

The Fictional and The Real

by
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I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners. I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

ABSTRACT

The impetus of this thesis arose from an unfound text and the unsatisfied questions regarding the profession of architecture when I first entered the school. What exactly is an architect? What exactly does an architect do? These are questions that the young have when they consider pursuing an education in architecture - questions that are not always well answered by the media, which they are most familiar with - film. The characterization of architects in cinema continues to provide lay people with a skewed caricature of the architect - this is misleading and not the correct basis for considering a career in this field.

This thesis seeks to reconcile the fictional/cinema architect with the real life practitioner. Throughout the past half-century the characteristics of fictional architect Howard Roark have been perpetuated in cinema architects creating an erroneous impression of the practitioner. Through a series of interviews with Toronto architects, a documentary film was created. Analysis of the interviews provided the basis for a comparison between the actual practice of architecture and the fictional impression provided by film architects.

The thesis is constructed in two parts. The documentary film relates interwoven stories of seven architects. Twelve hours of interviews has been distilled down to a fifty-minute narrative revealing key common characteristics and views held by the architects. The text reviews the key content of the discourse with real life practitioners, their common characteristics and views, relating to the fictional cases.

It is the intention of the author that the documentary film created at the centre of this thesis could provide potential architects and the layperson with a more accurate understanding of the actuality of the profession of architecture.

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A special thanks to the many friends and people who I met during this very long walk... It has been a pleasure.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	x		
PREFACE	xiii		
INTRODUCTION	1		
INTRODUCTION TO FICTIONAL ARCHITECTS	3		
. Howard Roark - <i>The Fountainhead</i> (1949)	4		
. Juror #8 - <i>12 angry Men</i> (1957)	4		
. Larry Coe - <i>Strangers When We Meet</i> (1960)	5		
. Davis Murphy - <i>Indecent Proposal</i> (1993)	5		
. Vincent Eastman - <i>Intersection</i> (1994)	6		
. Healy - <i>There's Something About Mary</i> (1998)	6		
. Michael Newman - <i>Click</i> (2006)	7		
CHAPTER 1: THE FICTIONAL ARCHITECT	9		
. Ayn Rand	10		
. Architects Thoughts	12		
. The Influences that Created Howard Roark	13		
. Louis Sullivan	14		
. Arrogance	15		
. Visionary	16		
. Creative Ego	16		
. The Art of Communication	18		
. Sex Appeal	19		
. Summary of Characteristics	21		
INTRODUCTION TO REAL ARCHITECTS	23		
. Douglas Birkenshaw - <i>MFBSFTA</i> (2010)	24		
. Eb Zeidler - <i>MFBSFTA</i> (2010)	24		
. Shirley Blumberg - <i>MFBSFTA</i> (2010)	25		
. Peter Clewes - <i>MFBSFTA</i> (2010)	25		
. Raymond Moriyama - <i>MFBSFTA</i> (2010)	26		
. Janna Levitt - <i>MFBSFTA</i> (2010)	26		
. Barry Sampson - <i>MFBSFTA</i> (2010)	27		
. Jack Diamond - <i>MFBSFTA</i> (2010)	27		
CHAPTER 2: THE MAKING OF A REAL LIFE ARCHITECT IN FILM	29		
. <i>The Man Is Called An Architect</i>	31		
. <i>A Cat Doesn't Make A Choice About Being A Cat, Or A Dog A Dog</i>	31		
. <i>You've Got To Sort Of Turn The Switch When You Immigrate</i>	35		
. <i>Look I Need To Rebuild The Cottage, And I'd Like You To Be The Architect</i>	35		
. <i>That Tree House Was Magic</i>	37		
. <i>Everyone Is Dead</i>	37		
. <i>Every Friday Throughout My Career We Have Beer And Popcorn In the Conference Room</i>	39		
. <i>I Keep The Diary</i>	39		
. <i>Architecture For Me, Is Almost Like Having A Series Of Affairs</i>	39		
. <i>Look At The Crap I Have To Do Now To Make A Building</i>	45		
. <i>I Became Very Good Friends With Everybody</i>	47		
CHAPTER 3: HOW REAL IS ROARK?	51		
. <i>Singular versus Plural</i>	52		
. <i>Gender</i>	53		
. <i>The Art of Communication</i>	54		
. <i>Technology</i>	55		
. <i>Creative Ego</i>	57		
. <i>Sex Appeal</i>	57		
CONCLUSION	59		
END NOTES	60		
BIBLIOGRAPHY	62		
APPENDIX A: TRANSCRIPTS OF INTERVIEWS	67		
. Douglas Birkenshaw	68		
. Eb Zeidler	80		
. Shirley Blumberg	90		
. Peter Clewes	101		
. Raymond Moriyama	114		
. Janna Levitt	119		
. Barry Sampson	129		
. Jack Diamond	143		

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

- INTRODUCTION TO THE FICTIONAL ARCHITECTS**
- 4 Fig. 1 “Howard Roark,” still from *The Fountainhead* (1949), dir. King Vidor.
- 4 Fig. 2 “Juror #8,” still from *12 Angry Men* (1958), dir. Sidney Lumet.
- 5 Fig. 3 “Larry Coe,” still from *Strangers When We Meet* (1960), dir. Richard Quine.
- 5 Fig. 4 “Davis Murphy,” still from *Indecent Proposal* (1993), dir. Adrian Lyne.
- 6 Fig. 5 “Vincent Eastman,” still from *Intersection* (1994), dir. Mark Rydell.
- 6 Fig. 6 “Healy,” still from *There’s Something About Mary* (1998), dir. Bobby Farrelly, Peter Farrelly.
- 7 Fig. 7 “Michael Newman” still from *Click* (2006), dir. Frank Coraci.
- CHAPTER ONE: THE FICTIONAL ARCHITECT**
- 11 Fig. 8 “Ayn Rand,” still from *The Fountainhead* special features (1949), dir. King Vidor.
- 12 Fig. 9 “The Opening Titles” still from *The Fountainhead* (1949), dir. King Vidor.
- 13 Fig. 10 (Top Left) Louis Sullivan <http://www.chicagonow.com/blogs/unknown-chicago/6-2--Sullivan.jpg> (accessed December 30th 2010)
- 13 Fig. 11 (Top Right) Frank Lloyd Wright <http://www.chabotcollege.edu/faculty/shildreth/isls/gifs/wright-frank-lloyd-02.jpg> (accessed December 30th 2010)
- 13 Fig. 12 (Bottom Left) “Howard Roark” (Bottom Right) “Henry Cameron,” stills from *The Fountainhead* (1949), dir. King Vidor.
- 14 Fig. 13 “Cameron and Roark in ambulance,” stills from *The Fountainhead* (1949), dir. King Vidor.
- 15 Fig. 14 “The interview of Frank Lloyd Wright,” stills from *Frank Lloyd Wright* (1998), dir. Ken Burns.
- 15 Fig. 15 “Roark refusing commission,” stills from *The Fountainhead* (1949), dir. King Vidor.
- 16 Fig. 16 Film stills from *The Fountainhead* (1949), dir. King Vidor.

- 17 Fig. 17 (Left) “Keating begging to Roark” (Right) “Roark agrees to design Cortlant,” stills from *The Fountainhead* (1949), dir. King Vidor.
- 17 Fig. 18 “Cortlandt exploding,” stills from *The Fountainhead* (1949), dir. King Vidor.
- 17 Fig. 19 “Eastman displays the creative ego,” stills from *Intersection* (1994), dir. Mark Rydell.
- 18 Fig. 20 (Top, Middle) “Roark in court,” stills from *The Fountainhead* (1949), dir. King Vidor.
- 18 Fig. 21 Still from *12 Angry Men* (1958), dir. Sidney Lumet.
- 18 Fig. 22 “Coe persuades Alter,” Still from *Strangers When We Meet* (1960), dir. Richard Quine.
- 19 Fig. 23 “Murphy inspires,” still from *Indecent Proposal* (1993), dir. Adrian Lyne.
- 19 Fig. 24 (Top) Photographs of working class men by Lewis W. Hine, in *Men at work* photographic studies of modern men and machines, New York: Dover Publications, 1977.
- 20 Fig. 25 (Bottom) “Roark in quarry,” stills from *The Fountainhead* (1949), dir. King Vidor.
- 20 Fig. 26 “Libido” stills from *Strangers When We Meet* (1960), dir. Richard Quine.
- 21 Fig. 27 “Gage propositioning,” stills from *Indecent Proposal* (1993), dir. Adrian Lyne.
- INTRODUCTION TO THE REAL LIFE ARCHITECTS**
- 24 Fig. 28 Douglas Birkenshaw by author, 2010.
- 24 Fig. 29 Eb Zeidler by author, 2010.
- 25 Fig. 30 Shirley Blumberg by author, 2010.
- 25 Fig. 31 Peter Clewes by author, 2010.
- 26 Fig. 32 Raymond Moriyama by author, 2010.
- 26 Fig. 33 Janna Levitt by author, 2010.
- 27 Fig. 34 Barry Sampson by author, 2010.
- 27 Fig. 35 Jack Diamond by author, 2010.
- CHAPTER TWO: THE MAKING OF THE REAL LIFE ARCHITECT IN FILM**
- 30 Fig. 36 Raymond Moriyama by author, 2010.
- 30 Fig. 37 Jack Diamond sketching his first building by author, 2010.
- 32 Fig. 38 The Catton House by author, 2010.

34	Fig. 39	Peter Clewes by author, 2010.	
34	Fig. 40	Tree House by author, 2010.	
36	Fig. 41	Eb Zeidler by author, 2010.	
36	Fig. 42	Shirley Blumberg author, 2010.	
38	Fig. 43	Barry Sampson by author, 2010.	
40	Fig. 44	Jack Diamond by author, 2010.	
41	Fig. 45	Frank Gehry's fish by author, 2010.	
42	Fig. 46	Jack Diamond and his illustration of the city hall in Jerusalem by author, 2010.	
42	Fig. 47	Eb Zeidler's sketch book by author, 2010.	
43	Fig. 48	Eb Zeidler and his church in Peterborough, Ontario, Canada by author, 2010.	
43	Fig. 49	The stair well of the Kensington parking garage by author, 2010.	
44	Fig. 50	Douglas Birkenshaw by author, 2010.	
46	Fig. 51	Shirley Blumberg by author, 2010.	
46	Fig. 52	Sheridan College, The Animation and Emerging Technologies Building by author, 2010.	
48	Fig. 53	Douglas Birkenshaw by author, 2010.	
		CHAPTER THREE: HOW REAL IS ROARK REAL?	
52	Fig. 54	(Top) "Howard Roark," still from The Fountainhead (1949), dir. King Vidor.	
52	Fig. 55	(Middle) Peter Clewes by author, 2010.	
52	Fig. 56	(Bottom) Key from the almanac of architecture & design 2010 by James P. Cramer, Jane Paradise Wolford, Atlanta: Greenway Communications, 2010.	
53	Fig. 57	Median Ratio of Male to Female Staff from the 2010 compensation, bonus & benefits survey by design futures council, Norcross: Greenway Communications, 2010.	
53	Fig. 58	Race / Ethnicity of Staff from the 2010 compensation, bonus & benefits survey by design futures council, Norcross: Greenway Communications, 2010.	
53	Fig. 59	Graduates by Gender from the School of Architecture, Waterloo: University of Waterloo, 2010.	
54	Fig. 60	(Top) Jack Diamond sketching his first building (bottom) Eb Zeidler's sketch book by author, 2010.	
56	Fig. 61	(Above) "Healy dropping rolls of drawings," stills from There's Something About Mary (1998), dir. Bobby Farrelly,	
			Peter Farrelly.
56	Fig. 62	(Top Right) "Howard Roark," stills from The Fountainhead (1949), dir. King Vidor.	
56	Fig. 63	"Michael Newman," still from Click (2006), dir. Frank Coraci.	
57	Fig. 64	Architects are Sexiest from Building Design, no. 1380, Jan 1999.	

Architecture is what you do to a building when you look at it - Walt Whitman¹

P R E F A C E

The idea for this thesis sub-consciously began during my first work experience at an architectural firm. The office was a renovated basement in the principal architect's home in Elora, Ontario. The principal was a man named James Fryett and his firm was called James Fryett Architect. Jim as he preferred to be called, was a brilliant architect and an amazing teacher. I learned a lot at his practice.

I remember the end of the first week of work at Jim's practice talking on the phone to a dear friend in Northern Ireland and telling him that the practice of architecture was not what I expected.

The image of the profession of architecture and even the architect himself is highly revered in contemporary society. An illusion encouraged by popular culture for in reality, for a junior, the practice of architecture is mundane, repetitive and characterized by long hours in front of a computer screen. The more experienced architects would spend all day on the phone conversing to contractors mediating their constructions while their architectural assistants battled through their drawings under the technician's aid.

Was this the reality of the practice of architecture? If so where was the glory? Where was the satisfaction? Was Jim's practice really like every other practice? I began to question everything I knew about the profession and I remember that same weekend searching for a text in many bookstores and libraries that would reveal the career of architecture for what it really is. I wanted a book with no illusions or exaggerations, just the truth about architecture. I wanted to find my future in a text; the future of what I would become if I were to continue my studies within architecture and the given lifestyle once a licensed practitioner.

I did not find a suitable text that weekend that could satisfy my anxiety-fueled curiosities.

When a few months of searching for a text had passed, I was approached by Brian McCulloch, an architect in Jim's office, for feedback regarding my experiences within the practice and I took it upon myself at this time to bring up my personal concerns regarding my future as an architect. The conversation we had was particularly memorable for it's in depth discussion on the state of the construction industry and the profession of architecture. Brian's opinions and experience were vital in answering some of my questions regarding the personal and professional aspects of the profession. However, his explanation for the public's embellished opinion regarding the architectural profession was the influence of the film *The Fountainhead*. He blamed the film for the confusion it began within the career and for portraying the role of the architect under fictional pretenses which clouded the interpretation of the practice and its practitioner.

Brian's last words in our conversation as he walked up the steps out of the office into the winter's night were, "That's where it all started Aaron."

INTRODUCTION

The Fountainhead arguably did more to shape public opinion about architecture and those who practice it than decade's worth of construction².

The focus of this book explores the fictional and real life architect. Using film as a medium of discussion, this analysis begins with *The Fountainhead* (1949). The decision for this specific starting point in cinematic history is because of the rare nature of the film. First the film *The Fountainhead* was intelligently written and researched by author Ayn Rand, producing a cast of fictional architectural characters that reflected modernist society well. Second and more significant, the leading male role named Howard Roark became accepted by popular culture as the dominant fictional archetype for the architect in cinema. Architectural related films that chronologically followed *The Fountainhead* adopted this archetype of Roark as a template for their fictional architects and collectively cinema gradually clouded the real life architect. *Film and Architecture* states:

*For many years the character of Howard Roark in *The Fountainhead* set an ideal prototype for the architects role and character. It seems the basic has changed little... when filmmakers want their character to demonstrate a sense of determination, drive, direction, passion, self-motivation and perhaps a certain sense of arrogance, the suitable profession is that of an architect³.*

This thesis investigates through the medium of film, first, how the fictional characteristics of architect Howard Roark portrayed within the movie entitled *The Fountainhead* influenced cinema's architects, and secondly, in opposition of Roark's fictional archetype a documentary film has been produced that creates an account of the real life architectural practitioner.

METHODOLOGY

CHAPTER 1. THE FICTIONAL ARCHITECT

This chapter investigates the architectural influences that author Ayn Rand used in the creation of her fictional character *Howard Roark* and how his characteristics have been repeated through a history of cinematic architects.

CHAPTER 2. THE MAKING OF A REAL LIFE ARCHITECT IN FILM

This chapter presents a personal analysis and interpretation of the real life architect through the making of the documentary film *My First Building - Stories from Toronto Architects*. The reason and relevance for the making of this film is to introduce and create a current account of the practicing architect. The theme of the film consists of stories from Toronto architects discussing their first architectural experience, their influences on architecture and architectural opinions. The layout of this chapter will show full transcripts of the film *My First Building - Stories From Toronto Architects* set along side my personal comments and opinions.

CHAPTER 3. HOW REAL IS ROARK?

This chapter compares and contrasts relevant commonalities found in character Howard Roark and the film *My First Building - Stories from Toronto Architects*. These are observations to discuss the reality of Howard Roark against the real life practitioner.

APPENDIX A TRANSCRIPTS OF INTERVIEWS

This includes the full transcripts in verbatim of the interviewed architects.

**INTRODUCTION
TO
THE
FICTIONAL
ARCHITECTS**



Fig.1 Film Still From The Fountainhead (1949).

ARCHITECT: Howard Roark.

FILM: The Fountainhead.

ACTOR: Gary Cooper.

RELEASE DATE: 2 July 1949.

ABOUT: An uncompromising, visionary architect struggles to maintain his integrity and individualism despite personal, professional and economic pressures to conform to popular standards¹.



Fig.2 Film Still From 12 Angry Men (1957).

ARCHITECT: Juror #8.

FILM: 12 Angry Men.

ACTOR: Henry Fonda.

RELEASE DATE: 29 July 1957.

ABOUT: A dissenting juror in a murder trial slowly manages to convince the others that the case is not as obviously clear as it seemed in court².



Fig.3 Film Still From Strangers When We Meet (1960).

ARCHITECT: Larry Coe.

FILM: Strangers When We Meet.

ACTOR: Kirk Douglas.

RELEASE DATE: 6 October 1960.

ABOUT: Architect Larry Coe has a wife and family, but becomes embroiled in an affair with beautiful Maggie Gault, a neighbor with her own family. The two lovers are forced to face the choice between love and loyalty³.



Fig.4 Film Still From Indecent Proposal (1993).

ARCHITECT: Davis Murphy.

FILM: Indecent Proposal.

ACTOR: Woody Harrelson.

RELEASE DATE: 7th April 1993.

ABOUT: A husband and wife can end their financial worries by accepting the offer of a billionaire to pay a million dollars in exchange for one night with the wife, but if they do, can their marriage survive⁴?



Fig.5 Film Still From Intersection (1994).

ARCHITECT: Vincent Eastman.

FILM: Intersection.

ACTOR: Richard Gere.

RELEASE DATE: 21st January 1994.

ABOUT: Separated from his wife, an architect has an affair with a writer, but remains emotionally torn between the two women, leaving his future happiness, and that of his 13-year-old daughter, hanging in the balance⁵.



Fig.6 Film Still From There's Something About Mary (1998).

ARCHITECT: Healy.

FILM: There's Something About Mary.

RELEASE DATE: 15th July 1998.

ABOUT: Years after his prom date with his beloved Mary was ruined, still-smitten Ted tries to track Mary down, battling a traitorous private investigator who decides that he wants Mary for himself by pretending to be an architect⁶.



Fig.7 Film Still From Click (2006).

ARCHITECT: Michael Newman.

FILM: Click.

RELEASE DATE: 23rd June 2006.

ABOUT: A workaholic architect finds a universal remote that allows him to fast-forward and rewind to different parts of his life. Complications arise when the remote starts to overrule his choices'.

**CHAPTER ONE:
THE FICTIONAL
ARCHITECT**

A Y N RAND

The cinematic archetype of the architect started with the author Ayn Rand and her book entitled *The Fountainhead*. Ayn Rand was born in 1904 St. Petersburg, Russia, and studied performance and screen writing at the prestigious State Institute for cinematography in Leningrad. She became a keen follower of American culture publishing many film reviews and essays on American cinema¹ before she immigrated to Chicago, Illinois, at the age of 21 in 1926. The immigration was a political decision due to the revolution and nationalist control of the Bolsheviks, which confronted her strong family principals of individualism and reason². Rand only spent a few months in Chicago before settling in Manhattan at the peak of the skyscraper mania, and began to write the novel *The Fountainhead* that she said would, "Infect my readers with my love of New York¹." New York at the time housed the tallest skyscrapers in the world, including the gothic inspired Woolworth Building², and Rand was probably referring to it when she was quoted saying:

Ablaze like a finger of God, and seemed to me the greatest example of free men³

Ayn Rand's personal investigation and research into architecture is thorough. It encompassed existing architectural principles and architects that she used as influences and inspiration in the creation of the book and evolution of the character Howard Roark, who's:

Genius and integrity were as unyielding as granite. By the time Rand was through chiseling his features, so was the public's perceptions of the profession of architecture. And America's real practitioners have been trying to live it down ever since⁴

Using the staff from the New York Public Library and the journal the Architect's World; Rand acquired a lengthy list of architectural publications that she used

as material research and reference in the writing of *The Fountainhead*. The bibliographies included le Corbusier, Frank Lloyd Wright, Louis Sullivan; architectural critics, historians and builders⁵. For further inspiration and education, Rand spent two months in the New York office of architect Ely Jacques Kahn. Kahn's forte were skyscrapers and housing projects; both building typologies were written into the novel as fictional buildings called The Enright House-the luxury apartment, The Wynand Building (the largest skyscraper in the world) and the housing project called Cortlandt Homes.

In 1943 Rand completed her novel *The Fountainhead*, instantly a New York Times best seller and the rights of the book were purchased by Warner Brothers⁶ for a film released on July 2nd 1949. The film *The Fountainhead* starring Gary Cooper as architect Howard Roark was a success, creating what would become the ideal fictional portrayal of the architect in cinema.

Fig.8 (right) Film Still From The Fountainhead special features (1949) Ayn Rand.



ARCHITECT'S THOUGHTS

The success of Rand's best selling book and Hollywood movie became a vivid memory in many architect's lives as Merrill Schleier / AIA Journal quotes:

*It is a testament to Ayn Rand's writing that many architects vividly remember where they were and what they were doing when they first read *The Fountainhead*.*

Frank Lloyd Wright: (in a letter to Ayn Rand) *I've read every word of *The Fountainhead*. Your thesis is the great one. Especially at this time. Your grasp of the architectural ins and outs of a degenerate profession astonishes me. Your novel is Novel. Unusual material in unusual hands and, I hope, to an unusual end*⁸.

Vincent Scully: *The Fountainhead is a message that shaped the late Modernism of the 20th Century. I read it as I was getting out of the service in 1946. I would read 10 pages and want to throw it against the wall*⁹.

Richard Meier: *I remember reading it when I was 16 or 17, and I had just decided to be an architect. I found the novel not only riveting, but exciting - a very important book for someone young. And that was before the Gary Cooper movie came out. I was not knowledgeable enough to make any association with Wright or Sullivan, so I read it at face value as a novel that depicted the kind of democratic spirit that existed at the moment: the feeling that good triumphs over evil and that, somehow, the architect has an influence over this. There was a sense that quality and idealism and striving for excellence were more important in the world and that single voice could make a difference*¹⁰.

