macy Dubois submitted a joint entry to the 1958 competition for a design for a new Toronto City Hall while they were students at Harvard's Graduate School of Design, and on the strength of their having placed as finalists in the competition at such a young age, moved from Boston to Toronto (Andrews being an Australian who was studying there) to launch their professional careers (fig. 4). Andrews went on to design such celebrated projects as the original Scarborough College for the University of Toronto (fig. 5), and Dubois, the studio addition to Central Technical School (fig. 6), as well as a new building for George Brown College's Casa Loma campus. For their part, Diamond and Myers, while in partnership, designed such unprecedented projects as the Dundas-Sherbourne housing project for the City Housing Department created during the David Crombie mayorality, the

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York Square retail complex in Yorkville (fig. 7), and a new headquarters building for the Ontario Medical Association. After the breakup of their partnership, A.J. Diamond went on to create numerous projects in Toronto, such as the city's downtown YMCA (fig. 8). For his part, Barton Myers designed—among many other projects—two much admired steel houses in Toronto (one of them for himself and his family, fig. 9) and the King James Place infill office complex on King Street East in Toronto.

Of this set of five distinguished immigrant architects in Toronto, two (Peter Dickinson and Macy Dubois) lived out the remainder of their lives in Toronto, two (John Andrews from Australia and Barton Myers from the United States) eventually returned to their home countries, and one (A.J. Diamond) continues to practice here (now in his late seventies). But each and every one of them made a profound contribution to architectural culture in the city. Dickinson remains to this day one of the two most admired pioneers of modernism in architecture in the city—competing for the top position in this regard only with one other contender, that being John B. Parkin Associates.

For his part, John Andrews not only designed canonical buildings such as Scarborough College in Toronto, as well as the new building for the Graduate School of Design at Harvard University (from which he had himself graduated in 1958), he also agreed in 1967 to take on the important academic responsibility of the chairmanship of the Department of Architecture at the University of Toronto, and launched a controversial pedagogical experiment that is much discussed to this day. Macy Dubois went on to design a whole series of admired buildings, including the Ontario Pavilion at Expo '67, as well as the much-loved Scaramouche restaurant that continues to be housed in Peter Dickinson's Benvenuto Apartments building.

For their parts, A.J. Diamond and Barton Myers made what are among the most important contributions ever to the state of architectural and urban design culture in the city of Toronto, through their deeply engaged participation in the activities of the so-called "reform council" launched under the leadership of Mayor David Crombie in 1972. Myers's contribution to the culture is probably best summarized in the special issue of *Design Quarterly* from 1978 (edited jointly by Myers and myself, and entitled "Vacant Lottery"), focusing on the shifts in design culture in the city introduced during the Crombie era.[1] For his part, Diamond has gone on for many years to argue against the so-called "international star system" in architecture, and in favour of a commitment by architectural professionals in Toronto to a strongly local sense of responsibility to the public design issues in the city.

The obvious difference between the "stars" enumerated in the first paragraph of this text, and the "imports" discussed subsequently, in regard to the evolution of architectural culture in Toronto, is that the "imports" in question became, over time, deeply embedded in that culture and, in turn, subsequently contributed deeply to it, in ways that the "stars" in question could not, and did not do. There are probably a handful of historical cases of architects "from away"—as the Newfoundlanders would put it—who have contributed to the evolution of a local architectural culture anywhere in the world—I think for example of Philip Johnson who, on account of an ongoing series of commissions for residences in Houston and Dallas (TX) in the 1950s and 1960s, seems to have engendered

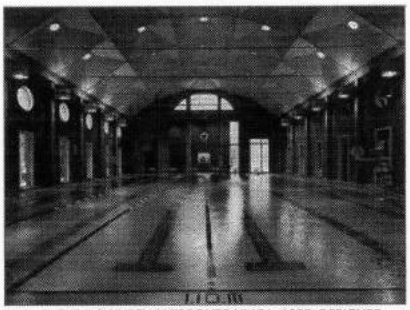

FIG. 8. THE DOWNTOWN TORONTO YMCA, 1985, DESIGNED BY A.J. DIAMOND. | IMAGE COURTESY OF DIAMOND & SCHMITT ARCHITECTS INTERNATIONAL.

