

somewhat difficult to glean for quick reference. Since the book is likely to be used as a catalogue in spite of the author's disclaimer, a checklist appendix, citing such basics in short form, would be a very useful inclusion in the next edition.

As a tightly-focussed study, the book is limited solely to Canadian-subject scenic and motif transfer printed wares. Thus, it does not address identical ceramic forms with British, American and other views and motifs. Neither does it cover a parallel group of British special-order tablewares (common in the later nineteenth century) bearing transfer-printed legends or motifs of Canadian organizations ranging from steamship lines and railways to hotels and churches. Another similar group is likewise excluded: those many *English* export white-wares decorated with either integral relief-moulded or cast and applied Canadian motifs, usually beavers and maple leaves, rather than transfer printing. Further work is badly needed on the latter two groups.

Overall, this is the best new book to appear in some years on either Canadian or Canadian-context ceramics, and though occasional new or variant printed scenes or motifs, or pottery forms, will appear just as the author projects, I doubt the subject coverage of *The Potters' View of Canada* will be superseded for decades to come. For historians and collectors of ceramics, it is an important work, and an essential one.

D.B. Webster
Curator, Canadiana,
Royal Ontario Museum.

EXHIBITIONS / EXPOSITIONS

L'art de l'architecte: trois siècles de dessin d'architecture à Québec/Three Centuries of Architectural Drawings in Québec City

Marc GRIGNON et Luc NOPPEN
Musée du Québec/Université Laval, 1983
293 pp. 232 illus., \$6.00

There are those who claim that the art of building – or architecture – is the beginning of all the arts. Yet in contrast to other arts like painting, sculpture, drawing or photography, architecture does not generally use the museum exhibition as a forum for appreciation. Architecture, in fact, is a public art, accessible outside museum or gallery walls to all who wish to see. A recent phenomenon in the cultural field is the attempt to examine the art of architecture through exhibitions. It raises a number of fundamental questions. How can one adequately examine the theme if the end product, the building, cannot (in most cases) be part of the display? To what extent can architectural exhibitions, inevitably focussed on process, lead to a greater understanding and appreciation of the completed masterpiece? Without the principal works, what artifacts can a curator choose in order to explore architectural creativity?

In response to this challenge, Luc Noppen, Marc Grignon and their collaborators (Shelley Hornstein-Rabinovitch and students at Laval University) have opted for a selection of architectural drawings as the means of examining architectural creativity. The drawings run the gamut of building types, styles and even engineering works, with the common denominator that all were made in Québec City and were conceived as part of the creative process leading up to construction. The earliest is a drawing for a mantelpiece (1679) by Claude

Baillif; the latest are 1912 designs for residences by the firm of Tanguay and Lebon. This limitation on the time frame is justified by the current state of research in the fields. Supplementing the drawings are a variety of three-dimensional objects, including books, manuscripts and carved models of the classical orders of architecture. To increase intellectual access to the drawings, the curators have added several imaginative teaching aids, an audio-visual show on paper conservation techniques, an attractive catalogue and a newspaper.

Despite the careful selection of artifacts and the clever use of such "hands-on" teaching aids as the plexiglass flap for alternate solutions to Chaussegros de Léry's 1744 cross-section for Notre-Dame Cathedral (no. 10) and the volumetric model to illustrate the components of architectural drawings (plan, elevation and section), the exhibition is unfocussed. The authors state that the particular aspect of architectural creativity that they intend to explore is the evolution of architectural drawings in Québec City in terms of content, form, media and artistic conventions. The chronological arrangement of the exhibition, however, tends to diminish this thematic thrust; to group works for similarity or contrast could have done much to enhance the viewer's understanding of how these drawings were made and used at different periods. As if hesitant to sustain strongly one thematic focus, the exhibition hints at, but does not consistently deal with, other avenues of inquiry, including the evolution of the architectural profession in Québec City, the history of Canadian architecture and, indeed, the histories of the individual buildings for which the drawings were made. By contrast, the amply-illustrated catalogue handles sensitively the main and ancillary themes in a well-argued introductory essay and thoroughly-documented individual

catalogue entries.

The accessibility of this technical and unfamiliar material could have been improved through the inclusion of more information around the drawings and a more thoughtful juxtapositioning of related objects. For example, access would have been enhanced by more guidance on the significance of the varied and sometimes unorthodox formats of some of the drawings (whether part of notarial documents or presentation pieces), or the curious perspective conventions of others (nos. 20, 24, 25, 27). And while the catalogue makes clear the association between the depiction of a seventeenth-century roof frame by Jean Caillé (no. 4), the reconstructed model by Denis Tétrault, and the relevant plates from Mathurin Jousset's *L'art de charpenterie* (Paris, 1702), the three items were spatially distant in the exhibition (at least at the National Gallery of Canada), thereby preventing most viewers from grasping their interrelationship. In the same vein, spatial separation and a dearth of explanatory material deprived most visitors of the pleasure of perceiving the subtle and illuminating linkages between the carved orders of architecture made to illustrate the neoclassical teaching of the Abbé Jérôme Demers (nos. 49-53), the copy of Demers' *Précis d'architecture*, and the architectural drawings of François and Thomas Baillairgé (nos. 31-32, 36-37, 39, 45, 66).

Apart from thematic considerations, architectural exhibitions may also be examined in purely aesthetic terms. If the arcane subject matter makes communication difficult, the uneven quality of architectural drawings, intended for the most part as working tools, often affects viewer appreciation. *L'art de l'architecte* is no exception to this generalization. Many of the drawings are dull and workmanlike, lacking the intrinsic aesthetic quality needed to

be attractive in their own right. Some are downright ugly and visually uninteresting (nos. 6, 23) or poorly drawn (no. 86). Only occasionally do the drawings attain the kind of quality that one usually expects in a museum context. These include the delicately refined late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century work of François and Thomas Baillairgé, the robust and pretentious competition perspective of the 1856 Québec Customs House by Charles Baillairgé (no. 79), the dynamic ink sketches for the 1880 Parliament Buildings by Eugène-Étienne Taché (nos. 90-91; the inversion of the two components of his given name in the catalogue entry is erroneous), and the flamboyant 1910 project for a Beaux-Arts station by Louis Morency (no. 102).

What was the reaction to *L'art de l'architecte*? Reports and visitor statistics from the Musée du Québec (6 April-29 May), the National Gallery of Canada (29 July-18 September), and the Royal Ontario Museum (15 October-30 November, 1983) suggest that the exhibition awakened considerable interest among specialized groups, in particular teachers and students of architecture, art history and engineering, but that it had less appeal for the general museum visitor. The narrow technical theme, the lack of supporting documentation in the exhibition itself, and the uneven quality of the artifacts probably contributed to the lack of general appeal. In the words of one officer, such an exhibition will never be a crowd-pleaser.

Nevertheless, Luc Noppen and Marc Grignon, as well as Shelley Hornstein-Rabinovitch and the Laval University students, are to be congratulated for rising to the challenge of exhibiting architecture in a museum context and for undertaking this pioneering exhibition to make known an aspect of our cultural heritage that has hith-

erto been largely overlooked. They have made a judicious selection of drawings and other materials, created imaginative teaching aids and prepared their documentation in an impressive and reasonably-priced catalogue. It is appropriate in this "post-modern" era, when interest in our architectural past has been rekindled, that *L'art de l'architecte* has presented to the public these images of our architectural heritage.

Christina Cameron
CIHB, Parks Canada.