

false buttresses are important but unfortunately, truncated in the illustration. The best photographs were those taken by the author where the stylistic peculiarities of the Neo-Gothic such as gingerbread trim and board and batten construction are clearly visible.

By virtue of its trans-Canadian scope, this book is extremely useful. This reviewer however, would like to suggest that for subsequent publications, some modifications should be undertaken to make them more efficient for the reader to handle. For example, the system of notation used for what has been called "legend sources" (a cumbersome term for the information accompanying the illustrations) is awkward. The reference note should appear on the page along with the information so that the reader does not have to flip constantly back and forth; in future, wherever possible, full archival references including numbers should be used. For example, Plate I illustrating the "Main elevation of the Government House for Quebec" Design 1811-12, by Jeffry Wyatt, comes from the Public Archives of Canada. The researcher wants to know the Ms, not only the secondary reference source which is given at the back of the book under "legend sources." While it was not the intention of this series at the outset to provide detailed archival information, it would be a welcome addition to future books.

Despite flaws that could be rectified by more attention to editorial detail, as a clearly defined approach to architectural photography and the inclusion of precise primary source material, the *Gothic Revival in Canadian Architecture* is an important addition to the growing body of architectural literature.

Ellen James
Dept. of Art History
Concordia University
Montréal, Qué.

Dom Bellot et l'architecture religieuse au Québec

Nicole Tardif-Painchaud
Les Presses de l'université Laval,
Québec, 1978
292 pp., 191 ill., \$16.00

I have just been reviewing Tom Wolfe's *Bauhaus to Our House* for another publication. I don't know whether Canada as a whole is ready for Tom Wolfe yet or not; certainly my base, Victoria, isn't. My God, can you imagine Tom Wolfe in Victoria? However, I digress, and I haven't even started to review *Dom Bellot*... Yet actually it's not entirely a digression, for there is a connection. Tom Wolfe and Robert Hughes (and many others lately) have been usefully reminding us how much was lost in the Bauhaus Blitz; what a clean sweep these European manifesto-manufacturers made of American traditions, American heritage, American craftsmanship and for that matter, American common sense. But that obliteration of the past wasn't only limited to the United States. Among Gropius's earliest converts were Canadians who had gone down to the "shrine" he presided over at Harvard; on returning they were just as zealous as any Bauhauslers to wipe everything "bourgeois" (i.e. everything architectural and sculptural from ca. 1870 to 1940) off the landscape, in the name of some optimistic utopian new world to be created any day now. The Dom Bellot tradition of church architecture was among their victims. They didn't physically demolish its buildings; since they were churches in Québec that just wasn't possible. But the churches could be and were made to seem out of date, out of fashion, contemptible, in consequence "le style Dom Bellot... c'est une page brève," lasting twenty years, 1930-1950. All the more useful, then, to have so fine a study made of it now.

Tardif-Painchaud begins with a general review of artistic developments with particular reference to Catholic religious art circles during the early decades of this century. It was a time of discontent with old formulae and there was a sense of urgency about renewals and revitalization "in modernist spir-

it." Dom Bellot's ideas were in the mood of this time. Born in 1876 of a family of architects, he took Benedictine vows in 1901 and was almost immediately ordered by his superiors to undertake construction of an abbey church at Oosterhout. So he found himself pursuing the family profession after all, with time to reflect upon the meaning of architecture. He made connections with various other groups working toward a more contemporarily meaningful modern architecture: craftsmen of all sorts, trying to revive somehow what they considered to have been the spirit of medieval art without necessarily reproducing its specific forms, but rather, devising forms suitable to their own twentieth-century times. Tardif-Painchaud describes these people and their theories admirably. How humane they seem, especially compared to the coldly scientific approach being fostered at this same moment by Corbu and Oud and Gropius and the rest of what Wolfe has so neatly called "The White Gods." How reflective! How concerned to build meaningfully and creatively on the past, rather than simply to obliterate it to make way from something new; "starting from zero" as Albers decreed in the fabled Bauhaus *Vorkurs*. She goes on to describe Dom Bellot's contacts in Québec, his work on the Oratoire (Basilique Saint-Joseph du Mont-Royal) in Montréal and the abbey of Saint-Benoît-du-Lac, and his three principal Québécois disciples: Adrien Dufresne, Edgar Courchesne, and Dom Claude-Maire Côté (*catalogues raisonnés* of their works are appended.) She then describes "le rayonnement du dom-bellotisme au Québec" and its rather abrupt end when the new style of church building derived from (though still by no means slavishly imitating) Bauhaus and CIAM principles swept into the province, beginning with the Lac Bouchette chapel by Henri Tremblay. Actually Tremblay made no sharp break with Québécois tradition either; he worked rather gradually out of Dom Bellotisme and retained traditional proportions (as I pointed out in an article on him and his work long ago in the *Journal of the RAIC*, 1953, if anyone should be interested.)