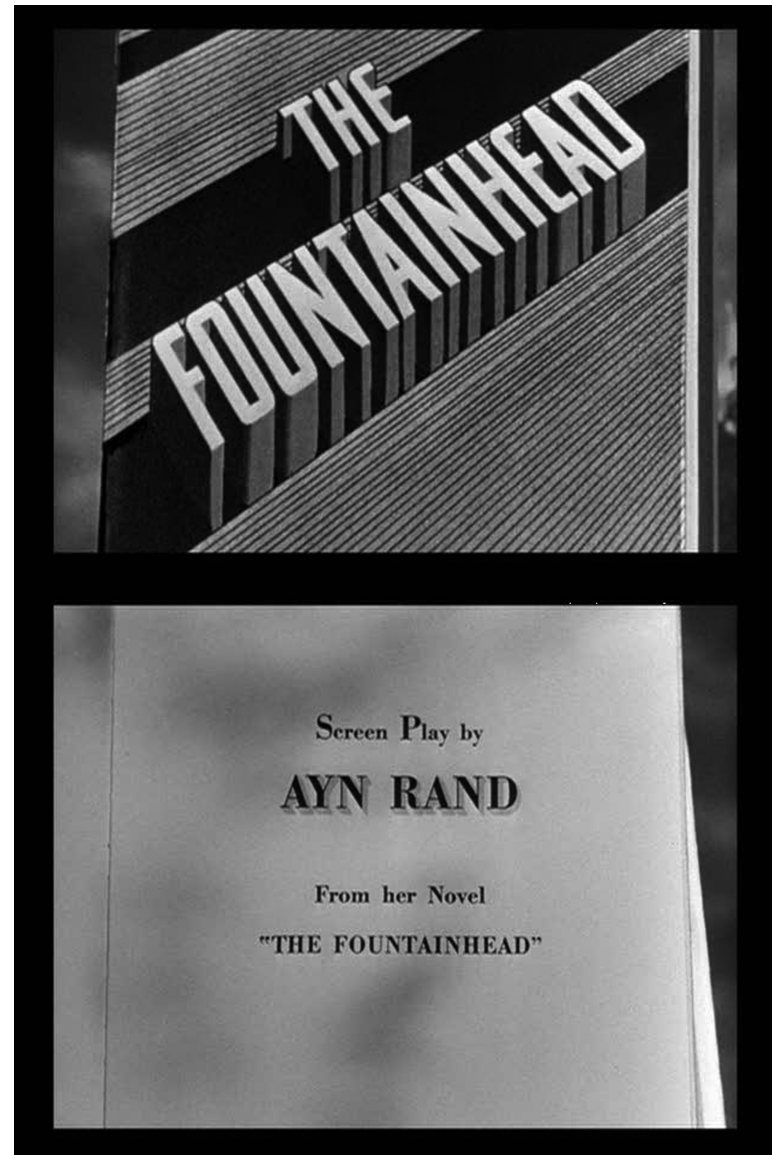


Fig.9 Film Still From *The Fountainhead* (1949) The opening titles.

THE INFLUENCES THAT CREATED HOWARD ROARK

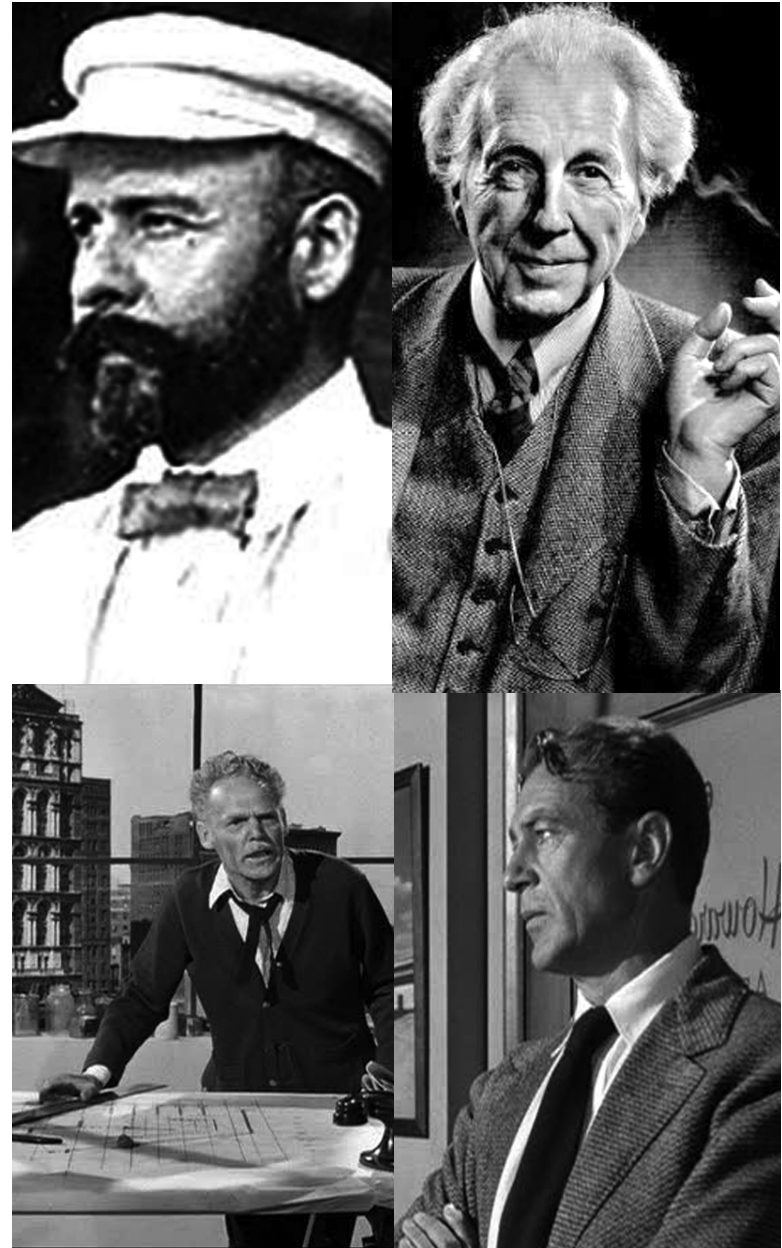
Richard Meier's comments regarding his unknown familiarity of Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright when reading Rand's book confirm her skills in fictional character development; Creating a believable fictional character from a real life influence. The true relationship of these two men was of mentor and student. Louis Sullivan mentored Frank Lloyd Wright, and Rand used their real life association for her character inspirations in Howard Roark and his mentor Henry Cameron within the film. Ayn Rand was a great admirer of both men and stated:

Roark's austere body and spirit... analogue to his functional buildings devoid of superfluous ornamentation... rehearse the modernist architectural discourse of Louis Sullivan, Frank Lloyd Wright's mentor. Sullivan was the model for the talented but impotent architect Henry Cameron, while Wright's indomitable spirit was the inspiration for Roark's¹¹.

Fig.10 (top left) Louis Sullivan.

Fig.11 (top right) Frank Lloyd Wright.

Fig.12 Film Still From *The Fountainhead* (1949) (bottom left) Henry Cameron (bottom right) Howard Roark.



L O U I S SULLIVAN

Rand's choice of Sullivan and Wright as direct character influences and the research of great modernist thinkers created a creditable cinematic realism of character that is most evident when the architectural principles of *form following function* adopted by Louis Sullivan was incorporated into the character of Cameron. Cameron is being taken to the hospital by ambulance as he is dying. He looks up through the window and speaks desperately to Howard:

Howard look at those buildings... Skyscrapers, the greatest structural invention of man... yet they made them look like Greek temples... and gothic cathedrals... and mongrels of every ancient style... I told them that the form of a building must follow its function. Howard, every new idea in the world comes from the mind of one man¹².

The use of Sullivan's adage '**form following function**' is an accurate account of his modernist thinking. The metaphorical use of the dying man pleading his life's beliefs before his student Roark leaves only the attitude of the student to be accounted for, and within a letter addressed to Frank Lloyd Wright, Rand described Roark's persona:

My hero is not you. I do not intend to follow in the novel, the events of your life and career. His life will not be yours, nor his work, perhaps not even his ideals. But his spirit is yours¹³.



Fig.13 Film Still From The Fountainhead (1949) Cameron and Roark in Ambulance.

ARROGANCE

Frank Lloyd Wright was opinionated and a popular architect of his modernist time. His dominant attitude and spirit is displayed clearly in the footage from Ken Burns documentary named *Frank Lloyd Wright*. Wright at the age of 88 is participating in a television interview September 1957:

Wright is asked the question, "I understand that last week in all seriousness, you said, If I had another 15 years to work I could rebuild this entire country, I could change the nation".

Wright Replies, "I did say that, and its true, having had now the experience of going with 769 buildings, It's quite easy now for me to shake them out of my sleeve, and its amazing what I could do for this country... I've been accused of saying I was the greatest architect in the world, and if I had said so, I don't think it would be very arrogant"¹⁴.



Fig.14 Film Still From Frank Lloyd Wright (1998) The Interview of Frank Lloyd Wright.



Fig.15 Film Stills From The Fountainhead (1949) Roark refusing commission.

Rand's adoption of Wright's spirit is best displayed within the scene were Roark refuses the commission to build for the board of directors for the Security Bank of Manhattan. His design is quoted as 'too original' and the board wants to soften the façade with a touch of classical dignity. The conversation unfolds:

Roark: If you want my work you must take it as it is, or not at all.

Client: But why?

Roark: A building has integrity just like a man, and just as seldom, it must be true to its own idea, have its own form and serve it's own purpose.

Client: But we can't depart from the popular forms of architecture.

Roark: Why not?

Client: Because everyone's accepted them.

Roark: I haven't.

Client: You wish to defy known common standards.

Roark: I set my own standards.

Client: You intend to fight against the whole world.

Roark: If necessary.

Client: After all we are your clients and it's your job to serve us.

Roark: I don't build in order to have clients... I have clients in order to build¹⁵.

VISIONARY

Le Corbusier was a modernist architect and author who's theory of the *new architect* within his text *Towards A New Architect* became an influence during the character development of Rand's vision of the ideal man¹⁸. Le Corbusier states the problem between architect and engineer:

Our engineers are healthy and virile, active and useful, balanced and happy in their work. Our architects are disillusioned and unemployed, boastful or peevish¹⁶.



Fig.16 Film Stills From The Fountainhead (1949)

The *new architect* must be a composite of architect and engineer, an active man who possessed both theoretical knowledge and practical experience¹⁷. Both Sullivan and Wright were seen as prototypes of this image of *new architect* and Rand's character Howard Roark inherited this singular vision of sole practitioner within the film. For example Roark is the only presence in his office, the only one standing admiring and being congratulated by client of the Enright House the luxury apartment building.

CREATIVE EGO

The creative ego of Howard Roark is primarily driven by the originality of his designs and was the reason for Rand's choice of vocation as she described in a speech to a group of architects:

I chose architecture because a sense of structure is the essence of man's creative faculty, the base of every achievement... a sense of structure is impossible without a possession of reason and reason is the attribute of the individual¹⁸.

Rand's integration of the architect's ego into the character of Howard Roark is most evident in the designing of Cortlandt Homes. Roark becomes the anonymous designer of the unsolvable housing project behind the name of failed architecture school friend Peter Keating a non-modernist thinker who never had an idea of his own. The scene shows Keating begging to Roark. Peter is a parasite feeding on a better man for personal resurrection. Keating confesses:

Howard, I'm a parasite, I've been a parasite all my life, you helped me with my projects in school, everything I've built was stolen from you and men like you who lived before we were born, I've never had an idea of my own. I've fed on you and I've hated you for it, and I've come here to ask you to save me.... Cortlandt is my last chance, I know I can't do it, I've tried. I've come to beg you as I did in school, to design it for me and let me put my name on it¹⁹.

Under a gentleman's agreement, both men agree that Roark alone designs Cortlandt. This is enough to satisfy Roark's passion of craft. Roark delivers the terms of design to Keating:

My reward, my purpose, my life, is the work itself, my work done my way, nothing else matters to me... I've always wanted to build a large scale project but I never hoped to get the chance. Now here's what I'll offer you. I will design Cortlandt, you'll put your name on it, you'll keep all

the fees, but, you will guarantee that it will be built exactly as I designed it... no changes by you or any one else. That's the payment I demand for my work, my ideas are mine, nobody else has right to them except on my terms, those who need them must take them my way or not at all²⁰.

As agreed Roark designs Cortlandt successfully but Keating is unable to control the originality of Roark's design with the clients resulting in an alternate design resolution and construction. Roark's creative ego is clearly displayed when he dynamites Cortlandt destroying the housing project due to the client's manipulation of his original design of the project.



Fig.17 Film Stills From The Fountainhead (1949) Keating begging to Roake (left) Roark Agrees to design Cortlandt (right).



Fig.18 Film Still From The Fountainhead (1949) Cortlandt Exploding.

The creative ego of the architect displayed cinematically by the character Howard Roark has been continued through many films but best represented in the film *Intersection* (1994) starring Richard Gere playing architect Vincent Eastman. Eastman argues with his clients on site over the matter of design changes while his design is under construction. The architect's ego of design is evident:

Eastman: Why did you hire me in for the job anyway?

Client: Read your contract.

Eastman: What? Read my contract? Fuck my contract and fuck you.

Client: Don't push man, we can push right back.

Eastman: Is this really a threat? Is this man threatening me? To hell with you, you can bring all of your goon bar lawyers out of the woodwork I don't care²¹.



Fig.19 Film Still From Intersection (1994) Eastman displays the creative ego.

After storming away from the argument, Eastman's associate Neil soothes his ego with words of vanity:

Neil: Very nice, very diplomatic.

Eastman: Come on Neil, they don't need that shit; they like to come in and see how cute they can be.

Neil: They're the clients.

Eastman: Great men of vision.

Neil: Everybody has to work for somebody pal, Even Michelangelo had to please the Pope.

Eastman: The Pope didn't ask for parking space²².

THE ART OF COMMUNICATION

Roark's art of communication is shown when he defends himself without an attorney and proves his innocence for physically dynamiting Cortlandt homes due to unwanted design changes. Roark's power of communication, inspiration, and influence over the jury using the argument of the post World War II fight

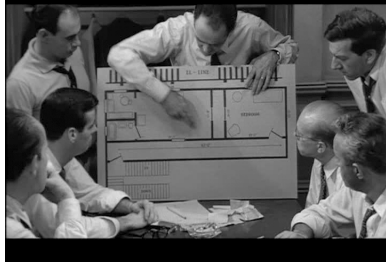


Fig.20 Film Stills From The Fountainhead (1949) Roark in court (Top, middle)

Fig.21 Film Still From 12 Angry Men (1957) (above).

of individualism and democracy against fascism and collectivism²³, is very dramatic showing his skills of communication. This power of communication continues within the film *12 Angry Men* (1957). Henry Fonda plays the role of Juror #8, an architect called for jury duty to decide the innocence of a young murderer. One by one, Fonda convinces the jury of the innocence of the young man with his strong verbal and persuasive skills. During one scene the floor plan of an apartment belonging to an eye witness is analyzed and reenacted by Fonda to prove the eye witness account is incorrect showing his skills of objectivity.

The strong communication skills of the architect are used to inspire and empower within the contemporary film *Indecent Proposal* (1993) starring Woody Harrelson as architect Davis Murphy, and the modernist film *Strangers When We Meet* (1960) starring Kirk Douglas as architect Larry Coe, Larry Coe empowers with the persuasion of doing. Coe, a Los Angeles architect awakens the

successful yet frustrated client/writer Roger Alter's passion to write again when presenting the modernist concept drawings for Alter's a new home:

Coe: Alright I made a mistake, when I met you I told my wife, "Here's a guy who would be willing to try something different." Boy was I wrong, you want to play it safe.

Roger: That's not true.

Coe: Then what are you afraid of, that some critic wont like your house?

Roger: This has nothing to do with the lousy critics [shouts].

Coe: You know Rog. We both start with the same thing, a blank piece of paper... but every time I try to play it safe I come up empty so now I just sit down on that drawing board and do what I want to do, and I hope what I like someone else will like. Maybe this isn't a great house I don't know, maybe somebody will think its an odd ball we can't try to please them all.

Roger: Are you trying to say this is what I do?

Coe: I don't know what you do. I read both your books, I liked them pretty well but, boy I love to see what would happen if you really broke loose.

Roger: Don't you think that's what I wanna do?

Coe: Then do it, write a book that you like and to hell with the critics.

Roger: You don't know.

Coe: Rog, I know one thing, you got to find out what's important to you, sure this house is important to me, and I was hoping you'd like it but if you don't like it we shake hand and say goodbye. It's as simple as that.

Coe: You know something, I think its a great house.

Larry: Are you sure I haven't talked you into anything?

Coe: Yeah I think you did, thanks²⁴.

Coe's discourse concluded in a new artistic life for the client/writer Roger Alter. The inspiration is evident in Coe as a saving grace, bringing a newly designed home and a newly inspired attitude towards writing for Alter.



Fig.22 Film Stills From Strangers When We Meet (1960) Coe persuades Alter.

Davis Murphy inspires with a lecture to architecture students during *Indecent Proposal*. He holds a brick in his hand and quotes Louis Kahn's 'Even a brick wants to be something' while displaying a slide show of architectural master pieces as the Parthenon, Chartres Cathedral, and Le Corbusier's chapel at Ronchamp. Murphy's speech brings an enlightening moment to his students using the singular perspective of a brick. Murphy quotes:

Murphy: What is this?

Student: A brick.

Murphy: Good, what else?

Student: A weapon. [laughter]

Murphy: Louis Kahn said even a brick wants to be something... a brick wants to be something... it aspires... Even a common ordinary brick wants to be something more than it is... wants to be some thing better than it is... and that is what we must be, I'll see you on Friday²⁵.



Fig.23 Film Stills From *Indecent Proposal* (1993). Murphy inspires.

SEX A P P E A L

The deliberate romance, sex appeal and dominant masculine presence of the cinematic architect Howard Roark was accurate in *The Fountainhead*.

Since *The Fountainhead* was written in America during the depression and completed during WW2, the masculinity of unemployment and the collective machine age of military mobilization were influences in the persona of Roark as Merrill Schleier describes:

Masculinity in America was predicated on work and instrumentality... There has always been a tension between the businessman and the working man as American masculine ideal types, between the heroic individual and the rugged team player²⁶.

This resulted in the revival of the hero artisan in the 1930's to bring hope and counteract the low morale during the depression. The working class man became visual propaganda, and viewed as the dominant masculine persona of America during that period. Heroic photographs of the Herculean workmen building the empire state building (the tallest structure in the world in 1931) holding and using tools like savior warriors became a desired image of the dominant masculine American male²⁷. Roark was deliberately given these desired masculine qualities with also a:

Singular vision and effort of the inventor/entrepreneur with the physical strength and honesty of the artisanal laborer²⁸.

The most noble of masculine scenes pertain to Roark working in the stone quarry. He is a reflection of the heroic artisan, a modern Renaissance man²⁹ who would rather labour than design architecture against his own design principles. The sexual use of the drill penetrating the pure obdurate granite³⁰ at the quarry when first seen by his future wife Dominique Francon over the rest of the quarry workers depicts the erotic nature of the relationship to follow and the magnetic sexuality that the architect Roark has been portrayed with. Rand's accurate use

of popular cultures societal movements and current affairs to manufacture an ideal architect is visually very persuasive and powerfully relevant for its time period. Rand creates a romance, not a reality; she seduces her audience with the relevant associations that made Roark a popular success and the choice to cast Gary Cooper as Roark reinforced the sex appeal of the character given Cooper's status at the time.

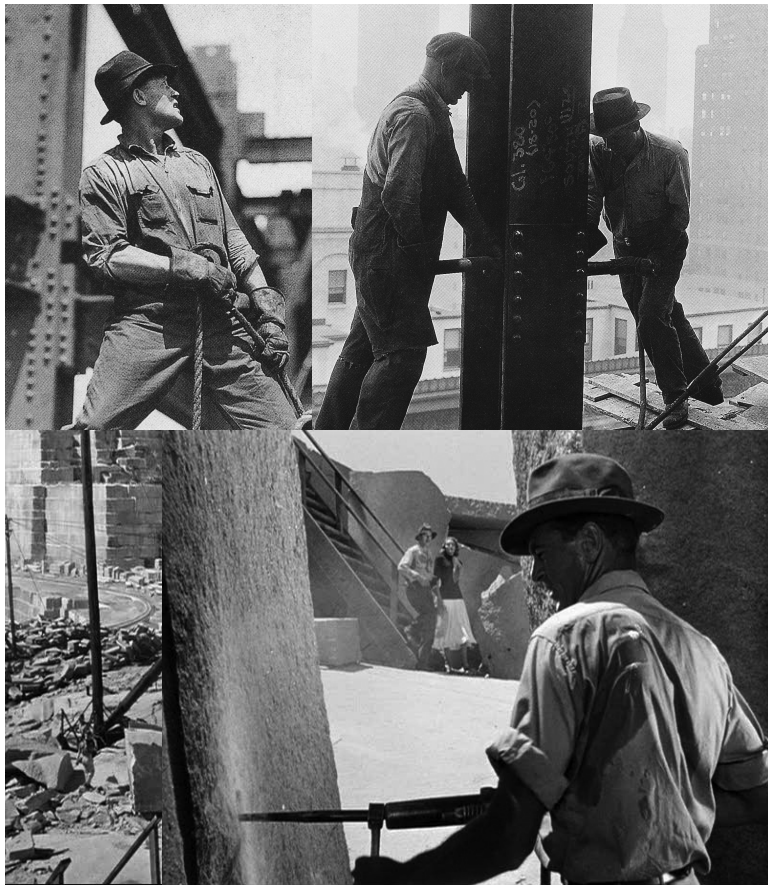


Fig.24 (Top) Photographs of working class men.
 Fig.25 (Bottom) Film Stills From The Fountainhead (1949) Roark in quarry.

This power of the architect's masculinity created by Roark continues with the connections between libido and architectural design with the act of adultery within the film *Strangers When We Meet*. Its very title, *Strangers When We Meet*



Fig.26 Film Stills From Strangers When We Meet (1960) Libido.

has hints of adulterous innuendoes contained within it, and shows a strong visual montage of married architect Larry Coe designing and building a client's new home while paralleling an adulterous relationship with Maggie Gault, who met through their young sons at a school bus stop. Nancy Levingson describes the series of montages that connects libido and design within the film:

The ripening of their relationship can even be described to the stages of a design project. There is the pre-design phase, the morning on the hill where they take not just the measure of the site but, like all potential lovers, the measure of each other. Next is the schematic phase, where they drive up the coast to Malibu for a clandestine rendezvous at the beach shack called the Albatross. Maggie is nervous, Larry direct. "I want to make love to you," he says. The success of this first encounter is conveyed by the films most flagrant sex and architecture montage, a kind of visual wink: the scene fades as Larry and Maggie kiss in the dark Malibu night, and then jumps quickly to the next morning at the construction site, where the bulldozers are busily moving the earth and hoses are spraying the ground. Next is the design development, during which afternoon at the Albatross become a regular event. Scenes of Larry at his drafting table, sketching in a frenzy of inspiration, alternate with vignettes of Larry and Maggie scampering on the beach, of Larry caressing Maggie's back, her black dress unzipped. Then, as the exciting potential of the design gives way to the fixed decisions of construction, the lovers realize they must confront the consequences of their affair: is it a frisky fling or a sturdier part of their lives, necessitating divorce and other messiness? The final scenes emphasize the symmetry of work and love. The denouncement of the affairs occurs at the new house; walking room to room, like a bride and groom come home, the lovers know that the end of the project is the end of the affair³¹.

The concept of finance driven by libido in the film *Indecent Proposal* (1993) adds

another alternate architectural layer to the masculine male, but a more realistic portrait of the contemporary architect. The film's hero, David Murphy, is an upstart architect. Murphy, with wife Diana played by Demi Moore, have become financially affected by the real estate recession of the early nineties. The recession leads them to Las Vegas to chance gamble and win the desired sum of \$50,000 to avoid foreclosure on their Santa Monica beach front dream house. Once arrived, the couple are propositioned over a game of pool by billionaire businessman John Gage played by Robert Redford for one million dollars in return for one night with wife Diana. Architecturally translated, the client becomes Gage, the architecture is wife Diana, and Murphy is the architect that has the masculinity and sex appeal to have a beautiful wife. Unable to sustain a financial income due to a recession, Murphy sells his beautiful wife in return for the short term financial stability and the saving of their dream home. Regardless of the success and stature architects are always a servant to the client, and a slave to the economy. This echoes *The Fountainhead* where Howard Roark's would rather labour within a stone quarry than design architecture against his own design principles until deserving relevant clients presented themselves.



Fig.27 Film Stills From Indecent Proposal (1993) Gage propositioning.

These are the realities of the practice of architecture, and the film *Indecent Proposal* tells a very symbolic story that presents the architect as a servant and slave to the client. Murphy is the contemporary example of the romance of the architect created by Howard Roark. Murphy's signature symbolic architecture is his wife, as Roark's is his modernist skyscrapers. Murphy's role is perhaps more realistic than some given his lack of financial security in the profession as the plot generator. This is the exception, not the rule, for the cinema architect.