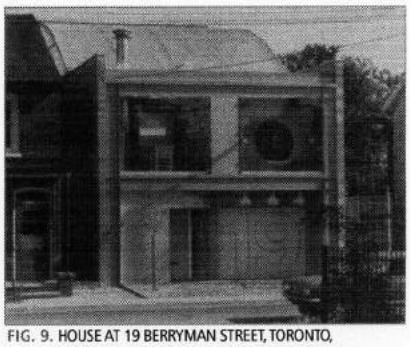

FIG. 9. HOUSE AT 19 BERRYMAN STREET, TORONTO, DESIGNED BY BARTON MYERS FOR HIMSELF AND HIS FAMILY. | IMAGE COURTESY OF ESTATE OF WILLIAM DENDY AND OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS.

a local, Johnsonian architectural subculture, despite his being so definitively located in New York City himself. But such examples are, as far as I know, extremely rare. It certainly cannot be said that Alsop, Libeskind, or Gehry have made a sustained contribution to architectural culture here. Their episodes of recurring participation in such a culture to date have simply not been frequent enough, or extensive enough, for "embeddedness" to set firmly in.

Yet the fact that none of this group has contributed significantly to the culture of architecture in this city does not mean that that culture has not continued to evolve and mature. I want to conclude

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this brief text with a few remarks on the question of the emergence of a "Toronto school," or a "Toronto style" in architecture, such as has been discussed by Professor Rodolphe el-Khoury of the University of Toronto, in a conversation with the partners in the firm Kuwabara Payne McKenna Blumberg, in a monograph on the work of that now very prominent Toronto firm. Interestingly enough, this is a firm whose partners are the four senior associates from the Toronto version of Barton Myers Associates; the four having decided to launch their own firm in the wake of Myers's decision to relocate his practice to Los Angeles at the end of the 1980s. Avowedly deeply in debt to Myers's architectural ideas, Kuwabara Payne McKenna Blumberg have gone on to become a major firm in Toronto and in Canada in their own right, and it is not surprising that the term "Toronto style"—if it is considered to be applicable to any firm of architects—would be considered to be applicable to KPMB. At a minimum, it is clear that el-Khoury makes an interesting argument for the consequential development over time of the distinctive and consistent design production of the firm, not only in terms of its characteristic formal approaches to architecture and urban design, but also in its typical systems of fabrication, and its employment of a consistent stable of local suppliers of specialized building components.[2]

It is true, of course, that other commentators have expressed skepticism in regard to the perceptibility of this so-called Toronto style; hence it cannot be considered to be an accepted historical reality at the present time. Yet, that having been said, it is also true that a jury assembled for a recent annual Canadian Architect Magazine awards programme—a jury that happened to include no representatives from Toronto—took it upon itself to shut Toronto almost entirely out of that particular annual round of awards, on the rumoured grounds that the designs submitted from Toronto that year were too alike, too familiar, and too predictable. A rumour such as this lends credence to the hypothesis that like earlier previous art-historical epithets such as "mannerist" and "impressionist," the term "Toronto style"—if it ever does so definitively—will accrue its eventual historical status as much as a term of scorn as one of admiration. And whether their views are positive ones or negative ones, future interpreters of this debate will find themselves forced to ponder the extant state of architectural culture here, in order to justify their own position in the matter of any putative "Toronto style."

Finally, a short—but I hope thought-provoking—commentary on the editorial policy of a very fine "local" architectural publication from Barcelona in the 1970s and 1980s: *Arquitecturas Bis*. Its editors made it their usual practice, when publishing a project or a book by a "local" figure, always to have the project or book in question commented upon by a notable "international" figure from outside the local Barcelona architectural scene. By the same token, projects and books discussed in the magazine that were from outside Barcelona were usually discussed by figures from that local scene. It has always seemed to me that this simple, yet ingenious editorial policy constituted a major contribution to the evolution of an influential—if indisputably "local" architectural culture in that important regional city. It seems to me that it is an example that we Torontonians might still be able to learn from—even a quarter of a century later.