I wish she had said a little more about this, perhaps she will, in another connection. For with all their efforts to maintain ties with the past, the Dom-Bellotistes made their own contribution to digging the chasm which today separates us from our past. I well remember how Gérard Morisset, one of the principal young protagonists of this renewal of religious art, talked about late Victorian art in the late 1940's. He would have none of it. He wouldn't have minded much if all Québécois churches between around 1870 and 1910 had fallen down, or even been torn down, not that he therefore refused to record them for his *Inventaire des Oeuvres d'Art de la Province de Québec*. Good archivist and scholar that he was, he recorded them just as carefully as the earlier ones that he cherished, and the Dom Bellot churches that he promoted. But he saw no merit in them; and in that, he was absolutely typical of his generation. Another memory of mine is of being at Harvard, when I was president of the Society of Architectural Historians, trying to save a campus building by Richard Morris Hunt, the great American academic architect of the 1890's and early 1900's. The Harvard administration wanted to tear it down to make room for some insipid monstrosity in Modern style, and eventually did so. The critical factor in their decision, so rumour had it, was a consultation with one of Harvard's senior architectural historians, a famous name throughout the world, a contemporary of Morisset, who privately advised the president that American buildings of this period and type were of little or no historic value. And that was in the early 1970's!

In retrospect we can easily understand that the buzzing noise in their ears was that of the saws going through the limb on which they sat. As soon as you start talking *Zeitgeist*, about style being the product of the "spirit of the time," the past is lost. The whole past becomes irrelevant and you must eventually come to agree with the *echt Modernismus* position: since the Middle Ages built in medieval style and the Renaissance in Renaissance style and so forth, it follows that we *must* build in Modern; we have no alternative but to

base our art wholeheartedly on steel-mills and railroads and Science, because the spirit of *our* age is scientific. All talk about "modernizing Gothic" is nonsense. Indeed so! The only way to argue, if you want to preserve the past, is from the fact and not from Hegelian theory: the fact being, that it is *not* true the Middle Ages built in medieval style and the Renaissance in Renaissance and so forth. In every age you can find all sorts of styles overlapping. For what determines style is not some spirit of the age obeyed by its artists, as Wölfflin, following Hegel, would argue (and indeed as the Dom Bellotistes were forced to argue too); it is the social function a given building performs. Style depends upon social function, on what a building is intended to do, in and for society. If the style of a given building is understood by the people who use that building to connote or allude to ideas which the builders or the inventors of the style intended, then that style is alive and working, no matter whether it was a product of modern times or ten centuries earlier. There is no reason to change it. Had the Dom Bellotistes seen style in this way, their arguments would have been sounder and their cause gone better. But they argued on their opponents' grounds. Inevitably they lost. And they lost the past as well. Yet at least the Dom Bellotistes' mistakes were made in a generous spirit which is more than can be said for the spirit of their rivals. How infinitely better to have destroyed unwittingly than to have been the conscious purposeful obliterator of our past. It is a pleasure to recall these people through the medium of Tardif-Painchaud's lucid prose and well-chosen illustrations.

I do wish, though, she had found space for mentioning some of the Dom Bellot related churches that were executed by others besides the monk-architect's three main disciples; for example the admirable church and presbytery of St. Clare in Windsor Ontario, by Albert J. Lothian (1931). Even though not in Québec, it is such a magnificent example of the style that it deserves a mention. Equally the Dom-Bellotiste église St-Pierre of 1953 in Joliette might have been cited. Maybe she does mention it. Since there

is no index and I might have missed a reference, I can't be sure. (Incidentally, *why* would a first-class press like Laval put out a book without an index?) But these are minor points which perhaps can be acted upon in a second edition, and by no means criticisms of a piece of scholarly work that reflects creditably upon all concerned.

Alan Gowans
Center for Advanced
Study of the Visual Arts
National Gallery of Art
Washington, D.C.

The New Brunswick Landscape Print: 1760-1877

Paul A. Hachey
Beaverbrook Art Gallery,
Fredericton, 1980
111 p. 122 ill., \$12.00

The *New Brunswick Landscape Print...* does not claim to be a definitive study, but is seen by its author as a foundation for further research and analysis. Given the textual content of the catalogue, there would appear to be much room for such exploration. A one-page introduction hints at a variety of important points, but rarely expands on them or refers to actual examples to illustrate them.

Of the 117 prints included in the fully illustrated catalogue, Hachey is careful to point out that seventy-nine are lithographs, nineteen are aquatints and nineteen are engravings; further counting reveals that of the thirty-nine artists identified, twelve served in the British Army; twenty-four of the prints were produced in England, thirty-two in the United States, four in Canada and seven are of unknown origin. Apart from its statistical value, no conclusions are derived from this ciphering. Throughout the catalogue, the reader is left to draw his own associations between the text and the prints. This is unfortunate, since it is evident that a great deal of research went into assembling the exhibition, yet this is not always reflected in the introduction or the catalogue notes.