S U M M A R Y OF CHARACTERISTICS

From his creative ego driving the originality of design taken from the spirit and thought of Frank Lloyd Wright to the art of communication showing the confidence of dialogue to inspire and influence right from wrong. His raw sex appeal and dominant masculine presence created a romance and passion of vocation and his independence of practitioner allowed Howard Roark to humbly influence decades of fictional architects in cinematic history.

**INTRODUCTION
TO
THE REAL LIFE
ARCHITECTS**



Fig.28 Film Still From My First Building - Stories From Toronto Architects (2010) Douglas Birkenshaw..

ARCHITECT: Douglas Birkenshaw.

FILM: My First Building Stories from Toronto Architects.

RELEASE DATE: December 17th 2010.

PRACTICE: B +H.

ABOUT: A design leader within B+H, Douglas was appointed as a Partner in 2006. A member of the firm since 1993, he combines his adept architectural visualization skills with his hands-on use of advanced architectural and imaging software applications. He has been a lecturer and visiting critic at a number of architectural schools. Douglas has a broad range of experience covering many project types; with a particular focus on institutional facilities with such clients as Queen's university, University of British Columbia, University of Windsor, University of New Brunswick, and Sheridan Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning. His work at Queen's University's Beamish Munro Hall, Metro Toronto Convention Centre's South Building, and the Sheridan Centre for Animation and Emerging Technologies has been recognized with awards from the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada, the Ontario Association of Architects and the Design Exchange, respectively. He has extensive experience with sustainable design and is a LEED Accredited Professional¹.



Fig.29 Film Still From My First Building - Stories From Toronto Architects (2010) Eb Zeidler.

ARCHITECT: Eberhard Zeidler.

FILM: My First Building Stories from Toronto Architects.

RELEASE DATE: December 17th 2010.

PRACTICE: Zeidler Partnership.

ABOUT: Eb Zeidler, as a Senior Partner, Emeritus in the firm, has over 50 years of architectural experience on landmark projects of almost every building type built in dozens of countries spanning the globe. These include the Eaton Centre in Toronto, Canada Place in Vancouver, BNI City office tower in Jakarta, The Kravis Performing Arts Centre in Florida and many others. His current work involves the Trump International Hotel and Tower, the Minto Midtown Development, and EMAAR Dubai Development. More than 400 articles have been published by leading professional magazines in addition the work has appeared in a number of architecture texts. He has written two books, "Healing the Hospital" and "Multi-Use Architecture in the Urban Context". Two books have been written "Eberhard Zeidler: In Search of Human Space" (Ernst & Sohn) and Zeidler Roberts Partnership: "Ethics and Architecture" (L'Arca Edizioni). Among the many awards and honours he has received is the Gold Medal of the RAIC and four honours degrees for universities. From 1984 to 2000, Mr. Zeidler was an Adjunct Professor of Architecture Design at the University of Toronto. The firm's main office is in Toronto with offices in London, Berlin, Beijing, West Palm Beach, Vancouver, Victoria and Calgary².



Fig.30 Film Still From My First Building - Stories From Toronto Architects (2010) Shirley Blumberg.

ARCHITECT: Shirley Blumberg.

FILM: My First Building Stories from Toronto Architects.

RELEASE DATE: December 17th 2010.

PRACTICE: Kuwabara Payne McKenna Blumberg Architects (KPMB).

ABOUT: Born and educated in Cape Town, South Africa, Shirley Blumberg studied architecture at the University of Toronto. Upon graduation, Shirley joined Barton Myers in 1977 and was an associate until co-founding KPMB in 1987. Shirley is recognized for her commitment to city building. She has worked on numerous projects that engage heritage contexts, notably King James Place and the Design Exchange in Toronto and most recently the Celia Franca Centre for Canada's National Ballet School (a joint venture with Goldsmith Borgal & Company Ltd. Architects) and the Gardiner Museum renewal. Her projects for corporate clients include the Hasbro Corporate Headquarters in Rhode Island, advertising offices for Ammirati Puris Lintas in New York, offices for Alias/wavefront, and animation studios for Disney Television. Currently, Shirley is the partner-in-charge of the Bell Lightbox for the Toronto International Film Festival Group, the New Sugar Building in Denver Colorado, the Vaughan Civic Centre, and University Boulevard a new mixed-use gateway project for the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. She is also directing several mixed-used residential projects in downtown Toronto. Shirley is a member of the Regent Park Design Review Panel, the Presidential Advisory Council for the Ontario College of Art and Design and a former member of the City of Toronto's Roundtable on Arts and Culture. She is a frequent guest critic and lecturer at universities across North America³.



Fig.31 Film Still From My First Building - Stories From Toronto Architects (2010) Peter Clewes.

ARCHITECT: Peter Clewes.

FILM: My First Building Stories from Toronto Architects.

RELEASE DATE: December 17th 2010.

PRACTICE: Architects Alliance.

ABOUT: Over 25 years of practice, Peter Clewes has established a reputation as one of Canada's most adventurous architects, behind some of the most innovative residential buildings in North America. He has extensive experience in all aspects of the process, from planning and economics to design and construction. Peter's notable projects include the award-winning Terrence Donnelly Centre for Cellular and Biomolecular Research at U of T; the Kaiser Computer Science and Engineering Building at UBC; mixed use development projects in Canada, the US and Europe; and the first 'green' student housing in Canada: the Pond Road Residence at York University. His innovative residential projects have been published internationally, and have received awards from the Ontario Association of Architects (OAA), Canadian Architect, and the City of Toronto. For his work on the TDCCBR, he shares three awards with Adrian DiCasteri and Stefan Behnisch, from the Royal Institute of British Architects, Architectural Record and Business Week Magazines, and the OAA. In 2005 Peter was appointed to the Waterfront Design Review Panel for the Toronto Waterfront Revitalization Corporation⁴.



Fig.32 Film Still From My First Building - Stories From Toronto Architects (2010) Raymond Moriyama.

ARCHITECT: Raymond Moriyama.

FILM: My First Building Stories from Toronto Architects.

RELEASE DATE: December 17th 2010.

PRACTICE: Moriyama & Teshima.

ABOUT: Raymond Moriyama, who founded the firm in 1958, is a hero to many Canadians. His stories of being interned during the Second World War because of his Japanese heritage and his rise to become one of Canada's most respected architects continue to inspire. As described by architectural critic Trevor Boddy: "These early challenges gave him a strong character coupled with sensitivity, qualities that have come through in his architecture." Ray has applied his extraordinary vision and understanding to numerous projects including the Bata Shoe Museum, Bank of Montreal Institute for Learning, Saudi Arabian National Museum, Ontario Science Centre, Scarborough Civic Centre, Toronto Reference Library, Canadian Embassy in Tokyo and the Canadian War Museum. Such highly visible projects consistently earn praise for their attention to the needs and purposes of the people who use them. He has received numerous honours including the Confederation of Canada Medal, the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada Gold Medal, and honorary degrees from ten Canadian universities. He is a Companion of the Order of Canada and was awarded the Order of Ontario. Born in Vancouver, Ray received a Bachelor of Architecture degree from the University of Toronto and Masters of Architecture degree in Civic and Town Planning from McGill University. He is a member of the Ontario Association of Architects and the Canadian Institute of Planners, a Fellow of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada, and an Honorary Fellow of the American Institute of Architects⁵.



Fig.33 Film Still From My First Building - Stories From Toronto Architects (2010) Janna Levitt.

ARCHITECT: Janna Levitt.

FILM: (Interviewed for) My First Building Stories from Toronto Architects.

RELEASE DATE: December 17th 2010.

PRACTICE: Levitt Goodman Architects.

ABOUT: Janna Levitt has degrees in General Arts and Architecture. Her creative use of colour and form combine with her excellent management skills to bring both elegance and accountability to every design. Janna is known for using materials in innovative ways, which allows her to provide clients with unique projects that are cost efficient. She maintains contact with a wide range of local artisans who serve as a resource base on many of the firm's projects. Janna plays an active role on all work produced by the firm, ensuring continuity with respect to budget, design and schedule. She is currently an adjunct professor at the University of Waterloo School of Architecture and is a former member of the City of Toronto Public Art Commission⁶.



Fig.34 Film Still From My First Building - Stories From Toronto Architects (2010) Barry Sampson.

ARCHITECT: Barry Sampson.

FILM: My First Building Stories from Toronto Architects.

RELEASE DATE: December 17th 2010.

PRACTICE: Baird Sampson Neuert.

ABOUT: Barry Sampson was born in Oshawa, Ontario in 1948. He received his Bachelor of Architecture from the University of Toronto in 1972 and later studied at the International Institute of Design (summer session) in London, England and at the Sorbonne in France. While living in Paris he worked with the firm of Deviller Chemetov Architects. He became a partner in the firm Baird/Sampson Architects, in 1982 and has been involved in a wide range of architectural, heritage, urban design, and planning research assignments undertaken by the firm. He has been partner-in-charge for a number of award winning projects including the Phase VI and Phase VII Student Residences at the University of Toronto, Bay-Adelaide Park, Niagara Parks Butterfly Conservatory and the Elliot Lake Auditorium for the Arts. He has also been responsible for the preparation of development plans for a number of significant sites in Toronto, Oshawa, Etobicoke and the region of Durham. Mr. Sampson has been invited to sit on many design juries, participate in many design charrettes and present a wide variety of lectures, including his recent talk at the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada conference entitled "Two Generations: The Legacies of University Expansion from 1963-72 and 2000-2010"; a comparison of the aspirations and evolving practices of these two eras and their influence on the Canadian culture and social landscape. Drawings by Mr. Sampson have been included in exhibitions in North America and Europe and he was awarded a senior artists grant by the Canada Council in 1989⁷.



Fig.35 Film Still From My First Building - Stories From Toronto Architects (2010) Jack Diamond.

ARCHITECT: Jack Diamond.

FILM: My First Building Stories from Toronto Architects.

RELEASE DATE: December 17th 2010.

PRACTICE: Diamond & Schmitt.

ABOUT: A.J. Diamond's degrees include a Bachelor of Architecture (with Distinction) from the University of Capetown, a Master of Arts in Politics, Philosophy and Economics from Oxford University and a Master of Architecture from the University of Pennsylvania. He was the first occupant of the Graham Chair at the University of Pennsylvania, established for those who have successfully combined theory and practice in architecture. He is a Fellow of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada and the Canadian Institute of Planners and an Honorary Fellow of the American Institute of Architects. He has received doctorates in Engineering from DalTech and in Law from the University of Toronto. He is a Royal Architectural Institute of Canada Gold Medalist, a Member of the Order of Ontario and an Officer of the Order of Canada. Mr. Diamond was instrumental in the movement to reinforce neighbourhoods at risk with infill housing and he devised medium-rise alternatives at equivalent densities to high-rise residential development. As an entrepreneur he demonstrated the economic effectiveness of recycling historic structures for new uses and has long identified the negative impacts of urban sprawl. Extra professional activities include chairman of the Advisory Committee on Design to the Canadian National Capital Commission, membership of the Ontario Human Rights Commission, a role as a commissioner of the Greater Toronto Area Task Force, which made recommendations on governance, taxation, land-use planning and transportation for the GTA⁸.

CHAPTER TWO: THE MAKING OF A REAL LIFE ARCHITECT IN FILM

This is the first documentary that I have produced and I would like to state that making a film which highlights the careers of architects who have truly affected people's lives with their architecture, hard work, and sacrifice was an amazing and humbling experience.

Chapter two is not a critical essay. Instead, the format of this chapter is a director's commentary which delivers a personal account in the form of a self-confessional that interprets my thoughts, ideas, and experiences when making the film *My First Building - Stories From Toronto Architects*.

The layout of this chapter shows full transcripts of the film *My First Building - Stories From Toronto Architects* set along side my personal comments and opinions validating the film's authenticity of the real life architect.

MY FIRST BUILDING

Stories from Toronto Architects

WHAT INFLUENCED YOU TO BECOME AN ARCHITECT?

RAYMOND MORIYAMA

WHAT INFLUENCED ME IS VERY SIMPLE, I NEARLY DIED. THIS WAS WHEN I WAS 4 YEARS OLD. IT WAS A VERY BAD SCALDING FROM A STEW THAT WAS BOILING IN OUR HOME. FORTUNATELY AS IT CAME DOWN, THE OVEN DOOR OPENED AND MY FACE WAS UNDER THE OVEN DOOR. SO ALL MY BACK AND ARMS WERE IN A BAD WAY, AND I WAS CONFINED TO A BED FOR 8 MONTHS.



Fig.36 Film Still From My First Building - Stories From Toronto Architects (2010) Raymond Moriyama.

MY FATHER ARRANGED A BED BY THE WINDOW SO THAT I COULD KEEP IN TOUCH WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD; AND NOT TO BE ISOLATED TOTALLY. I USE TO WATCH THIS CONSTRUCTION GOING ON ACROSS THE STREET. AS A CHILD A LITTLE OVER FOUR WHATEVER THIS SMALL CONSTRUCTION WAS, WAS A BIG PALACE. I USED TO WATCH THESE MEN DIG DITCHES AND POUR FOUNDATIONS, AND LAY BLOCKS. EVERY ONCE AND A WHILE THERE WAS A YOUNG MAN WITH A ROLL OF DRAWINGS AND A PIPE WHO USED TO COME ON THE SITE; AND THERE WAS A GREAT BIG ROCK ON THE SIDE OF THE CONSTRUCTION. HE WOULD SPREAD OUT HIS DRAWINGS ON THIS ROCK AND HE WOULD SMOKE HIS PIPE, AND I THOUGHT, "WOW" WHAT A TALENT". WHATEVER HE SAID ALL THESE MEN AFTER GATHERING AROUND HIM, WOULD NOD, NOT LIKE THE CONSTRUCTION GUYS NOWADAYS. SO I SAID TO MY FATHER, "EVERYBODY LIKES THAT MAN, HE SEEMS TO WORK REALLY

WELL WITH THE OTHER PEOPLE, WOULD YOU FIND OUT WHO HE IS?" WELL MY DAD IMMEDIATELY WENT ACROSS THE STREET AND TALKED TO THIS GUY AND TALKED TO THE OTHER MEN AND CAME BACK AND I'M WATCHING ALL THIS AND REALLY GETTING EXCITED. AND HE SAID, "THE MAN IS CALLED AN ARCHITECT". I SAID, "OHHHH, WELL I'M GOING TO BE AN ARCHITECT" SO AT FOUR AND HALF THE DECISION WAS MADE.

JACK DIAMOND

WELL AS I SAID I DIDN'T HAVE ANY ALTERNATIVE TO IT. I ALWAYS THOUGHT IT VERY ODD AS A MATTER OF FACT THAT PEOPLE COULD CHOOSE TO BE A DOCTOR OR A LAWYER I WOULD LOOK AND THINK TO THEM, A CAT DOESN'T MAKE A CHOICE

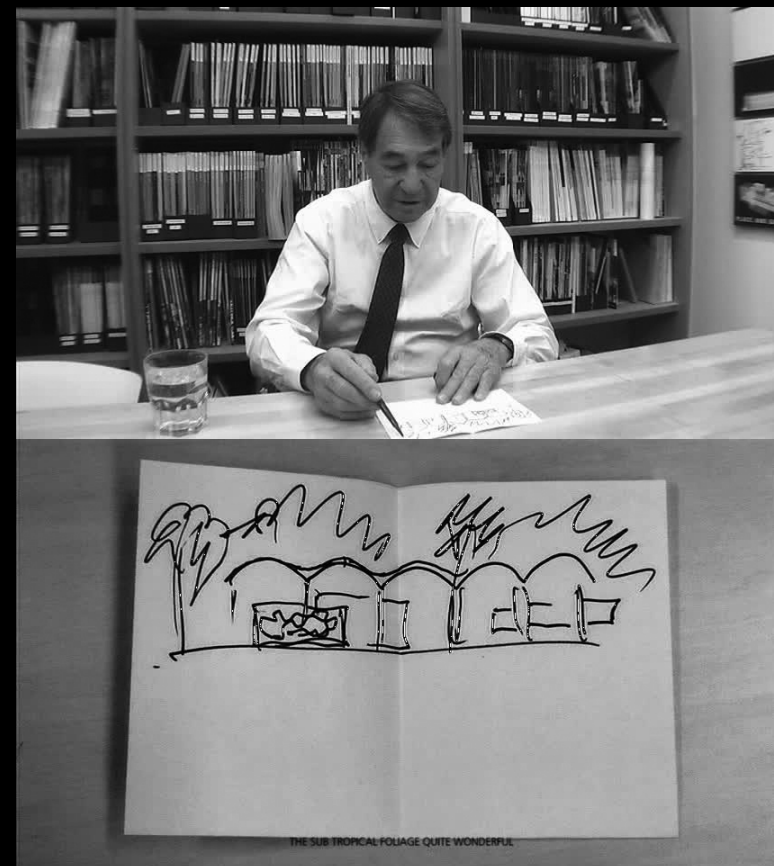


Fig.37 Film Still From My First Building - Stories From Toronto Architects (2010) Jack Diamond sketching his first building.

“THE MAN IS CALLED AN ARCHITECT”

RAYMOND MORIYAMA.

The brainstorming behind the cinematic task of creating a documentary to introduce and create an image of the practicing architect began with the watching of as many architectural related films as possible. Whether they were internationally acclaimed films for example, *The Sketches Of Frank Gehry*, or just clips on the world wide web, I watched them all. I needed to understand the language of the documentary film, how it presented each of its subjects, its purposes, its points of views or approaches of the filmmakers and the form the documentary became after editing when production had ended. What I learned was that architectural documentaries focusing solely on an architect and not a specific place or construction featured star/pop architects, for example, I.M. Pei, Frank Lloyd Wright, Frank Gehry, Louis Khan. This focus on the international star/pop architects has no relevance to the reality of the real life architect as they have projected past the common practitioner to celebrity status. Thus, within my film the strict focus became the common career architect.

Understanding anyone is difficult, but to understand an architect and present a reality of the profession needs distilling and strategic focus. I knew I could not produce a film that reflected a full working textbook of the architectural practice and persona of the architect and I didn't want to. Instead, what I wanted to do was deliver stories and experiences that architects had acquired as descriptions of their reality and their lives as architects. I wanted to collect the important memories that reflect the everyday architect. This could only be achieved through interview and by listening to the architects after asking the correct questions. In reality, the architect can only be listened to, and their architecture experienced. The question that opened the film was, “What influenced you to become an architect?” This is the only audible question throughout the film, it was spoken by myself to Raymond Moriyama and became the most appropriate place to begin the life stories of the seven interviewed architects. The influences that drive

people to become architects are amazing stories in themselves and I wanted to use Moriyama's story to begin this film. The cause and effect of deciding to become an architect for Moriyama was the physical pain of being burned by a boiling stew at the age of four and then inspired by a man with a roll of drawings and a pipe on a construction site who happened to be an architect. All of this was observed by Moriyama through a window while confined to a bed because of the severity of his injuries. It is an inspirational story. The story metaphorically summarizes the hardships of the career within architecture and a perfect story to begin the film, as it sets the proper atmosphere, truly grounding it, and setting the tone. It confirms the fact that this is not a stereotypical architecture documentary with pretty pictures Mickey Mousing to elaborate music in celebration to the next star/pop architect. This film deliberately features the everyday architect, to tell their stories, and to learn from their experiences in Toronto.

“A CAT DOESN'T MAKE A CHOICE ABOUT BEING A CAT, OR A DOG A DOG”

JACK DIAMOND.

My vision for the film was a conversation. However, the difficulties of arranging this in reality would be too problematic due to the unavailability of the architects, so it remained imaginary. My vision contained all seven architects sitting around the same table creating a continuous free flowing conversation. A relaxed conversation, a conversation that would take place in a restaurant, a public house, a place where stories can be shared and enjoyed. This concept of using the conversation through the act of story telling relates to the writings of Walter Benjamin's text *The Storyteller*. Benjamin discusses how there are two types of story teller:

Experience which is passed on from mouth to mouth is the source from which all storytellers have drawn... there are two groups which, to be sure, overlap in many ways. And the figure of the storyteller gets its

ABOUT BEING A CAT, OR A DOG A DOG. I MEAN WHAT ARE YOU? AND I REALIZED I WAS VERY LUCKY THAT MOST PEOPLE DON'T HAVE THAT DECISION MADE FOR THEM IN A SENSE. WELL MY FIRST BUILDING WAS IN DURBAN IN SOUTH AFRICA AND IT WAS HIGHLY INFLUENCED BY ITS BRITISH FORE BEARERS, SO ONE HAD SOME QUITE GOOD COLONIAL ARCHITECTURE BUT AGAIN VERY CIRCUMSCRIBED RATHER DERIVATIVE AND I DID A RESTAURANT IN A PARK WITH A THIN CONCRETE BARREL FAULTED SHELL ON POSTS AND BELOW THAT JUST GLASS. TAKING ACCOUNT OF THE SUBTROPICAL ENVIRONMENT THE DELICACY OF THIS WHITE SHELL IN THE PARK, AND THAT RATHER CHANGED THE ATTITUDE OF ARCHITECTURE IN THE TOWN. IN FACT I WAS PERSONALLY DOING THE MURALS ON ONE OF THE PANELS OF WALLS AND I WAS DOING THE PLASTER WORK, I WAS IN WORKMAN'S CLOTHES. ALL THE ARCHITECTS IN TOWN WOULD SNEAK BY TO TAKE A LOOK, DIDN'T REALIZE I WAS THERE, SO I COULD SEE THAT IT HAD AN EFFECT.

SHIRLEY BLUMBERG

I WENT BACK FOR THE FIRST TIME IN TWENTY-SIX YEARS, A YEAR AND A HALF AGO. SO THAT WAS AMAZING, 'CAUSE WHEN I LEFT, OR THE LAST TIME I'D BEEN THERE BEFORE, WAS WHEN IT WAS, YOU KNOW, FULLY IN THE SORT OF IN THE APARTHEID REGIME, AND, SO, GOING BACK A YEAR AND A HALF AGO WAS PRETTY AMAZING.

JACK DIAMOND

WE HAD A RACIST GOVERNMENT THAT TRIED TO MAINTAIN THE PRIVILEGES AND DOMINATION OF THE WHITES OVER THE BLACK. I DIDN'T WANT TO LIVE AT THAT STAGE A FASCIST RACIST STATE.

SHIRLEY BLUMBERG

YOU GOTTA SORT OF, YOU'VE GOT TO SORT OF TURN THE SWITCH WHEN YOU IMMIGRATE, AND IF YOU'RE, SORT OF, ALWAYS LOOKING BACK, IT'S JUST A MISERABLE EXISTENCE. SO, I'M GRATEFUL FOR THAT, BECAUSE IT WAS AN EXTRAORDINARY CHILDHOOD. BUT A YOU'VE GOT TO SORT OF LIVE IN THE PRESENT.

JACK DIAMOND

YEAH, OBVIOUSLY WHERE ONE GROWS UP IT IMPRINTS ON ONE VERY STRONGLY, BUT THIS IS MY HOME, TORONTO.