NOTES

1. Myers, Barton and George Baird, 1978, "Vacant Lottery, *Design Quarterly*, no. 108 (published by the Walker Art Centre, Minneapolis, Minnesota).
2. Kuwabara, Bruce, Tom Payne, Marianne McKenna, and Shirley Blumberg, 2004, "A Conversation with Rodolphe el-Khoury," in Phyllis Lambert, Detlef Mertins, Bruce Mau, and Rodolphe el-Khoury, "The Architecture of Kuwabara Payne McKenna Blumberg," Birkhauser, Basel Berlin Boston, p. 211-215.

THE GLOBE AND MAIL

Looks like time's up for Yorkville's old guard

John Bentley Mays
Special to The Globe and Mail
Published Thursday, Jun. 13, 2013 8:32AM EDT
Last updated Wednesday, Jul. 17, 2013 2:36PM EDT

In the summer of 1969, when I moved from the United States to Toronto, the intoxicating haze of rock music, incense, pot fumes and flower-power politics hung heavy over the little Victorian streets of the Yorkville district.

Head shops and vintage clothing emporia and coffee houses served a cosmopolitan clientele made up of young drifters and seekers, draft dodgers, outlaws and students. Though I was not a very convincing hippie – I never did get the hang of smoking weed – I enjoyed wandering along the neighbourhood's byways and browsing in the Book Cellar, on the corner of Avenue Road and Yorkville Avenue.

The Book Cellar is gone, of course, and so is the run-down folksiness that once gave central Yorkville a kind of faded charm. The district's transformation into a spiffy, high-end shopping and residential area began in the early 1970s, but this process is only nearing completion now, as new condominium towers go up, one after another, on the edges and main thoroughfares of the former village.

But if rezoning permission is granted by city hall, one tall building complex in particular will spell the end of old Yorkville as we've long known it. This mixed-use project by Empire Communities is slated to rise 38 storeys from the corner of Yorkville and Avenue Road (the location of the now-defunct Book Cellar).

According to documents filed with the city, it will feature 342 residential units, retail on the lowest storeys and five levels of underground parking. The architects (at the Zeidler Partnership's Toronto studio) have not yet produced final drawings. But from information that's currently available, I gather the structure will have a familiar shape: A stout podium four or five storeys high, with a slender point tower rising from this base. In other words, it promises to be just another high-rise that simply does its humdrum job, adding nothing to the ongoing story of building tall.

But, right now, I am less concerned with the aesthetic merits of this tower than I am with what its construction will sweep away.

The corner site is currently occupied by a small retail and courtyard complex known as York Square. Designed by Toronto architects A. J. Diamond and Barton Myers in 1968, this mingling of Victorian house-forms and modernist façade and interior treatments was an early, excellent instance of the "adaptive reuse" of old buildings that would later become a preservationist mantra. It is an object-lesson from the past that speaks eloquently to the present, and it deserves to be saved for that reason alone.

But York Square is more than taxidermy. The elderly houses Mr. Diamond and Mr. Myers inherited on the site were actively recycled, not merely pickled where they stood. The architects used the deeply sculpted upper storeys and roof fabric of the antique dwellings to create a picturesque skyline for their commercial

project, which, in turn, anchored the development in its neighbourhood of low-rise skylines.

In contrast to all that, the bottom storeys, where the storefronts meet the sidewalk, are clad in a broad ribbon of brick that binds the separate houses together and is unapologetically modernist in appearance. Large circular openings in the brick surfaces showcase what's for sale inside. This alternation of round windows and sturdy brick planes spared York Square from the monotony of the blank glass wall that had become (and still is) standard in big-city store design.

In these and other moves, Mr. Diamond and Mr. Myers showed that our ancestors' venerable way of making houses meet the sky can be honoured without a resort to fakery or pastiche, and that shops can be made to meet the city in a way that avoids the cliché of the all-glass store front. Though the years have not been kind to the place, the melding of old and new that the designers brought off at York Square is memorable and smart. The complex is also an expression of patient, careful urbanism that needs to be kept intact, just so young architects and the architecturally interested public can learn from its good example.

Perhaps it is too late to save York Square. But this much should be clear: Toronto will surely be diminished a little, if we allow this small, fine work of modern architectural imagination to fall before the bulldozers.

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