PETER CLEWES

MY FIRST BUILDING WAS A COUNTRY HOUSE FOR A COUPLE; AND THEY WERE FRIENDS OF OUR FAMILY. WE KNEW THEM GROWING UP IN MONTREAL, THEY WERE OUR BACKYARD NEIGHBOURS. AND THEY CAME TO, THEY MOVED TO TORONTO - I WAS GOING TO SAY "IMMIGRATED" - 'CAUSE IT WAS A BIT LIKE THAT - IMMIGRATED TO TORONTO WITHIN A COUPLE OF MONTHS OF MY PARENTS. HIS

NAME WAS AL. HE SAID, "LOOK I NEED TO REBUILD THE COTTAGE, AND I'D LIKE YOU TO BE THE ARCHITECT". I'D NEVER DONE A BUILDING. I WAS IN SECOND YEAR OF UNIVERSITY, HAD NO IDEA HOW TO PUT A BUILDING TOGETHER, AND AT THAT TIME I WAS ALSO VERY ENAMORED WITH THE WORK OF ARTHUR ERICKSON. ARTHUR AT THAT TIME, I THINK, WAS ARGUABLY THE PREMIER ARCHITECT IN CANADA, AND I THINK, ARGUABLY, THE ONLY CANADIAN ARCHITECT THAT HAD RECEIVED ANY KIND OF INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION. AND IT SEEMED TO ME HE WAS DOING TRULY ORIGINAL ARCHITECTURE. AND - THIS IS IMPORTANT, BECAUSE WHEN I CAME TO DO THE COTTAGE, I WAS DEEPLY INFLUENCED BY SOME OF ARTHUR'S WEST COAST HOUSES. AND THERE WAS ONE IN PARTICULAR CALLED THE CATTON HOUSE. THE CATTON HOUSE WAS A HOUSE, OR IS A HOUSE, I PRESUME IT'S STILL THERE - THAT WAS BUILT ON A SLOPE SITE, AND THE ENTIRE HOUSE WAS KIND OF VERY, VERY ANGULAR, FOLLOWING THE INCLINE OF THE SLOPE, AND FOR WHATEVER REASON, I THOUGHT THIS WAS A REALLY COOL HOUSE. AND SO I QUICKLY CAME UP WITH A DESIGN FOR THE, FOR AL BISENT'S COUNTRY HOUSE BASED LOOSELY ON THIS CONCEPT. AND IT WAS ALSO, IT WAS ON A SLOPE SITE, BUT NOT NEARLY AS SEVERE AS THE VANCOUVER CATTON HOUSE.



Fig.38 Film Still From My First Building - Stories From Toronto Architects (2010) The Catton House.

RAYMOND MORIYAMA

IT WAS THE FIRST TIME THAT MY FATHER AND I HAD A MAN TO MAN TALK, AND I WAS SO PROUD OF THAT MOMENT. HE SAID, "WELL JUJEU I RECEIVED A NOTICE TO BOARD A TRAIN TO A WAR CAMP IN THREE DAYS AND BE SEPARATED FROM THE FAMILY. HE SAID, I WANT YOU TO UNDERSTAND THAT IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO CLOSE THE STORE IN 3 DAYS AND YOUR MOTHER'S PREGNANT THAT WAS MY YOUNGER

full corporeality only for the one who can picture them both. "When someone goes on a trip, he has something to tell about," goes the German saying, and people imagine the storyteller as someone who has come from afar. But they enjoy no less listening to the man who has stayed at home, making an honest living, and who knows the local tales and traditions. If one wants to picture these two groups through their archaic representatives, one is embodied in the resident tiller of the soil, and the other in the trading seaman¹.

The relevant of the two is the resident tiller of the soil, a craftsman, an architect that would deliver their knowledge of craft through the act of story telling. The imaginary conversation would be the act of sharing craft, sharing stories of architecture. Jack Diamond was the first person to speak the words, 'my first building' in the film. The origins of the subject came from using the premise of memory. Memory is a phenomenon that everyone experiences, and for a story teller the art of repeating a story and retaining a memory is vital for their craft to remain constant, Benjamin explains:

For storytelling is always the art of repeating stories, and this art is lost when the stories are no longer retained. It is lost because there is no more weaving and spinning to go on while they are being listened to. The more self-forgetful the listener is, the more deeply is what he listens to impressed upon his memory. When the rhythm of work has seized him, he listens to the tales in such a way that the gift of retelling them comes to him all by itself. This, then, is the nature of the web in which the gift of storytelling is cradled. This is how today it is becoming unraveled at all its ends after being woven thousands of years ago in the ambience of the oldest forms of craftsmanship².

The act of recalling a memory, especially the nostalgia of the first time created a relevant approach for the subject of the stories within the film. Be it the first time you ride a bike without stabilizers, the first time you climb a tree, your first kiss, your first ride in an airplane, your first taste of a beer, the first time always keeps a personal memory, and sometimes the strongest memory. A first memory that can be understood, appreciated and learned from, regardless of class, culture or opinion. Relating this approach to the documentary, the title became, My First Building - Stories From Toronto Architects. It projects a natural expression of what the film is, Toronto architects discussing architecture, their first building, and sharing their career stories. This produces a nostalgic singular first person

perspective on the career of architecture creating a collective anthology of varied personal experiences. In contrast to the subject of first building, I added the extra point of view of my best building within the interviews. This was to create a time line of the architect's career, from first building to best building. Their first building became their initiation into architecture and becoming an architect, and their best building reflected their proudest moment within their career. Both these questions were asked to the architect during their interview, 'what was your first building?' and, 'what is your best building?' It created an enriching conversation, revealing the professional obstacles they faced during their first and best designs and the professional realities of construction with technical and personal insights that humanize the architect's abilities and passions within their career.

My favourite moment within the story of Diamond's first building, is his cough, a natural mannerism that most film makers would edit out as it would be considered a flaw, and an expense to include it. I emphasized it using the secondary camera to bring a stronger sense of reality of storytelling as I'm not trying to hide or conceal anything within the edits.

Diamond drawing the image of his restaurant, his first building, on the piece of paper I folded into a coaster for his glass of water before the interview displayed him as a very charismatic man, who shows a strong passion for making architecture. It was a natural moment that he did himself, I didn't ask him to draw. He lifted the glass, unfolded the paper and started to draw under his own reaction to my questions, which became a spontaneous moment. If I had asked Diamond to draw his first building it would have been unsuccessful, and rehearsed on camera. This moment was one of the many magical ones captured on camera throughout the 6 month interview process which came from a casual relaxing conversation and letting the interviewee control what they felt most comfortable talking about and doing while being filmed. Diamond's drawing was a marvelous moment and adds greatly to the understanding of the architect, simply that architects express themselves through drawing. Jack proved this when he instinctually unfolded the piece of paper under his glass to illustrate the explanation of his first building.

BROTHER WHICH WE LOST, AND CANADA HAS GONE TO WAR. A FEW DAYS LATER MOUNTIES IN STREET CLOTHES CAME, TWO OF THEM, AND PICKED HIM UP, AND I WATCHED THEM WALK OUT OF THE STORE. BUT THE MOST FRIGHTENING WAS THE THIRD MAN WHO STAYED BEHIND, A BIG TALL GUY, BUT BEFORE HE LEFT HE POINTED HIS FINGER, A BIG LONG FINGER, AND I'M TWELVE. HE SAID, "IF WE SEE YOU OUTSIDE AFTER SUNSET, YOU, YOUR MOTHER, YOUR SISTERS WILL BE SHOT."

PETER CLEWES

THERE WAS A MENNONITE CONTRACTOR FROM THE KITCHENER-WATERLOO AREA THAT WE'D WORKED WITH, AND THEY WERE REALLY WONDERFUL PEOPLE, BASICALLY CAMPED ON THE SITE TO BUILD THE COTTAGE, THEY WERE VERY GRATEFUL FOR THE WORK, THEY THOUGHT IT WAS FANTASTIC THAT THEY COULD BASICALLY STAY UP AT THE BEAUTIFUL LAKE FOR THE SUMMER. BUT THEY ALSO REALLY HELPED ME, KNOWING AND BEING EXTREMELY EXPERIENCED IN PUTTING BUILDINGS TOGETHER. THEY SAID, "PETER, LOOK" ONE OF THE FIRST PROBLEMS WAS THERE WAS VERY LITTLE LATERAL STABILITY TO THE BUILDING, BECAUSE IT WAS A THREE-STOREY BUILDING; IT WAS LARGELY



Fig.39 Film Still From My First Building - Stories From Toronto Architects (2010) Peter Clewes.

ALL OPEN, THERE WAS A SERIES OF UPPER FLOOR CUTBACKS, PARTICULARLY ON THE THIRD FLOOR A BIT OF A LOFT, WHICH WAS ALL THE RAGE AT THAT POINT. AND WHEN THEY FRAMED THE BUILDING, WE GOT UP TO THE THIRD FLOOR AND THE CONTRACTOR SAID, "PETER I WANT TO SHOW YOU SOMETHING" AND HE PROCEEDED TO PLANT HIS LEGS SOMEWHAT FAR APART AND HE DID THIS AND THE ENTIRE BUILDING STARTED TO THIS [MAKES SWAYING HAND GESTURE]. AND HE SAID I, I THINK WE CAN SOLVE THIS PROBLEM, AND HERE'S HOW I

THINK WE CAN DO IT. SO, I LEARNED A LOT AND I WAS VERY GRATEFUL.

RAYMOND MORIYAMA

WE WERE FINALLY SEND TO A HUGE INTERNMENT CAMP IN B.C. A PLACE IN A CAMP CALLED BAY FARM. AT THAT PLACE THERE WERE TWO PUBLIC BATHS, THERE WAS NO PRIVATE BATHS ANDEACH ONE HAD A MALE AND FEMALE SECTION. I WENT TO A COUPLE OF THOSE PUBLIC BATHS, TO THE MEN'S SECTION OF COURSE AND YOUNG BOYS WOULD SEE MY BURN AND SCARS AND THEY WOULD SAY, "HE'S DISEASED DONT TOUCH HIM." THAT WAS OK, IT WAS JUST THE KIDS, BUT ADULTS AS WELL, AND I ALMOST STARTED TO SEE MY OWN COMMUNITY OF JAPANESE CANADIAN AS ALMOST THE ENEMY. THEN I REALIZED THAT THERE WAS A RIVER THE SOCAN RIVER AT THE OTHER SIDE OF THE SMALL MOUNTAIN. SO I DECIDED INSTEAD OF HOT TEARS I WOULD JUMP INTO THE RIVER. IT WAS BETTER TO BE COLD THAN TO SUFFER FROM ANY TEARS. SO I BUILT A LITTLE PLATFORM ON A TREE, SO THAT I COULD GET ON TOP AND WATCH FOR PEOPLE AND IF NOBODY CAME I JUMPED INTO THE RIVER AND TAKE A BATH. WHAT A STARTED TO DISCOVERY WAS HOW BEAUTIFUL NATURE WAS. SO I STARTED TO BUILD A TREE HOUSE. AND THAT WAS A REAL STRUGGLE, THAT WAS MY FIRST FORAY INTO ARCHITECTURE.



Fig.40 Film Still From My First Building - Stories From Toronto Architects (2010) Illustration of Raymond Moriyama's tree house.

SO I HAD AN AXE FOR A TOOL WITH A FLAT HEAD ON ONE SIDE, I HAD SOME ROPE, SIX NAILS AND I WENT TO THE SAW MILL WERE I WORKED FOR 5 CENTS A HOUR FOR 7 CENTS A HOUR, AND THEY KNEW ME AND GAVE ME A FEW LUMBER TO BRACE THE BUILDING. WITH THAT I STRUGGLED AND BUILT THIS TREE HOUSE, MOSTLY OUT OF BRANCHES FROM THE RIVER OR IN THE FOREST. WHEN IT WAS FINISHED THE PEOPLE COULDN'T SEE IT.

“YOU’VE GOT TO SORT OF TURN THE SWITCH *WHEN YOU IMMIGRATE*”

SHIRLEY BLUMBERG.

The introduction of Shirley Blumberg’s voice over Diamond’s sketch connected the two architects from the same country as both were born and raised in South Africa. Blumberg was one of two female architects interviewed, Janna Levitt was the other. Unfortunately I couldn’t fit Janna into the film, which frustrates me greatly especially when Janna took the time to be interviewed. I interviewed eight architects in total. Janna’s transcripts are included in Appendix A.

Choosing the architects for the documentary was based on a few factors. First I needed to have a strong range of architects with an age and generation separation to hold a larger and richer history of experience. According to the O.A.A. (Ontario Architects Association) web site, the Greater Toronto Area (G.T.A) was the closest city within my personal proximity that accommodated the most diverse collection of architectural practices, so a perimeter was drawn around the G.T.A. The second factor addressed was the typology of architecture within the architect’s portfolio as I wanted a range of architectural expertise. Third, the personal success within their career was considered, as any architect with the star/pop label would not be considered. A wish list of 12 architects was finalized for the desired number of 8 knowing that some would refuse and not be interested in being interviewed. Contacting the architects became both exciting and frustrating. Emails, voice mails, texts, faxes, were sent out and some architects replied immediately others didn’t at all. The more developed architects with busier practices proved to be difficult to contact and required perseverance in eventually securing an interview date. All of the architects on my list were by default, very busy, so finding a suitable two hour window for the interview required planning. It took 6 months of constant negotiations to arrange and complete the interviews of all 8 architects, the first interview was in July 2009 and the last was in December 2009. Using the theme of immigration to contrast the

emotions of leaving your birth place to start fresh in a new country was a powerful way to introduce the location of the film and image of Toronto so viewers can firmly understand the passion these architects have for the city. I was unaware that Blumberg and Diamond both came from South Africa. So, having two of the architects discuss similar political issues regarding their birth place was very genuine, and contrasted the city of Toronto as a cinematic new home. However the footage of Toronto became a question. How can I present the city visually in a few seconds, but yet keep the integrity of the film and not lose the momentum and rhythm created from the stories. I personally think I haven’t achieved it, but have achieved a possible solution with a hybrid postcard shot of the skyline.

“LOOK I NEED TO REBUILD THE COTTAGE, AND I’D LIKE YOU TO BE THE ARCHITECT”

PETER CLEWES.

The story of Peter Clewes’s first building, a cottage on South Muldrew Lake near Gravenhurst Ontario is a very unique story. Its not very often one hears of a story quite like this, the tender of a cottage for an architect student and the large learning experience behind taking a project from beginning to end. Designing it, working with a client, learning the fundamentals of construction and structure, the construction process, and then when it was all over and the cottage is completed, it is destroyed by an arsonist a few weeks later. It’s a very unique story, unique because it describes struggle and loss - A myth of permanence. I deliberately contrasted this story against the story of Raymond Moriyama’s tree house, as they both share similarities of narrative. Clewes suffered a loss of a design and loss of a physical construction. Moriyama’s loss was more severe, he suffered loss of identity from his community of Japanese Canadians due to his scars from his severe burns as a child. He lost his unborn brother, he lost his father for many

PETER CLEWES

THERE WAS A VERY, VERY UNFORTUNATE THING, HOWEVER, THE HOUSE WAS BURNED DOWN. AND NOT ONLY WAS THEIR COTTAGE BURNED DOWN, BUT ALSO THE COTTAGE BESIDE THEM. AND IT TURNED OUT THAT IT WAS AN ARSONIST, AND HE HAD BURNED DOWN THEIR INITIAL, YOU KNOW, ORIGINAL COTTAGE, WHICH THEY, I THINK I NEGLECTED TO SAY IT, THEY HAD BOUGHT THE COTTAGE, AND HAD IT FOR ABOUT A MONTH AND IT BURNED DOWN. AND SO IT, MY FIRST BUILDING, YOU KNOW, HAD AN EXISTENCE OF ABOUT A MONTH AND THEN DISAPPEARED. AND AT THAT POINT AL BISENT AND HIS FAMILY SAID, LOOK, WE'VE HAD ENOUGH OF THIS. THIS IS OUR SECOND LOSS, AND THEY ENDED UP SELLING THE COTTAGE TO THEIR NEXT DOOR NEIGHBOUR WHO HAD ALSO LOST HIS COTTAGE. AND HE CONSOLIDATED THE PROPERTIES AND I GATHER THEY REBUILT SOMETHING. AND THEY EVENTUALLY ARRESTED THE ARSONIST, I BELIEVE. I DON'T PROFESS TO KNOW MUCH ABOUT ARSON AND ARSONISTS MINDS - BUT THEY, THERE'S SOME KIND OF STRANGE PSYCHOLOGICAL PROFILE THAT DRIVES PEOPLE TO BURN BUILDINGS DOWN, AND IT'S NOT A VENDETTA, IT'S JUST SOMETHING THEY FEEL COMPELLED TO DO.

RAYMOND MORIYAMA

THAT TREE HOUSE WAS MAGIC IT WAS MY MAGIC PLACE. IT WAS A PLACE FOR SOLITUDE FOR PEACE, I COULD LISTEN TO NATURE AND OBSERVE NATURE. AT THAT TIME I WOULD LOOK AT THE GROUND DOWN BELOW, WE WERE STILL IN SQUARE FEET, FEET AND INCHES THAT ONE SQUARE FOOT IS DIFFERENT FROM THE NEXT SQUARE FOOT AND THE NEXT SQUARE FOOT AND THE NEXT SQUARE FOOT. GOD THE WHOLE WORLD IS DIFFERENT EVERY SQUARE FOOT BY SQUARE FOOT, THAT LAND IS VERY PRECIOUS, AND THAT'S WHEN I STARTED TO REALIZE THE BEAUTY OF CANADIAN NATURE. AND I LEARNED TO FLY WITH IN MY IMAGINATION FROM THE TREE HOUSE UP AND OVER THE CAMP AND THAT'S WHEN I DREW A MAP OF THE WHOLE CAMP AND I MADE A SECOND MAP WITH THE NAMES OF EVERY FAMILY THAT LIVED IN ALL THESE SHACKS. THAT WAS THE BEGINNING OF MY ARCHITECTURE, AND WHAT DID I LEARN, TO DO THINGS WITH MINIMAL MATERIAL, WITH MINIMAL EFFORT, AND KEEP THE COSTS DOWN IN THE CASE OF THE TREE HOUSE, YOU KNOW I BUILT IT FOR NOTHING. SO ANYWAY THAT'S ROUGHLY THE STORY OF THE TREE HOUSE, AND BY THE WAY, NOBODY DISCOVERED IT EVER.

EB ZEIDLER

MY AGE-SIMILAR MATES DIDN'T GO IN THE WAR BUT I DID GO IN THE WAR, AND I HAD A, YOU KNOW, IT WAS KIND OF A HORRIBLE EXPERIENCE. I MEAN, WE WENT, THE FLOTILLA I WAS ON, IN THE NAVY, WE WERE IN RUSSIA. IT STARTED OFF WITH 2,400 MEN AND ENDED UP WITH 10. AND THEN I CAME OUT

OF THE WAR AND I CAME BACK AND I REALLY COULDN'T LAUGH ANYMORE; I MEAN, IT'S SUCH A DREADFUL EXPERIENCE - ALL YOUR FRIENDS, EVERYONE IS DEAD. AND THEN I WORKED FOR A WHILE AS A CARPENTER, AND WAS LOOKING FOR A UNIVERSITY TO GO TO. THE BAUHAUS, THAT STARTED AGAIN. THE OLD WEIMAR TEACHER THAT HAD BEEN IN PRISON CAMP OR ANYWHERE ELSE BUT RUSSIA, HAD CAME BACK TO WEIMAR TO START THE BAUHAUS AGAIN.

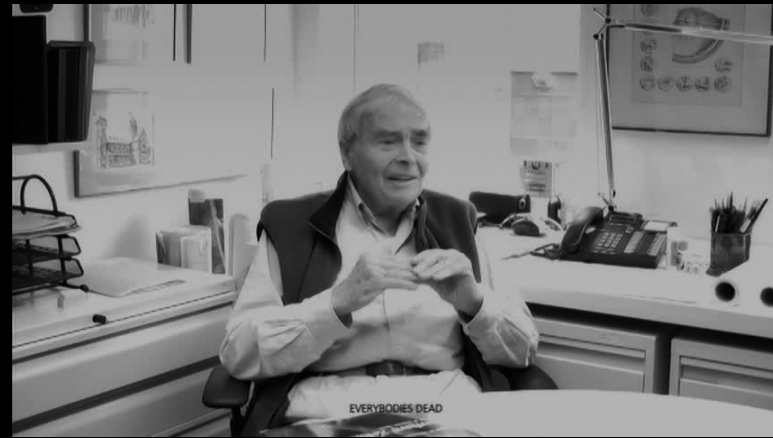


Fig.41 Film Still From My First Building - Stories From Toronto Architects (2010) Eb Zeidler.

SHIRLEY BLUMBERG

BEFORE I LEFT THE COUNTRY, I WORKED FOR AN ARCHITECT, HE WAS CALLED



Fig.42 Film Still From My First Building - Stories From Toronto Architects (2010) Shirley Blumberg.

PIUS PAHL AND HE STUDIED AT THE BAUHAUS UNDER MIES VAN DER ROHE AND

years due to the war, and through all of this turmoil he was able to channel his energies and focus, and build a tree house that cocooned him from the hardships that he faced on a daily basis while being incarcerated. That is what truly being an architect is about, finding and resolving a problem through the act of creativity and construction. The myth of permanence focuses on the mortality of structure and is the reality of architecture. Mohsen Mostafavi and David Leatherbarrow in their book *On Weathering - The Life of Building in Time* comment:

One of the most ancient commonplaces of architecture; buildings persist in time. Yet they do not. No building stands forever, eventually every one falls under the influence of the elements³.

The myth of permanence is the creation of the semi-permanent tree house for Moriyama to insulate him from the realities of daily life and for Clewes it was the reality of the destruction of his first building.

“THAT TREE HOUSE WAS MAGIC”
RAYMOND MORIYAMA.

The honesty of Clewes describing his personal failures as a young architect student is compelling. The huge undertaking of accepting a project and learning architecture from the act of construction, is again another over-lapping concept between Moriyama and him and a common fundamental component of architecture pedagogy. However the differences in constructions between Clewes and Moriyama are organic. Clewes cottage was designed and evolved from research and influence of client and peers, such as Arthur Erickson's Catton house. Raymond's began from a personal problem, and evolved from a platform into a tree house using materials gathered from the forest and lumber yard.

The tree house was a large influence on Moriyama's life and architectural career. His realization of the beauty of Canadian nature came from his tree house which helped in the reconciliation of the abandonment levied upon the Japanese Canadian community, his philosophy of using minimal material, effort, and to keep the costs down again came from the construction of the tree house. Also

the act of instinctually mapping Bay Farm through memory of experience and imagination could be translated as the making of Moriyama's first architectural site plan. But there was one other story that never made the edit into the film and is important to reference as it effected the regeneration hall within the Canadian War Museum 60 years later, Moriyama's proudest architectural moment thus far. The story was a sound Moriyama heard one evening while sitting in the tree house that influenced him so greatly that the first drawing he made for the design of the Canadian War Museum was the sketch of that sound. The regeneration hall presently mimics the same sound proving that Raymond Moriyama's first building was as he quotes, "a magic place."

“EVERYONE IS DEAD”
EB ZEIDLER.

The introduction of Eb Zeidler was placed after the ending of Moriyama's tree house as the continuation of World War Two was relevant. Both Moriyama and Zeidler were torn with graphic experiences from the war that should be commended regardless of nationality. The sincerity of delivery by Zeidler describing his naval experiences was touching and I deliberately made this era of his life his introduction into the film, as I felt this experience, just like Moriyama's, has probably influenced his life and career.

The first impressions of every architect was important to me. How should I best introduce each architect? And when to introduce them was largely controlled by my concept of the imaginary conversation, the topic of conversation, and architectural integrity of the individual. For example, Zeidler and Moriyama were both introduced with stories of their childhood as that was most important for the presentation of their skills and experiences as architects, and humors them as individuals showing an essence of their person's. For Barry Sampson, I replaced the discourse describing his first building with the introduction of his blue collar upbringing in Oshawa juxtaposed with his financial topics. Finance is a common subject that needed to be addressed within the film as it was clearly addressed during the interviews. I felt Sampson's financial stories were more enriching in the understanding of the practice of architecture than his first building, and as the editor of the film I feel it created a more relevant conversation.

HE DID HOUSES, HE WAS AN AMAZING GUY. SO, I DID FULL SCALE DETAILS WITH A RULING PEN ON PAPER. AND I WAS THE ONLY PERSON WORKING FOR HIM IN HIS STUDIO. HIS STUDIO WAS ATTACHED TO HIS HOUSE, AND THEN WE'D BREAK FOR LUNCH AND HIS WIFE WOULD MAKE A FABULOUS LUNCH, AND WE'D SIT THERE FOR A COUPLE OF HOURS AND HE WOULD BRING OUT HIS BOOKS FROM THE LIBRARY AND TELL ME ALL ABOUT THE BAUHAUS.

EB ZEIDLER

AND THEN I GOT A LETTER FROM CANADA SAYING THAT I HAD AN EMPLOYMENT WITH THE FIRM OF BLACKWELL AND CRAIG AND THEY WOULD GIVE ME A JOB AS A JUNIOR ARCHITECT. WELL I SAID, WHAT DOES AN ARCHITECT GET IN CANADA? AND NOBODY KNEW, YOU KNOW AND I SAID, FINALLY, WELL WHAT DOES A BRICKLAYER GET IN CANADA? AND A BRICKLAYER GOT A HUNDRED DOLLARS AT THIS TIME A WEEK, YOU KNOW, AND SO I THOUGHT, WELL, I'M GETTING AT THE MOMENT FOUR TIMES WHAT A BRICKLAYER GETS AND I WOULD MAYBE NOT GET AS MUCH, I WOULD GET MAYBE HALF. AND THAT WOULD BE ALL RIGHT, YOU COULD LIVE ON TWO HUNDRED DOLLARS. AND I CAME TO CANADA AND I GOT A JOB AND I GOT TWENTY-FIVE DOLLARS [CHUCKLE]. AND I SAID TO MY THEN, NOT PARTNER, BUT BOSS, JIM CRAIG, WELL, CAN'T YOU PAY ME SOME MORE, AND HE SAID ARE YOU CRAZY, I GOT FIFTEEN DOLLARS WHEN I STARTED. [LAUGHTER]. AND ACTUALLY TWENTY-FIVE DOLLARS WAS ENOUGH, BECAUSE I, IN THREE MONTHS, I BOUGHT A CAR.

BARRY SAMPSON

WHEN I GREW UP IN OSHAWA, IT WAS VERY MUCH A COMPANY TOWN. MOST OF THE INDUSTRY WAS RELATED TO GENERAL MOTORS, SO IF YOU DIDN'T



Fig.43 Film Still From My First Building - Stories From Toronto Architects (2010) Barry Sampson.

WORK FOR GENERAL MOTORS, YOU WORKED FOR A COMPANY THAT MADE PARTS FOR GENERAL MOTORS, LIKE BUMPERS, OR LIGHTS, OR WHATEVER. THERE WASN'T MUCH ELSE, AS I RECALL THAT PEOPLE DID THERE, OTHER THAN, YOU KNOW, SERVICES, WHICH WERE KIND OF SUPPORTING IT... INDEED, YOU WERE EXPECTED TO DRIVE A GM CAR IN OSHAWA. I DID A SHOP ONCE - WE DON'T DO VERY MUCH RETAIL WORK - BUT I DID A SHOP, AND I WAS SURPRISED TO DISCOVER THAT THE GUY WHO DESIGNED THE LOGO AND THE BAGS FOR THE STORE WAS PAID MORE THAN WE WERE TO DESIGN THE STORE. BUT IF YOU THINK ABOUT IT. ONE OF THE ISSUES WITH ARCHITECTURE IS THAT PEOPLE SEE THE ARCHITECTS FEES AS COMING OUT OF THE BUILDINGS - THE MORE THEY HAVE TO PAY THE ARCHITECT, THE LESS MONEY THEY HAVE TO PAY TO THE BUILDING. AND THE PROBLEM IS, REALLY, THAT PEOPLE DON'T WANT TO PAY ENOUGH FOR BUILDINGS IN THE FIRST PLACE.

JACK DIAMOND

NOBODY TELLS YOU HOW TO RUN A PRACTICE, HOW TO DEAL WITH THE BUSINESS SIDE, AND IT'S A VERY EXPENSIVE LESSON YOU LEARN IN PRACTICE. THIS FIRM, MY FIRM, IS THE ONLY ARCHITECTURE FIRM IN CANADA THAT THIS YEAR WILL BE THE THIRD TIME WE'VE BEEN CHOSEN AS ONE OF THE 50 BEST MANAGED COMPANIES IN THE COUNTRY. NOT ARCHITECTURAL FIRMS, ANY COMPANY IN THE COUNTRY, WE'RE THE ONLY ARCHITECTURE FIRM THAT HAS EVER BEEN INCLUDED, AND NOW IT'S OUR THIRD TIME, I'M PROUD OF THAT, AND PART OF IT IS NOT SIMPLY THE BOTTOMLINE, MAKING MONEY WHICH EVERYBODY WANTS TO HAVE GOOD REWARD. IT'S HOW YOU MANAGE IT, SO IN THIS OFFICE FOR EXAMPLE SOME PARTS OF OUR MANAGEMENT ARE ON FRIDAYS, EVERY FRIDAY THROUGHOUT MY CAREER WE HAVE BEER AND POPCORN IN THE CONFERENCE ROOM EVERYBODY COMES, AND WE REVIEW A PROJECT FOR CRITICISM, WE INVITE CRITICISM, WE WANT TO KNOW WHAT PEOPLE THINK IN THE OFFICE, WHERE THEY THINK WE COULD DO BETTER, WHAT WE'VE DONE BADLY, WHAT WE'VE DONE WELL. SO THOSE DISCUSSIONS HAVE SEVERAL BENEFITS, MOST OF THE JUNIORS IN THE OFFICE SEE ME IN AN COAT AND TIE AND THINK IM A FRONT OFFICE GUY, ON FRIDAY MEETINGS THEY SEE WE'RE VERY SERIOUS ABOUT ARCHITECTURE AND THE DISCOURSES ARE AT A VERY INTERESTING LEVEL. WHEN WE'RE IN A PINCH AND SOMEBODY HAS TO BE BROUGHT ONTO A TEAM THEY KNOW ABOUT THE PROJECT, AND IT GIVES JUNIORS A SENSE THAT THEY CAN ACTUALLY SHAPE THINGS IF THEY MAKE AN INTELLIGENT SUGGESTION IT'S ADOPTED, SO IT'S A VERY IMPORTANT THING. SO THAT'S ONE OF THE THINGS ABOUT MANAGEMENT THAT THERE'S AN ENGAGEMENT OF THE OFFICE ABOUT WHAT ARE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUE IS AND THAT'S ARCHITECTURE, DESIGN, PRODUCING GOOD BUILDINGS. ONE OF THE OTHER WAYS TO DO THAT IS THAT

***“EVERY FRIDAY
THROUGHOUT
MY CAREER
WE HAVE
BEER AND POPCORN
IN THE
CONFERENCE ROOM”***

JACK DIAMOND.

Before any interview could take place, I had to confirm and approve all my intentions through the University of Waterloo Ethics Department. This professional step helped confirm the appropriate nature of the interview material and to keep the interview procedure professional. Each architect was told in advance of their interview date to personally reminisce about their first and best buildings. I came prepared with a strategic list of questions that the architects had never seen before, thus, the architect's answers were sincere. Nothing was pre-scripted, they were not allowed to rehearse, and none of them were personal friends. I used the casual approach of simply having a conversation and deliberately entering the conversation with no preconceptions. The architects spoke to me with confidence, and confided personal information that they knew would not be exploited about their life as an architect. I also let the architects control the conversation of the interview with their topics of interest when describing their first and best buildings. Each interview was unique to them. For example, Peter Clewes's interview took a political angle on architecture, whereas Raymond Moriyama's was strongly based around the strategies of World War Two, and Jack Diamond's had a strong business theme that is displayed in his interpretation within the film of how he manages his firm which has been chosen for the third time in 2009 as one of the 50 best managed companies in Canada.

“I KEEP THE DIARY”

EB ZEIDLER.

Previously through the spontaneous act of drawing his first building Jack Diamond revealed how architects graphically communicate. Eb Zeidler's sketch books are again a marvelous moment for understanding this same act as Zeidler has captured his life's work on paper in black hard bound sketchbooks that date over 200 editions, Zeidler comments:

“I keep the diary, and I've always put my personal life and what I design and what I'm doing. And the sketches I do... I go through that now... And there's a lot of things I forgot... that there's buildings I designed or arguments we had”

Being able to film over Zeidler's shoulder as he turned the pages on sketch book edition number 85 showed his architectural life visually. This is a Herculean achievement to keep such a life time commitment to the profession of architecture. Off camera Zeidler was in the process of getting a selection of his sketch books published, as they truly will influence and inspire. He has an exquisite hand for drawing that captures his career buildings and personal sketches brilliantly which I was honoured to capture for the film.

***“ARCHITECTURE
FOR ME, IS
ALMOST LIKE
HAVING A SERIES
OF AFFAIRS”***

SHIRLEY BLUMBERG.

During the interviews many explanations of the client were described:

Eb Zeidler stated, *“You need a connection with your client... and if that connection doesn't work... then the building suffers from there”*. Douglas Birkenshaw stated, *“I like to let the program, and desires of the client define the architecture”*.

EVERYONE IN THIS OFFICE MAKES SOUP TWICE A YEAR. WE HAVE A SOUP KITCHEN, INCLUDING ME, BECAUSE WE HAVE ABOUT 160 PEOPLE, SO THAT'S ENOUGH WORKING DAYS IF EVERYONE DOES TWO SOUPS A YEAR.

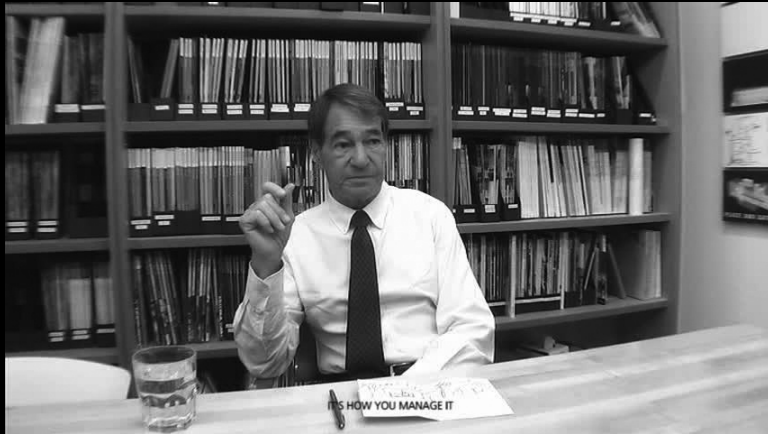


Fig.44 Film Still From My First Building - Stories From Toronto Architects (2010) Jack Diamond.

THERE'S A SOUP SCHEDULE, AND 29 LANGUAGES SPOKEN IN THE OFFICE SO THE RECIPES ARE FASCINATING AND WE'RE GOING TO PRODUCE A DIAMOND AND SCHMITT SOUP BOOK. SO WE HAVE GOT A TERRAIN AND PEOPLE GET TOGETHER AND THERE'S A METHOD AND MY CONTROLLER SAID TO ME YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE THESE HIGH PRICE GUYS MAKING SOUP AND I SAID ABSOLUTELY. ITS A WAY PEOPLE GET TOGETHER, IF IT'S IMPORTANT, IT'S THE INFORMAL CONTACT AS MUCH AS THE SCHEDULED FORMAL ASPECTS OF WORK THAT ARE PRODUCTIVE.

EB ZEIDLER

WHAT THE MAIN THING WAS IN ARCHITECTURE WERE THE PEOPLE. NOT THE BUILDING. I MEAN, IT WASN'T TO BUILD A MASTERPIECE AND THEN JUST GO AND SAY, "AH," YOU KNOW. BUT THE QUESTION WAS TO BUILD A BUILDING THAT PEOPLE FELT, "AHA," YOU KNOW, "I FEEL GOOD HERE," AND THIS IS A PLACE TO WORSHIP, AND THAT IS A PLACE TO HEAL, AND THAT IS A PLACE TO LIVE, BUT THEY ALL HAD THE SAME THING OF YOUR EMOTIONS - HOW YOU FEEL ABOUT THAT, YOU KNOW. AND THEN THE OTHER THINGS LIKE FINANCING AND MONEY AND SO ON OF COURSE PLAYED A THING IN THERE, BUT NO MATTER HOW MUCH YOU PRESSED THE MONEY DOWN, IT STILL HAD TO GIVE THAT EMOTIONAL SENSE, YOU KNOW. AND, YOU KNOW, THAT WAS ALWAYS MY FIGHT WITH THE CLIENT.

PETER CLEWES

IN THE FILM 'MY ARCHITECT', TALKING LOUIS KHAN'S I THINK, GRANDSON,

INTERVIEWED I.M. PEI AND I.M. PEI SAID, LISTEN, I HAVE TO EARN A LIVING, I COULDN'T DO THE WORK THAT LOUIS KHAN DID. LOUIS KHAN HAD A SINGULAR FOCUS ON DOING AMAZING BUILDINGS, AND, YOU KNOW, THE HELL WITH MAKING A LIVING, AND TO HELL WITH MY PROFESSIONAL REPUTATION, I WANT TO DO AMAZING, THOUGHTFUL BUILDINGS. AND I.M. PEI WAS AN EXTRAORDINARY ARCHITECT WHO SAID, LOOK, I HAVEN'T ALWAYS DONE THE BEST BUILDINGS, BECAUSE I'VE HAD TO EARN A LIVING, AND I THOUGHT, EVEN AT THAT LEVEL, THERE'S AN ADMISSION THAT HIS WORK ISN'T AS GOOD AS HE FELT IT COULD BE, BECAUSE HE HAD THIS NEED TO, AS HE SAID, EARN A LIVING.

BARRY SAMPSON

I THOUGHT WITH THE GREAT, YOU KNOW, FAN FAIR FOR GEHRY AND I GUESS LIBESKIND, SOME OF GEHRY'S MORE INTERESTING THAN LIBESKIND, BUT I THOUGHT IT MIGHT BE CHANGING. BUT WHAT'S HAPPENED NOW IS IT'S LIKE THE MAJOR LEAGUES AND THE MINOR LEAGUES, WHERE YOU HAVE A FEW STAR ARCHITECTS THAT CAN COMMAND HUGE FEES AND ARE ASKED TO DESIGN PROJECTS FOR A THOUSAND DOLLARS A SQUARE FOOT. AND THEN YOU HAVE, YOU KNOW, THE REST OF US TOLLING IN THE MINOR LEAGUES WHERE YOU'RE EXPECTED TO GET A LOW FEE AND TO DO A MAJOR CULTURAL WORK FOR, YOU KNOW, \$200 A SQUARE FOOT,

JACK DIAMOND

THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THEM IS THAT FRANK GEHRY IS VERY TALENTED, EXTREMELY TALENTED AND HE MAKES BEGUILING AND WONDERFUL ARTIFACTS, I CAN'T SAY THAT FOR ALL OTHER ARCHITECTS. AND THE PROBLEM FOR ME WITH GEHRY AS MUCH AS I ADMIRE HIS TECTONIC CAPABILITIES THEY ARE WONDERFUL AND FAIRLY FREQUENTLY THEY DO RESOLVE THE FUNCTION NOT ALWAYS BUT THEY DO, YOU CAN'T MAKE A SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE FROM THAT, THERE ARE NO PRINCIPLES ABOUT HIS WORK WHICH I THINK ARE TRANSFERABLE IT'S A POETIC EXPRESSION OF ONE INDIVIDUAL NOT TRANSFERABLE. SO ANYONE WHO TRIES WILL BE A SECOND CLASS GEHRY.

DOUGLAS BIRKENSHAW

I HAPPENED TO SEE HIM GIVE A LECTURE JUST AFTER THIS MOMENT AND YOU COULD SEE THIS SHIFT. HE WAS ASKED BY FORMICA TO DO THESE LIGHT FIXTURES USING SOME WHAT TRANSLUCENT MATERIALS AND IT DEvised THIS THING THAT LOOKED LIKE A FISH OUT OF SCALES AND ITS SHAPED LIKE AND FROM THAT MOMENT ON YOU CAN JUST SEE HIS ARCHITECTURE COMPLETELY TRANSFORM IT ALL GOES INTO THOSE KINDS OF SHAPES MADE FROM ESSENTIALLY SCALES. AND YOU CAN HEAR HIM START TALKING ABOUT IT AND TALKING ABOUT HIS FASCINATION WITH FISH. IT IS A FORM OF POST-

RATIONALIZING THIS MOMENT IN TIME AND THAT ULTIMATELY EVOLVES IN BILBAO.

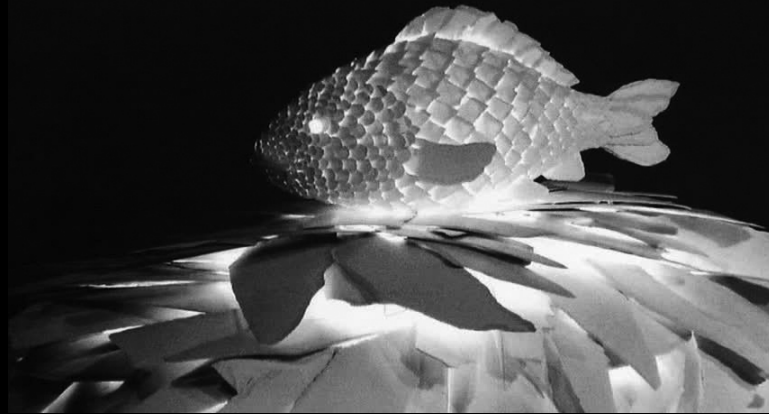


Fig.45 Film Still From My First Building - Stories From Toronto Architects (2010) Frank Gehry's fish.

EB ZEIDLER

GEHRY'S BUILDINGS DON'T FIT EVERYWHERE. I MEAN, THERE ARE BUILDINGS WHERE HE HAS DONE VERY WELL AND OTHERS WHERE HE KIND OF JUST HAS PUSHED HIS TRADEMARK ON TOP OF IT, AND, AND TO ME THAT ISN'T RIGHT.

DOUGLAS BIRKENSHAW

FOR INSTANCE WE DID THE ROM WITH DANIEL LIBESKIND PERSONALLY I'VE GOT A LOT OF PROBLEMS WITH THAT BUILDING, JUST BECAUSE PERSONALLY IT'S A GREAT SUCCESS FROM A LOT OF OTHER FACTORS BUT I JUST THINK THERE'S WAY TOO MUCH IMPOSITION ON THE CULTURE OF THAT INSTITUTION OF DANIEL LIBESKIND. FOREVER ALL THE CURATORS ARE GOING TO BE FIGHTING AGAINST THE BUILDING I FUNDAMENTALLY, I CAN'T EVEN UNDERSTAND THE DESIRE FOR THAT BECAUSE THE BUILDING, THAT BUILDING COULD BE ANYWHERE IT COULD BE FOR ANYBODY. IT'S IRRELEVANT AND ALL THAT'S RELEVANT IS THAT DANIEL LIBESKIND DESIGNED IT AND THERE'S SOMETHING SOMEHOW TO MY MIND ANTITHETICAL TO MY NOTION OF WHAT AN ARCHITECT IS.

JACK DIAMOND

THE MISTAKE MANY CRITICS MAKE ABOUT ARCHITECTURE, IS THAT THE DEAL WITH IT AS AN ART FORM, AND THAT'S SUPERFICIAL, LITERALLY SUPERFICIAL IT DEALS WITH SURFACE AND SHAPE, THAT'S WHAT SUPERFICIAL MEANS. BUT ARCHITECTURE IS INHABITED IT IS THERE FOR A PURPOSE EVEN IF THE PURPOSE IT'S SOMETIMES SYMBOLIC THE FACT IS THERE IS A PURPOSE. SO ARCHITECTURE IS MULTI DIMENSIONAL, AND ONE OF THOSE POWERFUL COMPONENTS IS A SOCIAL COMPONENT. THE CONTEXTUAL

ISSUE, YOU GOT TO PUT IT OUT IN THE RAIN SO IT'S GOT TO BE WEATHER PROOF. YOU GOT TO DEAL WITH CLIMATE, YOU GOT TO DEAL WITH CONTEXT, YOU GOT TO DEAL WITH COSTS, THE POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN TERMS OF CODES AND ACCEPTABILITY IT IS A MULTI DIMENSIONAL QUESTION. IT'S EASY TO SOLVE ONE OF THEM, THAT'S WHY YOU GET THE SO CALLED ICONIC BUILDINGS, THEY'RE DOING ONE THING ONLY THEY'RE MAKING A BIG SHOW, THERE'S ARE SOME NOVEL SHAPE, BUT THEY DON'T RESOLVE, NECESSARILY RESOLVE THE FUNCTION, THE SHAPE IS NOT A CONSEQUENCE OF THE TECHNOLOGY AND THE BUILDING IT'S AN IMPOSITION LIKE AN ART FORM. SO I HAVE SAID OFTEN THAT IDEOLOGUES AND AMATEURS ARE VERY SIMILAR, THEY COME WITH A PRECONCEIVED NOTION. THERE IS VERY LITTLE CREATIVITY IN A AMATEUR AND A IDEOLOGUE. THE AMATEUR SAYS, "OHH I SAW THIS HOUSE IN SWITZERLAND. AND IT'S GOT A LOVELY PITCHED ROOF AND I LIKED THE LOOK OF THAT CAN I HAVE ONE IN SANTA FE?" WELL YOU KNOW THAT THE PITCHED ROOF CAME FROM THROWING OFF THE SNOW AND IT DEVELOPED A CHARACTER BECAUSE OF ITS CONTEXT AND TECHNOLOGY, SO DOES ADOBE HOUSING AND, TO PUT AN ADOBE HOUSE IN SWITZERLAND OR A SWISS HOUSE IN SANTA FE OBVIOUSLY IS INAPPROPRIATE BOTH HAVE COME FROM CONTEXT AND TECHNOLOGY MAKING A VIRTUE OF THE NECESSITY OF THE MATERIALS IN THE CIRCUMSTANCE. SO THAT'S AN AMATEUR WHO SAYS I LIKE THAT, I WANT THIS, I WANT ONE OF THOSE. AN IDEOLOGUE COMES TO SOME SHAPE THAT HE'S DONE, OR HER AND THEY DO IT AGAIN AND AGAIN AND AGAIN REGARDLESS OF CONTEXT, SO IN THAT RESPECT THEY ARE NOT CREATIVE, BY THE PUBLIC AND THE NON DISCERNING PUBLIC IT LOOKS WILDLY CREATIVE BECAUSE OF IT'S CRAZY NOVEL SHAPE, BUT THAT'S NOT CREATIVE. CREATIVITY IS A QUESTION OF RESOLVING A SERIES OF COMPLEX AND VERY FREQUENTLY CONFLICTING DEMANDS. I'LL GIVE YOU AN EXAMPLE, YOU CAN TELL ME IF IT'S INTERESTING, THE CITY HALL IN JERUSALEM, A SQUARE IN URBAN DESIGN TERMS IS WELL DEFINED BY THE BUILDINGS THAT SURROUNDED IT. THERE'S AN ENCLOSURE TO THAT, BUT IN JERUSALEM YOU HAVE THIS TERRIBLE DIVISION BETWEEN THE ARAB AND JEWISH SIDES OF IT. BUT IT'S A CIVIC BUILDING AND REQUIRES ACCESS BY ALL CITIZENS OF THE CITY. SO HOW DO YOU MAKE A SQUARE WHICH IS PERMEABLE AND ACCESSIBLE FROM ALL SIDES AND YET ARCHITECTURALLY A DEFINED SPACE AND ENCLOSED. SO THAT'S THE KIND OF INTERESTING PROBLEM TO RESOLVE. YOU CAN EASILY MAKE A WONDERFUL SQUARE BY INCLOSING IT, BUT YOU HAVEN'T SOLVED THE POLITICAL ISSUE, BY ACCESS BY ALL ITS CITIZENS. SO THAT'S AN EXAMPLE OF WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT IT. SO IF YOU CAME WITH A PRECONCEIVED IDEA, YOU WOULDN'T BE ADDRESSING THE SUBTLETIES OF THE CIRCUMSTANCE.

NAPOLEON WON HIS BATTLES BY WALKING THE BATTLEFIELD FIGURING OUT THE GROUND. CREATIVITY COMES FROM NO PRECONCEPTION. OF LOOKING AT ALL OF THE INPUTS NOT JUST ONE, AND THEN WITH JUDGMENT DECIDING WHICH ARE THE IMPORTANT ONES TO GIVE EMPHASIS. THESE WILL CHANGE BY CIRCUMSTANCE, THAT'S THE ESSENCE OF CREATIVITY, AND THEN YOU MAKE IT MORE THAN THE SUM OF ITS PARTS.

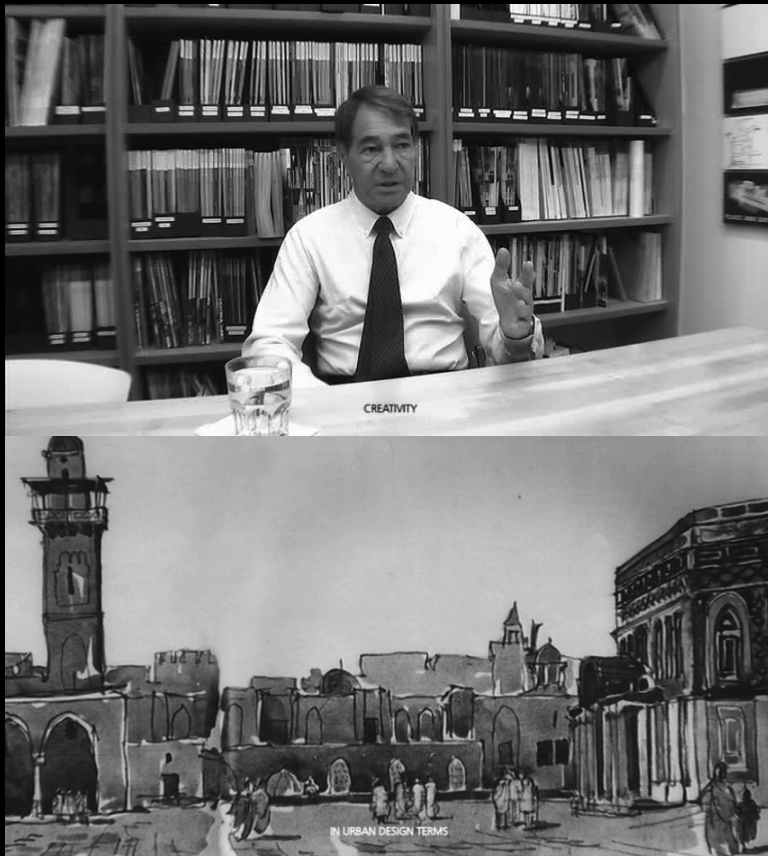


Fig.46 Film Still From My First Building - Stories From Toronto Architects (2010) Jack Diamond and his illustration of the city hall in Jerusalem

PETER CLEWES

IF YOU CAN'T COMMUNICATE AN IDEA, AND CONVINCE PEOPLE OF YOUR IDEAS, THEN YOU HAVE NOTHING. IT DOESN'T MATTER HOW BRILLIANT YOU ARE. AND, YOU KNOW, ARCHITECTURE, LIKE A LOT OF CREATIVE PROFESSIONS,

IS RIFE WITH HIGHLY CREATIVE PEOPLE THAT ARE NEVER SUCCESSFULLY REALIZED, OR ARE ABLE TO ARTICULATE THEIR TALENT, BECAUSE THEY CAN'T COMMUNICATE IT. EITHER IN THEIR PERSONALITY - THEY'RE JUST DIFFICULT OR STUBBORN OR WHATEVER - OR THEY'RE SO WRAPPED UP IN THEIR IDEA, THEY CAN'T CONVINCE A LAY PERSON THAT, YOU KNOW WHAT, THIS IS A VERY STRONG THING HERE; AND I THINK THIS IS WORTHY OF BEING EXECUTED. AND, SO I'VE ALWAYS BELIEVED THAT, TO BE A GOOD ARCHITECT, YOU NEED TO BE A GOOD ARTICULATOR, AND THE BASE KIND OF CASE FOR ARTICULATION IS DRAWING. THOSE IN MY OFFICE WHO CAN DRAW REALLY WELL, THEN IT'S IRRELEVANT WHAT THE MEDIA IS, WHETHER IT'S A COMPUTER OR A PIECE OF PAPER WITH A CHARCOAL PENCIL. IF THEY'RE GOOD DRAWERS, THEY'RE GOOD DRAWERS, AND THE MEDIUM IS ALMOST IRRELEVANT.

EB ZEIDLER

THIS HERE'S TEN YEAR'S OLD. I HAVE, KEEP THE DIARY, AND I'VE ALWAYS PUT MY PERSONAL LIFE AND WHAT I DESIGN AND WHAT I'M DOING. AND THE SKETCHES I DO AND ALTOGETHER SO, AND SO, AND IT'S KIND OF INTERESTING. I GO THROUGH THAT NOW AND I'M DOING EIGHTY-FIVE, AND THERE'S A LOT OF THINGS I FORGOT.



Fig.47 Film Still From My First Building - Stories From Toronto Architects (2010) Eb Zeidler's sketch book

THAT THERE'S BUILDINGS I DESIGNED OR ARGUMENTS WE HAD, AND THEN THEY COME BACK. WHILE I BUILT BUILDINGS IN GERMANY AND DESIGNED THEM, I KIND OF PREPARED MYSELF FOR ALL THAT, AND WHEN I CAME HERE, MY FIRST BUILDING, REALLY, WAS A CHURCH IN PETERBOROUGH. THERE WAS A MINISTER THERE, A SCOTSMAN, AND HE WAS QUITE AMUSING, AND SO HE, AT THE OPENING HE SAID THAT IT REMINDED HIM OF THE LEMMINGS, YOU KNOW.

[LAUGHTER] WE ALL MARCHED IN. [LAUGHTER] AND, BUT, YOU KNOW, IT WAS A FEELING OF LIGHT, YOU KNOW. WE HAD THESE FOLDED WALLS WITH LIGHT COMING FROM BEHIND, SO WHEN YOU CAME IN THE CHURCH, IT



Fig.48 Film Still From My First Building - Stories From Toronto Architects (2010) Eb Zeidler and his church in Peterborough, Ontario, Canada.

WAS A LIT CHURCH, BUT YOU WOULDN'T BE DISTURBED BY THE WINDOWS, YOU COULDN'T LOOK OUT, YOU KNOW. THEY CAME FROM, WHEN YOU WENT OUT YOU SAW THE LIGHT, YOU KNOW. IT WAS FUNNY, HE FOR EXAMPLE, WHEN WE BUILT THE CHURCH, AND IT WAS AT THE TIME A HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS, IT WAS A LOT OF MONEY [LAUGHTER], AND HE HAD TO GO THE SYNODINE IN PETERBOROUGH, IN TORONTO, TO GET PERMISSION. AND HE FINALLY GOT IT AFTER A LONG, LONG DISCUSSION. AND SOMEBODY, HE HAD, WE HAD A CROSS

- I HAVEN'T IT HERE - BUT IT WAS A BIG CROSS HERE AND THERE. AND THEY SAID THAT THEY LIKED IT ALL, BUT THEY THOUGHT, DOESN'T THE UNITED CHURCH HAVE A MORE SPECIAL FEELING FOR THE CROSS, WITH THE CIRCLE AROUND LIKE THE PRESBYTERIANS HAVE AND SO ON, AND SO ON? AND HE SAID YES. AND THEY SAID, "WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?" [EB MAKES A MONEY SIGN WITH HIS HAND] [LAUGHTER] AND HE SHUT UP. [LAUGHTER]

SHIRLEY BLUMBERG

ARCHITECTURE, FOR ME, IS ALMOST LIKE HAVING A SERIES OF AFFAIRS, ALTHOUGH, I WOULDN'T KNOW THAT, OF COURSE, IN PRACTICE. [LAUGHTER] BEING HAPPILY MARRIED, AND ALL. BUT, IT'S LIKE, BECAUSE YOU, YOU HAVE SUCH A DEEP ENGAGEMENT WITH YOUR CLIENTS, SUCH AN INTENSE ENGAGEMENT FOR A FEW YEARS, AND THEN - POOF - YOU'RE OFF TO THE NEXT ONE, RIGHT? AND YOU'LL GO BACK AND VISIT OCCASIONALLY, BUT IT'S LIKE, THEN THEY TAKE THE BUILDING AND IT'S OFF AND RUNNING. SO, IT'S KIND OF INTERESTING. YOU LEARN AN AWFUL LOT ABOUT DIFFERENT DISCIPLINES AND BUSINESSES AND PURSUITS THROUGH THAT, SO IT'S REALLY QUITE FASCINATING. MY FIRST BUILDING WAS, AFTER I GRADUATED WAS THE KENSINGTON PARKING GARAGE.



Fig.49 Film Still From My First Building - Stories From Toronto Architects (2010) The stairwell of the Kensington parking garage.

SO HERE I WAS, A FRESH, YOUNG GRADUATE, AND I WAS PROJECT ARCHITECT FOR A BUILDING. IT WAS, LIKE, INCREDIBLY EXCITING. AND THE STRUCTURE ITSELF, WAS DESIGNED BY R & C, WHO WERE PARKING AND STRUCTURAL ENGINEERS, AND, SO, WHAT WE WERE REQUIRED TO DO AS ARCHITECTS WAS REALLY CLAD THE STRUCTURE. AND AT THAT TIME, IT WAS ONLY A ONE-STORY BUILDING, BUT IT ALSO HAD A ROOF DECK, OBVIOUSLY. SO THAT WAS MY

FIRST EXPERIENCE WITH ACTUALLY TAKING A BUILDING THROUGH AND DOING WORKING DRAWINGS, AND I DID MY FIRST STAIR DESIGN. AND THE STAIR WAS PRETTY, THAT WAS SORT OF THE, I GUESS, PRETTY WELL THE ONLY FEATURE OF THE DESIGN THAT IT WAS BUILT INTO THE EXPRESSION OF THE ELEVATION, THE STAIR TOWER. AND, I WAS BLOWN AWAY BY DESIGNING STAIRS. I THOUGHT THAT WAS, LIKE, THE MOST AMAZING THING, BECAUSE IT'S SUCH A THREE-DIMENSIONAL PROJECT. AND SUCH A THREE-DIMENSIONAL PROBLEM, SO, I'D NEVER ACTUALLY BEEN THROUGH THAT IN DETAIL, THE WHOLE THING, SO, I STILL REMEMBER THAT WAS, THAT WAS PRETTY EXCITING. AND THEN, ACTUALLY, YEARS LATER, AS K.P.M.B., WE DID THE ADDITION TO THE KENSINGTON PARKING GARAGE, AND I RE-DID IT, AGAIN!

DOUGLAS BIRKENSHAW

BUILDINGS ARE SO IMMENSELY COMPLICATED NOW SO I'M RENOVATING A HOUSE AND YOU TEAR OUT THE CEILING AND THERE'S FOUR-INCH STUDS FOR THE ROOF AND THERE IS NO INSTALLATION ANYWHERE, SINGLE GLAZING THEY DON'T BUILD THEM LIKE THEY USED TO THANK GOD AND EVERYTHING IS KIND OF MADE UP. WELL NOW WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT A HOUSE AND HOW INCREDIBLY SOPHISTICATED IT IS. THE ELECTRICALLY SYSTEMS, THE 200 AMP PANELS, THE DATA, THE TELEPHONE, JUST LOOK AT THE LIGHTS, THE DIMMERS, THE MULTIPLE DIMMERS, THE THREE PULSE SWITCHES ON AND ON AND ON AND THAT'S JUST THE LIGHTING SYSTEMS. IN FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT'S DAY YOU MIGHT OF HAD GAS [LAUGHTER]. THE MECHANICAL SYSTEM ON TOP OF THAT. THE INSULATION, THINK ABOUT THE COMPLEXITY OF THE ENVELOPE NOW OF THE MODERN HOUSE AND THAT'S JUST THE HOUSE. YOU'VE GOT RAIN SCREEN FOR EXAMPLE, THE PRINCIPALS OF THE RAIN SCREEN THAT'S A INCREDIBLY SOPHISTICATED THING. THE PRESSURE EQUALIZATION THE BRICK IS ON THE OUTSIDE OF THE BUILDING, THE INSULATION, THE AIR SPACE, THE GAP, THE TECHNICAL DETAILS OF JUST THE GAP AND HOW YOU LEAK WATER OUT OF IT. THE AIR VAPOR BARRIERS THE INSULATION THE STUD SYSTEM ON AND ON IT GOES ETC. ETC. JUST THAT SECTION OF THE WALL IS INCREDIBLY COMPLICATED. BUT IT USES WAY LESS ENERGY, IT PROVIDES WAY MORE AMENITY, COMFORT IN THE WAY THEY JUST DIDN'T HAVE IN FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT'S DAY. I CANT SAY THAT OUR ROLE IS DIMINISHED IT'S GOTTEN FUNDAMENTALLY MORE COMPLICATED. YOU LOOK AT THE CRAP I HAVE TO DO NOW TO MAKE A BUILDING AND PEOPLE I HAVE TO INTERFACE WITH AND THE CONVERSATIONS I HAVE TO HAVE. THERE IS A KIND OF A MISUNDERSTANDING OF WHAT ARCHITECTS DO. THERE IS A BOOK THAT NULA BECK WROTE YEARS AGO CALLED IT WAS CALLED PARADIGM SHIFT. IT WAS ONE OF THOSE THINGS THAT TALKED ABOUT HOW THE DIGITAL WORLD IS GOING TO CHANGE EVERYTHING SHE DID THIS CATALOGUE

OF KNOWLEDGE WORKERS AND SHE SAID THE MOST INTENSE KNOWLEDGE WORKERS WERE ARCHITECTS. BECAUSE WHAT WE PRIMARILY DO IS MANAGE INFORMATION WE DON'T DRAW. DRAWING IS JUST A VEHICLE FOR MANAGING INFORMATION. SO WE COLLECT INFORMATION FROM ALL OVER THE PLACE, WE MAKE A DRAWING OF A BUILDING AND THAT'S THE WAY WE DISSEMINATE INFORMATION THROUGH SPECIFICATIONS AND DRAWINGS.



Fig.50 Film Still From My First Building - Stories From Toronto Architects (2010) Douglas Birkenshaw.

THAT'S A KIND OF A PROFOUND CONCEPT BECAUSE IF YOU LOOK AT WHAT I DO ALL DAY. I DRAW IM REALLY LUCKY WHEN I DRAW. BUT ACTUALLY I SPEND A LOT OF TIME TALKING TO ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTANTS, I SPEND A LOT OF TIME DEALING WITH MECHANICAL, ACOUSTICAL, STRUCTURAL ETC. AND ITS MY JOB TO ORCHESTRATE THEM AND BRING THEM TOGETHER AND MAKE THEIR WORK DEFINABLE AND THEN ON TOP OF THAT, DO WHAT WE EXCEL AT AND THAT'S TO HAVE THE VISION FOR THE BUILDING.

JACK DIAMOND

I REMEMBER ONCE READING THAT SIMENON THAT PROLIFIC DETECTIVE WRITER, FRENCH DETECTIVE WRITER, WHO WRITES BOOKS WITH EXTRAORDINARY SIMPLICITY OF LANGUAGE, IN FACT IF YOU'RE EVER PERTURBED AND IN A STATE, TO READ HIS BOOK IT'S EXTRAORDINARY CALMING AND METHODOICAL THE SIMPLICITY OF THE LIFE OF HIS DETECTIVE. HE PRODUCED AN ENORMOUSLY PROLIFIC PRODUCTION OF BOOKS AND APPARENTLY IT WOULD ONLY TAKE HIM WEEKS RATHER THAN MONTHS TO PRODUCE IT. BUT HE WOULD LOCK HIMSELF INTO A ROOM AND HE WOULD SHARPEN ALL HIS PENCILS AND HE WOULD PUT ALL HIS PAPERS IN A ROW AND GET EVERYTHING ABSOLUTELY ORDERED. I FIND I DO EXACTLY THE SAME THING, BECAUSE WHEN YOUR MIND IS

Raymond Moriyama stated, “We always tend to go on a journey with a client to find out not only about each other but to share an experience⁷.”

For the film I chose Blumberg’s analogy of the client as a lover, “Architecture, for me, is almost like having a series of affairs” which is a very humorous and a poetic way of describing the profession through the client and highlights the important relationship of architect and client. This analogy leads into Blumberg’s first building the Kensington parking garage and I wanted to display specific footage of this building. The book *City and Cinema - Essays on the Specifics of Location in Film* stated that:

Le Corbusier collaborated in some twelve different films, but he never conceived of architecture merely as a set design or as a decorative expression.... He argued that cinema could seize the character of a place, revealing the intimate relationship between site and housing, between inhabitants and the ambient milieu⁸.

Le Corbusier collaborated on many films yet refused to help design sets during these film collaborations. His argument endorsed the filming of architecture within films and how cinema could seize the character of a place. This concept ‘seizing of place’ was the reason for my use of a long slow pan of the stair well consciously showing the dirt and filth that has accumulated on the steps and floor in Blumberg’s first building the Kensington parking garage. It was a visual symbolic gesture that shows the reality of the career of architecture. The reality that all constructions are architectural and something as unappealing as a stairwell in a parking garage is the reality of the profession.

“LOOK AT THE CRAP I HAVE TO DO NOW TO MAKE A BUILDING”

DOUGLAS BIRKENSHAW.

When you make a film alone, you take on the role of everyone involved, from director, interviewer, camera operator, cinematographer, producer, art director etc. It is a excessive undertaking. As the editor of a film having a large body of

research comprising to over 12 hours of interview footage became the hardest task of all the roles. The interview transcripts primarily were over 74,000 words, a large novel by themselves, see appendix. As an editor I had to make realistic choices and sacrifices and only the most relevant footage would be used in the film. The editing process took a very long time, and the first cut of the film contained all 8 architects and both first and best buildings. It was 2hrs and 24mins in length. This was too long yet highly informative. The next edit removed all best buildings, and its duration was 1hr 37mins. Again too long, but closer to the vision of what I wanted. The final edit removed Janna Levitt from the film due to her first building experience being subjective, leaving 7 architects and a duration of 50mins. The editing process took a total of 8 months before the correct vision of the imaginary conversation was created and is a process that connects film and architecture, as both director and architect are the orchestrator of many disciplines. During a press conference during the release of film *The Sketches* of Frank Gehry, director Sydney Pollack was asked the question, “Are there any comparisons you can make between being an architect and being a director?” Pollack replied:

I think architecture is really very very close in terms of the quick analysis of it to movies in the sense that it is another mosaic art that is composed of many other arts. I always think about being a director that you do not have to be an expert in any of these fields but you have to know enough about cinematography for example to know how to use lenses and light emotionally. You have to know enough about architecture to know what the apartment is that the character lives in. You have to know enough about costume design to be able to choose the right clothes. You have to know enough about light and the way it works to know the right time of day to be shooting the scene. You have people that do all of that for you as experts but your in control of it in away. And you dream the movie on some idealist level but you can't make the movie without translating it through 15 other disciplines that leads you to spend half your life in terrible frustration. When you dream a building, I think that's why Frank loves the sketch because in his point of view it's the purest aesthetic form. Now he has to really build the building. So that means you have to have sewers, you have to have water pipes, you have to have staircases and elevators, people have to get in and out, you have all sorts of practical problems so its kind of a big mosaic art so in that sense yes i do think there is a comparison. It's a literal comparison, a conceptual comparison⁹.

NOT ORGANIZED AND WHEN THE IDEAS ARE FLOATING AROUND AND YOU'VE NOT RESOLVED THE DESIGN ISSUE THEN I NEED TO ORGANIZE MY EXTERNALITIES. I LIKE TO HAVE MY BOOKS IN ORDER, MY SHOES IN A ROW, MY WATCHES IN A ROW, I MEAN EVERYTHING ORGANIZED, AND I LISTEN TO MUSIC, FOR ME IT'S ABSOLUTELY TRANSPORTING. I'M SURE THAT I CAN LEVITATE ON THE GREAT MUSIC, I FEEL I'M NOT TOUCHING THE GROUND. BUT ONCE THE PROBLEM IS RESOLVED AND YOU'VE GOT THE SOLUTION AND I'M DRAWING IT, I DON'T CARE ABOUT MESS, BECAUSE INTERNALLY I'M ORGANIZED, I'VE NOTICED THIS IN MYSELF, THAT IT DOESN'T BOTHER ME THAT MY OFFICE IS IN A MESS, MY STUDY IS IN A MESS, IT'S THAT YOU'VE GOT THE THING WORKED OUT AND DRAWN AND MAKING A LOVELY DRAWING IS DEEPLY SATISFYING.

SHIRLEY BLUMBERG

I'VE DONE SUCH A HUGE RANGE OF BUILDINGS, I WOULD ALSO HOPE THAT AS A PRACTICING ARCHITECT, MY BEST WORK WOULD BE AHEAD OF ME, RIGHT? OTHERWISE, I WOULD SORT OF GIVE UP, YOU KNOW? THAT'S THE GREAT THING ABOUT ARCHITECTURE, IT'S LIKE YOU'RE NEVER DONE, THERE'S ALWAYS MOUNTAINS TO CLIMB THE ONLY TIME A BUILDING ALMOST BLEW UP - LITERALLY - YEAH, LET'S SEE, THAT WAS KIND OF SCARY. IT WAS HASBRO, THE CORPORATE HEADQUARTERS, AND WE HAD A THOUSAND PEOPLE IN THE BUILDING. THEY'RE WORKING IN THE BUILDING. WE WERE EXPANDING AND DOING THE RENOVATIONS PHASE BY PHASE AND THANK GOD I WAS ON SITE THAT DAY. THE ELECTRICIAN CAME RUNNING FOR ME, AND HE SAID YOU GOTTA COME RIGHT AWAY. AND WE WENT STRAIGHT TO THE HUGE TRANSFORMER ROOM. HE HAD JUST SWITCHED THE OLD TRANSFORMERS OVER TO THE NEW TRANSFORMERS.



Fig.51 Film Still From My First Building - Stories From Toronto Architects (2010) Shirley Blumberg.

THE ELECTRICAL ENGINEER HAD UNDERSIZED THE TRANSFORMERS, AND I WAS ABOUT, I WOULD SAY, A HUNDRED FEET OR MORE AWAY FROM THE TRANSFORMER ROOM, AND I COULD FEEL ALREADY THE IMMENSE HEAT BEING GENERATED FROM THE ROOM, AND HE SAID I NEED YOUR PERMISSION - IT WAS LIKE, UNBELIEVABLE - I NEED YOUR PERMISSION TO TAKE THE BUILDING DOWN BECAUSE I'M AFRAID IT'S GONNA BLOW, IT'S GOING TO EXPLODE. SO I SAID, "TAKE THE BUILDING DOWN", JUST SHUT IT DOWN, AND THEN I WENT TO EXPLAIN TO MY CLIENT, THE CEO, WHY WE HAD JUST TAKEN AWAY ALL HIS POWER. BUT HE, HE WAS RELIEVED NOT TO HAVE THE BUILDING BLOW UP. YEAH, SO IT WAS A BIT SCARY. AND I CAN, TO THINK IF I HADN'T BEEN ON SITE THAT DAY, I WOULDN'T KNOW. THAT'S A BIT SCARY. BUT THAT'S THE CLOSEST I'VE COME TO DISASTER. [LAUGHTER] SO IT IS QUITE SERIOUS. BUT YOU DO HAVE TO HAVE A SENSE OF HUMOUR; WELL, I THINK YOU'VE GOT TO BE THE KIND OF PERSONALITY WHO DOES STRIVE - OR THRIVE ON GOOD STRESS BECAUSE GOOD STRESS IS FINE, YOU KNOW, WHEN YOU'RE ENJOYING THINGS, RIGHT? WHAT I DO IS I, I WALK TO WORK IN THE MORNING, IT'S 35 MINUTES, AND THEN I WALK HOME. AND THAT TIME IS AMAZING, BECAUSE I CAN THINK ABOUT MY DAY AHEAD, THINK ABOUT MY PROJECTS AND SORT OF SLOWLY, YOU KNOW, GET INTO THE OFFICE MODE AND THEN DECOMPRESS ON THE WAY HOME. AND SO I NOTICE SINCE I'VE BEEN WALKING TO WORK, SINCE I'VE DITCHED MY CAR AND WALKED TO WORK, WHICH IS ENVIRONMENTALLY VERY GOOD, MY STRESS LEVELS HAVE GONE DOWN.

DOUGLAS BIRKENSHAW

WE TEND TO LOOK DOWN ON PEOPLE WHO ARE ACTUALLY BUILDING THE



Fig.52 Film Still From My First Building - Stories From Toronto Architects (2010) Sheridan College, The Animation and Emerging Technologies building.

“I BECAME VERY GOOD FRIENDS WITH EVERYBODY”

DOUGLAS BIRKENSHAW.

Douglas was a child actor who spent his youth on stage, television, and travelling shows across Canada. He was the first architect I interviewed for the documentary and ironically the story of the Sheridan building has remained one of my favourite stories throughout the interview process (see appendix: A). I feel the anecdote of the Sheridan building closes the film well as it is a conclusion of the combination of many disciplines of architecture that have been described by the architects during the film *My First Building - Stories From Toronto Architects*. It concludes with the final stage of architecture, a story about construction. I want to end chapter two with a story of my own that happened during the morning of interviewing Raymond Moriyama. I want to share this story as it is relevant in telling a part of the journey I have experienced when making this film:

I would always arrive early for the interviews giving appropriate time to find the location, meet and greet and set up the equipment in the pre-arranged room. My attire was always a black suit as I wanted to be taken seriously and professional, and I wanted to show I was taking the interview and the architect's life and subject very seriously. I always worked alone and carried a lot of equipment, and that morning the interview was in Raymond's firm Moriyama and Teshima. Where I had set up the cameras in the pre-arranged lunch area Raymond has second thoughts and thought it would be better if we had the interview instead in the office of his son and company partner Jason Moriyama. I agreed and the film equipment was moved into Jason's office. The office was split level, with working desks at the top, and a small lounge at the bottom accommodating fixed bench cream upholstered seating on each side that led out to glass patio doors and a concrete terrace. It was a beautiful room with lots of natural light. During the final setting up of one of the

cameras I was having trouble getting the appropriate angle as there was twin coffee tables in the middle of the lounge preventing the tripod legs from extending properly. As Raymond sat opposite and watched, I started to gently move one the coffee tables. Unaware that the table top and base were not connected I started to move it more, without notice the coffee table top fell off its base and catapulted a full glass water that was sitting on the top across the room splashing the carpet and rolls of drawings that were sitting there. Raymond looked at me and my embarrassment and said calmly, "Maybe we should have bought better tables Aaron." After several apologies were made and everything was patted down and dried I began to brief Raymond on the ethics of the interview. During this briefing Raymond didn't like the fact I was wearing a tie, and told me that "I wasn't being myself and I was trying to be proper". Raymond is a very wise man and I agreed completely with his comment as I was genuinely wearing it to be proper, and so took off my tie. I then stood up, walked over to the cameras and just as I pressed record to begin filming the interview the noise of a then silent construction site began outside the window from its morning break. The noise of the construction outside overpowered Raymond's soft spoken voice in many places during the interview and can be clearly identified in the film, which is ironic as it was a construction site that began his journey into architecture.

BUILDINGS. I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT IS BUT WE DEIFY THE PEOPLE THAT ARE IN THE BOARDROOMS DOING THE DESIGN PRESENTATIONS AND WE LOOK DOWN AT THE PEOPLE THAT ARE ACTUALLY BUILDING THE THINGS. AND FOR ME BUILDING THE THING THAT'S WHAT IT'S ALL ABOUT. WE CAN DRAW IT TILL THE COWS COME HOME BUT AT THE END OF THE DAY ITS ALL ABOUT MAKING SOMETHING THAT PEOPLE LIVE WORK AND ARE ENRICHED BY. NONE OF THAT HAPPENS WITH THE DRAWINGS ITS ACTUALLY THE FINISHED PRODUCT. I DID THIS PROJECT FOR SHERIDAN COLLEGE SHERIDAN COLLEGE ANIMATION AND EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES BUILDING WHICH IS AT THEIR TRAFALGAR CAMPUS AND THAT I CAN CLEARLY SAY IS MY FIRST BUILDING AS I DESIGNED THE WHOLE THING. BUT I ALSO THROUGH A SERIES OF CONSEQUENCES AND A COMBINATION OF A RECESSION AND A PROJECT MANAGER QUITTING I ENDED UP BUILDING IT AS WELL. I BECAME VERY GOOD FRIENDS WITH EVERYBODY WITH THE STEEL GUYS NOT JUST THE FOREMAN BUT THE WORKERS ON THE JOB. AND THERE WAS A GUY WHO WAS THE FOREMAN OF THE ELECTRICAL CONTRACTOR, AND WE HAD A CHANGE ORDER WERE EVERYTHING CHANGED IN THE LAYOUT OF THE BOXES ON THE FLOOR. I HAD JUST GOTTEN A LAPTOP IT WAS ONE OF THE EARLIER LAPTOPS. AND I HAD AUTOCAD RUNNING AND I WOULD JUST SIT IN THE TRAILER AND DRAW STUFF. AND WE HAD THIS PROBLEM, SOME LAYOUT CHANGED, SO EVERYTHING CHANGED. AND THE LAST THING YOU WANT TO DO IS BE DOING IS CORE DRILLING AFTER THE FACT IT IS A NIGHTMARE YOU HAVE TO X-RAY SLABS NOBODY CAN BE IN THE BUILDING WHEN YOU DO IT. AND SO THE CHANGE HAPPENED AND IT WAS ALL VERY SLOW GETTING APPROVED AND IT FINALLY CAME THROUGH BUT WHEN IT CAME THROUGH THEY WERE ACTUALLY POURING THAT SLAB. FERNANDO THIS SHORT BRAZILIAN GUY HE WAS LIKE ONE OF THESE BARRELS AND HE ALWAYS WORE CHEF PANTS THESE CRAZY COLORED PANTS IT JUST MADE NO SENSE HE WAS JUST THE ODDEST LOOKING GUY ON-SITE WITH A BIG BELT AND A HAT. WE JUST SAT THERE AND WE REDREW THE THING ON THE COMPUTER. EVERY TIME I FINISHED A ROOM I WOULD HAND IT TO HIM AND HE WOULD GO UP TO THE DECK. AND THEN THE FINAL ONE I FINISHED PRINTING IT OUT. I WENT UP TO THE DECK, THE THIRD-FLOOR DECK AND YOU'RE WALKING ACROSS REBAR AND THERE'S TWO LAYERS OF REBAR AND I HAND THE THING TO HIM. HE GOES AND SPRAY PAINTS THE SPOT ON THE SITE. A GUY WHO HAS DESIGNED THE BUILDING IS ALSO THE GUY WHO'S DOING CONSTRUCTION AND YOU'VE GOT A RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CREW THAT I WILL NEVER REPEAT PERSONALLY BECAUSE I CAN'T NEVER SPEND THAT MUCH TIME ON SITE ANYMORE. ACTUALLY I JUST FELT LIKE CRYING THERE WAS JUST SOMETHING SO GORGEIOUS ABOUT, AND IT SO MUCH ABOUT DRAWING, IT WAS SO MUCH ABOUT THE CONSTRUCTION PROCESS AND PERSONALITY AND EVERYTHING

ELSE. THERE WAS JUST KIND OF A REAL BEAUTY TO IT; ANYWAY IT'S JUST ONE OF THOSE STORIES THAT I LOVE.



Fig.53 Film Still From My First Building - Stories From Toronto Architects (2010) Douglas Birkenshaw.

CHAPTER THREE: HOW REAL IS ROARK?

Chapter one discussed how the characteristics of Howard Roark influenced fictional architects. Chapter two discussed the making of a documentary film named *My First Building - Stories from Toronto Architects* for the introduction and understanding of the real life architect. Chapter three combines both chapters one and two.

Ayn Rand created the fictional character Howard Roark through her investigation of architecture and architect in modernist American society. I have created a similar document; a fictional conversation through the investigation of architecture and interviewing of eight Toronto architects.

The following pages compare and contrast relevant commonalities that character Howard Roark has with the interviewed architects. These are observations that have been made during this exploration of the fictional architect and real life architect.

S I N G U L A R VERSUS PLURAL

The contrast of the singular architect versus the plural architect is where I would like to begin the first commonality. Howard Roark was always depicted as a singular practitioner. Aside from friends and mentors, he worked alone to design buildings as depicted in the film, *The Fountainhead*. As the still image from the film *The Fountainhead* suggests Roark is alone. The still image of Peter Clewes, taken from the film *My First Building Stories from Toronto Architects*, shows the reality of architectural practice. He is not alone. Over his right shoulder you can see several employees busily working away on architectural documents. Jack Diamond furthers this point by commenting on the staff numbers in his own practice:

We have about 160 people... and 29 languages spoken in the office!

The architect is rarely a singular entity. Ayn Rand used the illusion of singularity to create a stronger image of Roark which was conceived from the American masculine ideal types that lay between the heroic individual and the rugged team player².

In chapter two of the *Almanac of Architecture and Design*, it features the listing of leading North American architecture and design firms with relevant data related to their firm type, headquarters, market segments, pro bono work, and metrics from the design intelligence index³. The key determines the size of firm by employee with small, medium, large extra, large, and not provided. There is no separate category for solo practitioner.

In the book *Changing Architectural Education - Towards a New Professionalism*, section two - *Collaboration - Developing Teamworking skills for Professional Practice*, states:

Design in practice is a participative activity: architects need work with other built-environment professionals to provide clients with a cost-effective and integrated service!

The book *Changing Architectural Education - Towards a New Professionalism*

examines and discusses contemporary architectural education, and proves that architectural students are being lectured in the realities of architecture as a participative profession, not a singular profession.

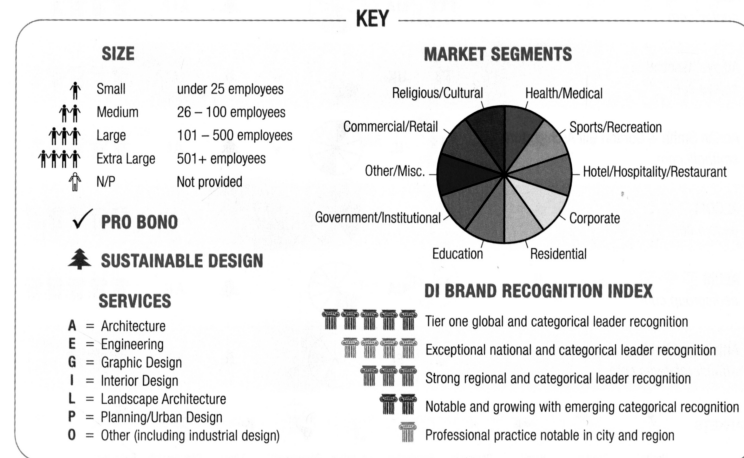


Fig.54 (top) Film Stills From *The Fountainhead* (1949)

Fig.55 (middle) Film Still From *My First Building - Stories From Toronto Architects* (2010) Peter Clewes

Fig.56 (bottom) Key from the *Almanac of Architecture and Design* (2010)

GENDER

The image of Howard Roark is all American, a hero artisan, masculine. Today architects are a more diverse group of gender and ethnic background. There are fewer prejudices. Raymond Moriyama is Japanese-Canadian and was placed in an internment camp, Shirley Blumberg is a founding partner and Janna Levitt is a principal within their own architecture firms. It still is a male dominated profession solely by ratio but not derived from the sexist attitudes during 1940's / 50's America that helped create Howard Roark.

The DesignIntelligence 2010 Compensation, Bonus and Benefits Survey is compiled by an interdisciplinary network of design, product, and construction leaders exploring global trends, challenges, and opportunities to advance innovation and shape the future of the industry and the environment. In December 2009 and January 2010, they surveyed leading U.S. architecture and design firms on the subjects of compensation, benefits, and demographics. The results stated:

The median ratio was 64% male and 36% female. 12.1% of firms reported having a higher percentage of female than male staff. Race / Ethnicity of Staff: 81.8% white, 7.6% Asian, 5.6% Hispanic or Latino, 2.7% Black, 0.98% two or more races, 0.8% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and 0.5% American Indian⁵.

The *DesignIntelligence* survey proves that the profession of Architecture and design firms still are male dominated, but shows that 12.1% of firms do have a higher percentage of female staff. Also the statistics from the *University of Waterloo, School of Architecture - Graduates by Gender⁶* show that there are larger percentages of females to male graduates during the period of 2002 -2009, proving that the future male domination within the profession of architecture is on a decline within this institution.

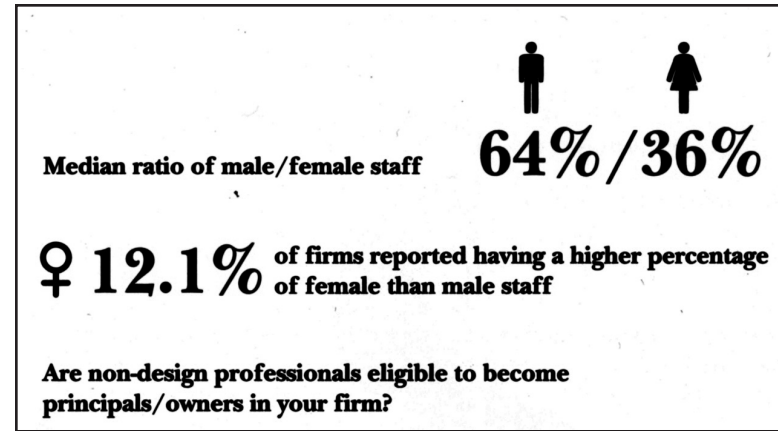


Fig.57 Median Ratio of male to female staff from The DesignIntelligence 2010 Compensation, Bonus and Benefits Survey (2010).

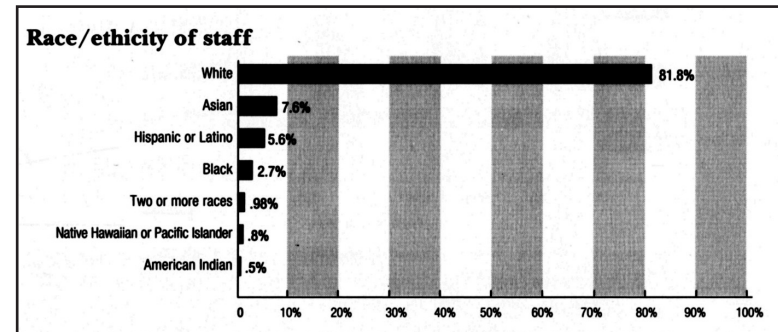


Fig.58 Race /ethnicity of staff from The DesignIntelligence 2010 Compensation, Bonus and Benefits Survey (2010).

	BES/BAS Degrees Awarded		B. Arch Degrees Awarded		M. Arch Degrees Awarded	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
2002	38	22	6	3	10	10
2003	37	23	8	9	25	21
2004			9	13	16	12
2005	25	26	24	10	10	13
2006	26	32			13	14
2007	19	37			11	25
2008	24	40			7	9
2009	31	33			14	18

Fig.59 University of Waterloo graduate by Gender (2010).

THE ART OF COMMUNICATION

There are two dominant skills of communication that have been addressed during this investigation. The first skill is eloquence. The second is the skill of drawing, which is the art of visual communication. Roark displayed both skills. His eloquence was shown when defending himself without attorney and winning his innocence for dynamiting Cortland homes. His drawing skills are proven through the sole authorship of the many fictional buildings he produced in the film.

Peter Clewes comments on the skill of communication and drawing:

If you can't communicate an idea, convince people of your ideas, then you have nothing. It doesn't matter how brilliant you are. And, you know, architecture, like a lot of creative professions, is rife with highly creative people that are never successfully realized, or are able to articulate their talent, because they can't communicate it either in their personality – they're just difficult or stubborn or whatever – or they're so wrapped up in their idea, they can't convince a lay person that, you know what, this is a very strong thing here; and I think this is worthy of being executed. And, so I've always believed that, to be a good architect, you need to be a good articulator, and the base kind of case for articulation is drawing. Those in my office who can draw really well, then it's irrelevant what the media is, whether it's a computer or a piece of paper with a charcoal pencil. If they're good drawers, they're good drawers, and the medium is almost irrelevant⁷.

Francis E. Lyn and Ron Durlaney presented the paper *A Case for Drawing* to the 97th Annual meeting in Portland, Oregon of the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture *The Value of Design - Design is at The Core of What We Teach and Practice*, and discussed the relevance of drawing in architecture:

In many schools of architecture, hand drawing (and perhaps drawing itself) has become marginalized while digital modeling has increased in scope and complexity. Resources are increasingly redistributed from hand drawing to digital media. Even with the development of more agile and

useful digital technologies, hand drawing in the architectural curriculum remains necessary... The discipline of drawing, or designing, by hand allows or the emergence and development of particular relationships between drawing, experience, and building... The value of the sketch should not be framed as a question of dissonance between the potentialities of digital production and nostalgia for hand craft. A sketch is a rough drawing or delineation of something, giving the outlines or prominent features without the detail, especially one intended to serve as the basis of a more finished picture, or to be used in its composition; a rough draught or design; Also, in later use, a drawing or painting of a slight or unpretentious nature. This describes not only an object but also a process methodology for thinking. Others, who have suggested that 'sketching as thinking' is transforming the nature of the discipline, have reinforced this understanding. Sketching is more than simply a tool for recording ideas. Rather one may understand sketching as a way of thinking and as part of an iterative process. The iterative process as thinking is essential to the development of architectural ideas. Just as the author produces numerous drafts before publication, the designer attempts numerous iterations of work before arriving at the satisfactory conclusion⁸.

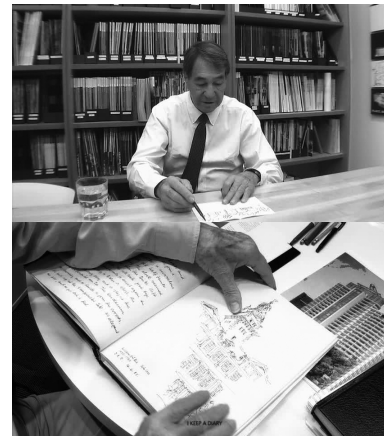


Fig.60 Film Still From *My First Building - Stories From Toronto Architects* (2010) Jack Diamond sketching his first building (top) Eb Zeidler's sketch book (bottom).

The concept of 'Sketching as thinking' was illustrated by Jack Diamond in the film *My First Building - Stories from Toronto Architects* when he graphically responded to the interview questions regarding his first building. It is also presented within Zeidler's diaries portraying his life's work. Drawing is a relevant form of communication in the characteristics of the real life architect.

TECHNOLOGY

The cinematic romance with the drafting table and use of scale model evolved from the romantic era of Howard Roark. The computer has since replaced the drafting table, Eb Zeidler comments:

Well, the computer, now, has kind of expanded the initial time and shortened the other time. I mean, because when you have a computer drawing ready in the design, it looks like the finished building... And much better than I can do it by hand... If you go in our office here, now, everybody sits on a computer but me⁹.

Frank Jacobus (University of Idaho) presented the paper *The Disappearing Architect: 21st Century Practice and Rise of Intelligent Machines* to the 97th Annual meeting in Portland, Oregon of the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture *The Value of Design - Design is at The Core of What We Teach and Practices*, and discussed the introduction of the computer in architecture:

In 1977 William J. Mitchell published Computer-Aided Architectural Design as an introduction to the practicing architect about how computers could be employed in the workplace. Since Mitchell's publication there have been numerous advances in the use of the computer as a design tool... The first generation of Computer Aided Drafting (CAD) systems that filtered into the architectural practice primarily emulated hand drafting and were sold as tools that would aid in the speed of the project production. This generation of CAD systems evolved, taking drafting a step further by introducing spatial visualization components via streamlined 3D (and 4D) software with rendering capabilities¹⁰.

Cythia Ottchen (Office for Metropolitan Architecture) presented the paper *The Future of Form: The location of Meaning in Data-Driven Architecture* to the 96th Annual meeting in Houston of the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture *Seeking the City - Visionaries on the Margins*, furthers Jacobus's comments about the usage of digital tools and techniques in architecture:

The vast majority of digital tools and techniques usage today is engaged on the productive level, ie after the Author/Architect conceptualizes the form in a 'traditional' way using a mode of meaning such as a metaphor,

concept, etc. Production takes several forms. 3D modeling digital processes are used to represent and refine the form. Models for study and presentation purposes are then made quickly to accurate dimensions using laser cutters and 3D printers. BIM (Building Information Software) software gives precision and control to the documentation and development process of the building. On the level of construction fabrication, linking the 3D model directly to CNC mills for example streamlines the production process, eliminates the potential for craftsman's error, and enhances feasibility of variety by making custom and elements cheaper... Digital processes engaged on the productive level can, with a greater control and precision and often in a shorter period of time, simply replace and reconfigure the manual labor traditionally used to draft, model and document the developing design from the concept sketch onwards the fabrication of the final work... For example in Frank Gehry's case the digital processes make it possible to very accurately document and translate into built form extremely subjective stylistic nuances that retain all the playfulness of the hand-built models which he uses to work out initial concept sketches he draws by hand. Gehry works like a sculptor on the physical models. To preserve his signature nuances the models are digitally scanned to create point clouds that are transformed into digitized forms. For the sophisticated 3D modeling software CATIA (and now its architectural customized descendent Digital Project) is used because it is able to carry and preserve Gehry's signature complex organic shell forms. Further the parametric and BIM ability of Digital Project is used for repetitive parts of building (e.g. floor plates) in order to refine the shape of the building and calculate cost quickly. Finally the BIM qualities of the Digital Project software are used to contractually document the design as a digital 3D model (replacing conventional 2D drawings). The software allows architects to work out complex geometrical nodes like corners in 3D to avoid construction problems later. This is an advantage traditional plans and section representation that allow only static 2D views and not a 3D view. This precision and comprehension of Gehry's 3D documentation controls quality and cost because contractors have more precise material and geometric information with which to calculate price: they don't have to 'pad' their prices to cover unknown factors. Gehry requires his sub-consultants to use his software, thereby controlling the process virtually to the end of built product¹¹.

Technology is now, as William J. Mitchell predicted in 1977, employed in the

workplace. The drafting table has been replaced by the computer and sophisticated BIM software helps the architect create a stronger vision artificially which as Ottchen quoted 'lowers craftsmen's errors' within scale model making through the aid of laser cutters, CNC machines, and 3D printers. The recent film *CLICK* (2006) starring Adam Sandler as architect Michael Newman still portrays the fictional architect working late at home on construction drawings with pencil and paper and building unrealistic presentation scale models by hand. These fictional inaccuracies are fueled by the idea, of the romance, of the architect, taken from *Roark*. The romantic vision of watching an architect work with pencil and paper is cinematically rewarding, but realistically misleading. To see a roll of architectural drawings deliberately fall out of a car door in the film *There's Something About Mary* (1998) is again a deliberate use of the romantic architectural cliché. The scene portrays Healy played by Matt Dillon, pretending to be an architect in an attempt to impress Mary played by Cameron Diaz, by letting a few rolls of architectural drawings fall from his car door. This illusion of image continues the romance of the modernist films in contemporary film. Healy is using the ideal of the masculine sex appeal created by Howard Roark to seduce Mary. The roll of drawings are still realistic in practice but again would not have been hand drawn as portrayed by Newman, they would by been drawn with the aid of a computer and plotted on a large format printer.



Fig.61 (Above) Film Stills From *There's Something About Mary* (1998) Healy dropping rolls of drawings.

Fig.62 (Top Right) Film Stills From *The Fountainhead* (1949).

Fig.63 (Bottom Right) Film Stills From *Click* (2006) Micheal Newman.



CREATIVE EGO

Creative ego is inherent within the architect's make-up and Ayn Rand was correct in her use of this characteristic within her character Howard Roark when his creative ego drove him to dynamite Cortlandt Homes due to unwanted design changes.

Douglas Birkenshaw:

I've a friend who says what obviously drives architects is pure ego and the love of their own production... Again any architect that I know that is any good, also has an immense ego. It requires an ego that allows you to stand in front of someone and say this is the right solution for your building, and definitely that's an act of ego and confidence¹².

Peter Clewes:

I believe that architects are fiercely ego-driven, particularly very strong designers, and it's both good and bad. The strength of their ego is what drives the work, but it also makes them fiercely independent, fiercely competitive¹³.

Raymond Moriyama commenting on the public's reaction to the War Museum:

Another woman said, "Immaculate architect will give up part of his ego, and pick up the soul of the nation he serves¹³."

Douglas Birkenshaw:

To make buildings requires a huge amount of effort and capital and that is human capital and financial capital that goes into them so they are imbued with a monstrous amount of will, ego, and desire culturally¹⁴.

SEX APPEAL

The sex appeal of Howard Roark is identified through the inherited connection of the working class man which was the desired dominant masculine persona in Modernist America during *The Fountainhead's* release. Roark's on screen magnetic presence and relationship opposite Dominique Francon pushed this masculine ideal further solidifying the sexual appeal for the profession of the architect. Many films followed this romance created by Ayn Rand and popular culture has accepted the sex appeal of the architect to be a desirable image in society. Fifty years after the release of the film *The Fountainhead* the sex appeal of the architect is still very much relevant as the journal *Building Design*¹⁵ states:

Architects 'are sexiest'

Architects have been voted the sexiest male professionals, in a survey of women's ideal partners.

The survey, conducted by introduction agency Drawing Down the Moon, found that women favoured architects "due to the esteem associated with the profession".

Architects are seen as being "balanced and rounded individuals who combine a creative approach with a caring, thoughtful disposition," the survey found. It concluded: "Their ability to cope with pressure of work in a relaxed manner was also deemed to be a significant plus."

Male architects beat stockbrokers, doctors, film directors and teachers to the top spot.

However, female members of the profession fared less well and did not feature in the top 10 of male preferences.

RIBA president David Rock commented that architects were probably unaware of their own animal magnetism: "Architects are probably the only group on the list whose self-image is lower than their public image," he said, but added: "Mind you, you have to question the veracity of any list that includes drama teachers."

RIBA Architecture Gallery director Alicia Pivaro, who is married to architect Paul Monaghan, said she thought male architects were highly attractive: "Being married to architecture's Mr Sexy, I would have to agree."

But she was surprised at the failure of women architects to appear on the list. "All the ones I know are very sexy," she said.

Men instead voted PR executives the sexiest profession for females, followed by actresses and journalists.

Fig.64 Architects are Sexiest from *Building Design* (1999)

CONCLUSION

Howard Roark has been accepted by popular culture as the ideal image of the fictional architect, an image that shows commonalities from fictional to real life. While some commonalities have changed in the profession such as gender and technology, the architect's creative ego and skills of communication have not. These two commonalities make up the spirit and creative vision of the architect; the spirit which Ayn Rand quoted in stealing from Frank Lloyd Wright to fuel the fictional Howard Roark. The creative ego drives the originality of vision and passion for design and the personality is governed verbally and visually through the skills of communication. Therefore, the realism in Howard Roark is authentic, as the spirit is the primary makeup of the real life architect and separates them from the lay drafts person; however, the outdated archetype has negative affects.

The negativity aspires from an image that has not been corrected in over a half century, an image that needs to be corrected so that the public opinion can adjust from a romantic modernism to present contemporary. The architects interviewed for the film *My First Building- Stories From Toronto Architects* reveal an up to date reality of the architectural profession within Toronto, Ontario, but this is not enough to sway public opinion, it is simply an investigation which has proven the archetype of the fictional architect to be misleading, creating a dated confusion.

Therefore this thesis can not be concluded until the archetype of the fictional architect is updated from the modernist characteristics of Howard Roark. A simple solution would be a contemporary remake of the film *The Fountainhead* containing the same level of research and character development that displays an accurate up to date portrait of the fictional architect to reform the public opinion. A study behind such a remake should involve an understanding of the architect and profession through the same principles that the film *My First Building Stories From Toronto Architects* displayed: A mass interviewing of the architect and profession to strategically understand the subject matter and rewrite *The Fountainhead* accordingly to suit the contemporary Howard Roark 60 years later.

Popular culture has invited the idea of a remake of the film *The Fountainhead* and Oliver Stone has been quoted in IMDB as the possible director¹. Brad Pitt has also been linked with the remaking and was quoted in The Atlasphere:

The book [The Fountainhead] is so dense and complex, it would have to be a six-hour movie ... I don't know how you would do it under four, and not lose, really lose, what Ayn Rand was after².

Pitt's statement reassures a negligence towards the realities of the real life practitioner and displays a poor understanding of how the archetype of Howard Roark has clouded the true image of the architect. If the popular success of Howard Roark's image was unintentional by Rand then the archetype of the architect became a result of her exceptional research and character development in a modernist society. Clearly if Pitt positions a remake of *The Fountainhead* from the perspective of the previous modernist research by Rand then the fictional archetype will be strengthened and the realities of the profession will be lost for another half century until the writers realize Howard Roark must be updated. Roark could be portrayed as a female since statistics show a strong gender and ethnicity change within the profession. The single white all American male dominated architectural profession is becoming presently less relevant in contemporary society which allows a choice of gender, race and ethnicity for the role of Roark. The advancement of technology within the profession from simple drawing desk to the sophistication of computer operated hardware and software again shows a relevant need for an update as the romantic cinematic image of hand drawn constructions drawings is obsolete in contemporary practice.

To conclude this investigation of the fictional and real, I would like to summarize the name 'Howard Roark' as an attitude and a way of life. To be Howard Roark you must have a passion of spirit for your career and have a creative vision that drives you to excel. I can honestly state that the eight architects which were interviewed for the film *My First Building- Stories From Toronto Architects* are Howard Roark, as they each inherently displayed the characteristics of spirit, passion and vision of practice for a profession that has been misled by cinema's fictional interpretation.

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APPENDIX A: TRANSCRIPTS OF INTERVIEWS

DOUGLAS BIRKENSHAW
EB ZEIDLER
SHIRLEY BLUMBERG
PETER CLEWES
RAYMOND MORIYAMA
JANNA LEVITT
BARRY SAMPSON
JACK DIAMOND

DOUGLAS BIRKENSHAW INTERVIEW

DOUGLAS BIRKENSHAW INTERVIEW.

DATE: 6TH JULY 2009.

TIME: 10AM.

LOCATION: 481 UNIVERSITY AVENUE, STE.300, TORONTO.

Douglas Birkenshaw thank you for taking this interview

My pleasure.

Where were you born?

I was born in Toronto in 1957. I spent the first 6 months of my life in Port Credit, which is now Mississauga in fact, and then we moved to Laurence and Mount Pleasant, Lawrence and Yonge area of Toronto. In those days it would have been a suburb of Toronto but pretty much its downtown now.

Do you have any siblings?

Yes one brother older, and one sister older.

You were the youngest?

I was the youngest.

Were you beaten up?

Was I beaten up? [laughter]

By your siblings or were you just spoiled?

I was both [laughter] spoiled and beaten up.

What did your parents do for a living?

My father was a life insurance executive, he was the vice president of Confederation Life and chairman of NN Financial and my mother was a music teacher.

Did you enjoy your childhood neighborhood?

Well strangely enough I can't say that I didn't like my neighborhood, but as I got older, its probably and certainly then was the most whitest and Anglo Saxon protestant neighborhoods in Toronto and eventually that became pretty stultifying and I looked forward to moving out.

Can you be more specific?

Well at some point you grow up and realize there is a much broader and bigger world out there, and broader interests. For example the general food that I grew up

with, everybody in the neighborhood was classic A&P meat and potatoes and my first experience with broader food was amazing to me, I liked Chinese food and Indian food and those were somethings you never got in my neighborhoods.

What was the typology of your childhood home?

Single family detached, four bedroom, two storey, on a 50x120 foot lot, very conventual, suburban typology, old suburb I guess.

Do you still remember it? the smells of it?

Yes quite well actually.

Is there any significant places within the house that you miss?

Not that I miss no. I pretty much recreated most of the stuff that I miss. I'm fond of saying that the world is divided into basement people and attic people, everybody lives in the in-between. I was a basement person and my father had a shop down there that I spent a lot of time in. A hack-around play room was down there. I've kind of essentially recreated that in the house that I live in now. Im a basement person.

You're a basement person? Do you like the dark?

I think I just like the toughness of it and the fact that you can hack around with stuff and nobody's really going to bother you much. And probably- we used to hang out in the furnace room when I was a kid and it was dark and dingy and awful when I think about it. [laughter]

What influenced you or inspired you to become an architect?

I had a grandfather who died when I was one and I had this mythical concept of the guy and I inherited for some reason his drafting equipment was fascinating to me because my grandmother gave it to me. It was a bone handle drafting equipment, it was really stunning stuff, and I inherited some books of his and I always thought I wanted to be an engineer. But at the same time I had this weird moment in my life were, I was a child actor, through a fluke and I worked in the theatre in my spare time till I was eighteen until I basically went to university. And somewhere in there to I got interested in photography and I had this friend in high school that was a year ahead of me that wanted to get into architecture and I photographed his portfolio for him. And I always had this dichotomy between wanting to become an actor or get into photography or become an engineer, and some light went off when I was looking at his stuff and I went into the library and researched architecture and what was involved and found myself really drawn to

it when I was in grade twelve. It was a funny thing that as soon I went and started looking at buildings, it was almost instant, I thought oh my god this is what I need to do. So that was that it was a classic thing of finding some synthesis between right and left brain.

What acting did you do as a child?

My parent took me to see the opening night of *Mid-Summers Night Dream* because they had a friends daughter was in it from Stratford and we were at the opening night party when I was eleven and this actor that just died who was called William Hutt, actor director he was doing *waiting for Dago* that year and he saw me walking through the lobby and decided I looked like the child he wanted for this thing. You know what a story. So I spent the summer in Stratford and it was a magical environment for an eleven year old kid all my friends were these old crazy actors could spend my time hacking around backstage and from there I did a whole series of CBC television dramas plays in various theaters around Toronto. Summer Stock, traveling shows, school was a real significant part of my education in the world because at 11 your suddenly away from your parents and doing something pretty adult.

That's amazing, quite the upbringing you had.

Indeed, like I said, I was spoiled [laughter]

So why didn't you pursue acting professionally?

Its funny I was offered a thing 16 on Niagara-On-The-Lake my father said that's fine you can do that but you just have to finish your high school, thats all there is to it, you got to keep that door open, my parents were very supportive of my hobbies as long as I got my degree. Somehow there was just some point where the acting was just not enough I was always a math wonk I like doing my math there wasn't enough left brain stuff in the acting world at some point I realized that something was more cerebral I guess.

Was photography a subtle step towards architecture?

I think it was a subtle step towards architecture but that's another basement activity. I built a darkroom in my basement and the real magic of watching photographs come out of your developing that really engaged me the chemical processes. Lets fast-forward 20 years the first time that a modeled something in AutoCAD release nine it was a surface mesh and watching it evolve in those days it would literally draw each line of a complex mesh that you would watch it evolve on your screen it was exactly the same feeling as watching my first photograph

develop there was something about it that was intensely magical. The process that you set in motion that you don't have affect over once it goes into motion. There is a lot of photography that I think has involved magic, and the creative aspect but that is combined with the highly technical aspect that is embodied in architecture.

What cameras did you use at the time?

My first camera was a 35mm Canons actually

Do you still own them?

I do not. It's funny because they got stolen in a move some how they kind of evaporated but at the time it was already moving into digital media so that was a bit of a heart breaker but were really in some ways just antiques, I'd just like to have them on the shelf now.

Do you still do photography a lot?

I can't say I do photography. I accidentally take some good photographs, my notion of photography is entirely supportive now I carry a digital camera everywhere. I probably use it pretty much every day. I consider it a scanner for the world and I think that there's things happening for photography that are dramatic like these software programs like 'Photosyth' that you can get it on the web that are not in some ways not artistic than they are about capturing a space, they are much more objective tools. I question whether you can call that photography? I try occasionally to take decent photographs, the relationship to photography is much more than transitory images that are fixed on the wall for me. I was just looking at a whole slew of photographs we took of a building we just finished in Shanghai and some of the photographs are quite beautiful. I like the fact that there are a 100's of them and you can move around the space but they are all vignettes.

Did you ever try to make films?

I never have. For some reason it never interested me. Even now when I render out things from programs I only render every 20th frame so you move through the building sequentially in a continuous narrative.

Where were you educated for architecture?

University of Waterloo. My wife also did her at MArch at Waterloo, things like children kept getting in the way, she finally did her thesis while she was in labor with our youngest, finished her thesis presentation, Prof. Don McKay came out in the hallway said congratulations you have passed, we went and had some

dinner and four hours later we had the kid. [laughter] It's a classic story, ask Don about it.

Can you tell me about your first building?

I was trying to figure out what my first building would be and what it actually meant? I had the great good fortune of working at Jack Diamond's office when I was on co-op, just shortly after they had split from Barton Myers and there was 12 people in the office, and we had a fantastic amount of leeway and he was very generous with work. And I was thinking what it would be, one of those buildings that I was thinking? What would be the thing that I would consider my very first building would it be one of those where you have some control and some input? But I look back in that period, well actually, I didn't have a clue what I was doing. I was second-year and thought I was God's gift to design, but actually I was a guy who knew nothing. I could do some stuff on paper but didn't quite understand the depth of knowledge required to build buildings. To include making drawings that allow someone to stand in the mud and stake out a building, figure out how to build a foundation and all the technical aspects that are required to execute a design.

I was on my own for a while I did two restaurants that I would consider my own, but they are not really buildings they are insertions into other buildings and one of them was at the AGO that recently Frank Gehry just tore out the Tannenbaum Court, and that was a fantastic project, was not a building, it was more of an interior. I just kept on thinking forward and the first building that I did that had some significance and I can look at the exterior and say it's mine was the Metro Toronto Convention Center, but in fact there were so many forces on it that ultimately I cannot say it was fully mine but was in some ways my first building where I thought, "I love being an architect". But after that I did this project for Sheridan College Sheridan College Animation and Emerging Technologies building on their Trafalgar campus and that I can clearly say is my first building as I clearly designed the whole thing. But also through a series of consequences and the combination of a recession, and the project manager quitting I ended up building it as well and I was on site two days a week and redrawing things as we went because it was a design build and I found myself on the deck while concrete was being poured. It involved a lot of in-depth research because no one had done a computer school at the time and certainly not for computer animation so I went down to San Francisco and did research at Lucas Arts. For me it's one of the buildings I'm quite proud of. It's full of idiosyncrasies and personal mistakes but at the end of the day just has a phenomenal amount of spirit in it. And its the first

building I can look at and say oh my goodness I feel like I've arrived somewhere because I actually have confidence in every aspect of the building. I had confidence in design, had confidence in my relationship with the user groups, had confidence in the drawing methodology I used, I had confidence in the working drawings because I did those. I had confidence in the construction because I was on site all the time. I know that building from the dirt all the way up to the finish on the roof, all the work with the local jurisdictions, the code, all the work with the coordination of the various sub-consultants and mechanical, electrical, acoustics which were hugely important. The building was also bleeding edge in terms of its technical aspects because it had data backbones running through it that allowed you to do live theater in one area of the building projected into another area of the building - and for that matter anywhere in the world which was quite unique at the time. It had aspects to it as it was affiliated to universities in San Francisco, France, and they would do teleconferencing and again at that time it was pretty novel just trying to design spaces for these technologies that were emerging at the time, including a digital television studio which was the first in Canada. Basically there was only one in England and some in the States. It was technology that you would go from first principles and research for the type of space that would accommodate that. It's a groovy looking building and I'm pleased with it. I did this pixelated façade, which at the time I didn't see it anywhere and now it's on everything I feel like I have some authorship over that. It's purely a zeitgeist thing the pixelated stochastic façade and at the time I told the story that they are so color crazy in the animation and color fidelity and we had to tint the glass so I decided to use two different colors of tints so I couldn't decide how to put that on the building so I took a DNA map and turned it on its side and applied it to the building, and so when you're inside the building you always know the colors are being mediated, the light is always being mediated, because there's two different colors of glass so you know you're not actually seeing true light coming into the building. Now that sort of thing is so common.

But you were the first to do a pixelated facade?

While I've no idea if that was the case but I feel like I was it is probably going a little far. [laughter]

Tell me about the DNA map?

I don't know if you've see the DNA map something that has a series of dots on it and it looks quite random putting a point on how many chromosomes you have so I just took that, turned it on its side, and stretch it in Photoshop, and applied it to the façade so that developed the pattern. It was funny, on opening night I told

somebody this story, and they were one of the donors and they got up and made speech; oh and by the way the architect signed the building because he's put his DNA map on the façade. Which is not true but it makes for a great story as it was just some random DNA.

You do not know whose DNA it is?

I have no idea I should have made something up just to make the narrative sound more impressive. Well that's a classic example, I do not like to do patterns. I like to design my buildings from the inside and work my way out, and the façade's just evolve into something. I think that's that's actually the reason why a lot of my façades aren't terribly successful, I don't consider myself a great pattern-maker, I want some form of automata or a condition to arise that requires a façade to look in a particular manner. I was having such a hard time with this, to find something to create a story of automata to apply to this thing so the aesthetic has a narrative to it that appeals to people. Sometimes it's a narrative that makes the aesthetic appealing, it's not the other way around. I think that architects, often people make fun of us, that that's some sort of post-rationalizing things. But we often make up stories for making design decisions often are so rich and potent they pull us through huge chunks of our career. One of my favorite examples is Frank Gehry his architecture was something up to a moment, and I happened to see him give a lecture just after this moment and you could see this shift. He was asked by a firm to do these light fixtures using some one of these translucent materials and it devised this thing that looked like a fish out of scales and from that moment on you can just see his architecture completely transform, it all goes into those kinds of shapes made from essentially scales. And the rest is history as they say. And you can hear him start talking about it and talking about his fascination with fish. It is a form of post-rationalizing, this moment in time and that ultimately evolves into Bilbao.

You said you could see your own personal mistakes in the Sheridan building would you comment on them?

When you're that intimately involved with the thing the mistakes you see are design and technical mistakes. At the time I was trying to push the limits in several fronts including using exposed concrete, fly ash concrete at the time which was pretty rare and trying to use it in slabs and everything else frankly doing things beyond my knowledge and the industry's knowledge. So for example, this was before LEED existed, I wanted to tint the concrete with a shake on system after the concrete has been poured, well it doesn't react very well to fly ash so there is this sort of green tint in the concrete that's all marbled and crappy. Ultimately I

liked it but I thought I pushed that a little too far and should not have been quite so cavalier.

Could you tell me what you learned from your first building?

The experience I learned was actually just the importance of understanding the techniques of construction and design that gives you an extraordinary amount of authority over the effects of the buildings that you do and that was very valuable lesson. That's one of the things that your education, you don't quite get when you're moving through, is that at some point your vision is incredibly important, but it's not just about design it's about executing the thing and understanding how to encompass your client's needs and enhance them, and you can only do that at a deep level by having a deep understanding of your media, be that drawing or knowing how your concrete works.

Are there any personal or professional stories that are memorable during your first building?

From a personal perspective I had a kid, my marriage dissolved, I met Ginger [current wife] I renovated a house, I started smoking again, I lost 30 pounds because I was so stressed out and I wouldn't trade it for the world. [laughter] At so many levels, it's my first building, its impact was dramatic. When I started here I was the golden design boy and I was Mr. Go To The Boardrooms. But sharing the period of time when I was building the thing I was walking around with dirt all over me all the time, and it's a funny thing in this business that we tend to look down on people who are actually building the buildings. I don't know what it is but we deify the people that are in the boardrooms doing the design presentations and we look down at the people that are building the things, and for me building the thing, that's what it's all about. I mean, we can draw it 'til the cows come home but at the end of the day it's all about making something that people live, work and are enriched by. None of that happens with the drawings, its actually the finished product. So that was an extraordinary time for me, you realize that you're on another curve it's a very personal curve that's a form of self-satisfaction because when you're building it's all about being in the mud and yelling at contractors and the days are kind of hard and nasty and your not getting the pats on the back, way to go great design presentation, congratulations you won that competition or whatever. The only gratification is the door opening at the end of the day, but it's months and months and months of slogging in nastiness and you can combine that with my general personal life falling apart it was pretty dramatic. There's a lot of personal stories in there, tons of them. And now I have two children with Ginger and that experience made me a monster on many construction sites,

I have no fear of anything big anymore, it was a seminal moment of my life. I recommend it to anybody. I think every architect should have to build a building from beginning to end and be in a construction trailer being yelled at. It's very good for your character.

Can you tell me about your best building Douglas?

One of the direct results of the Sheridan building, that allowed this company to get back into academic work. We were a firm that was primarily commercial. When I started here we had one project that was the Metro Convention Center that was not commercial, it was institutional, and it carried us through the recession of the early 90s which basically brutalized the industry and we laid off tons and tons of people back then. After that I had this thing where I thought we should go after and concentrate on academic work and with our chairman at the time Dan McAllister, we went after this project at Queens University. I would say we were probably the dark horse, and we often are because we are considered a pretty corporate firm, and in the academic world we were up against the Jack Diamonds and the KPMB quote unquote more boutique design firms even though Diamond Schmitt is now 150 people, the same size we are. So you have to work much harder to get these jobs as you have to convince people to take you on and take a risk essentially because you don't have the same depth of design background that Diamond Schmitt does and you don't have that reputation that both KPMB and Diamond Schmitt certainly deserve because they have been working at it for quite some time. So when we went after this project we decided to take all the stops out. It was the brainchild of this one guy at Queens University in the engineering department where he said the one of the great problems of the education of engineers was that they were very isolated in their disciplines and the methodology of education was too what he called walk and chalk, it was too science and not enough practical application. His concept that was based on research that came out of MIT particularly the Aerospace department there, that the education of the engineers should much more closely be modeled on the actual process from ideation to production of product out in the real world. First of all of that meant multidisciplinary, so you don't have an engineering school that says this is the faculty of mechanical engineering and this is the faculty of electrical, civil so you brought them all together. The second thing everything is project based so your education starts with what is referred to CDIO so it is "conceived design implement and operate", so you work through the conception of the thing in groups, you design the thing in groups, you implement it i.e. you go and build it then you operate it test it destroy it and study. And all the way through that is overlaid the requirement of presentation to your peers, and to

your staff and possibly to a broader audience. So from that end the program of the building was fundamentally different than what you would normally expect since it required shops and meeting rooms by the gallons. A very different conception of classrooms and so on. So when we went after the job we just did a design vaguely based on the work we had done on Sheridan. One of the things we said was that the building should itself be a perfect education tool, a pedagogical tool, so it should be the leading edge in environmental design. It should have representative characteristics to it that would help structural engineers. So it has four different structural systems carved away to show things off, and in fact the entire process of construction should be evident so we put webcams into the building, this is some time ago now. Everything was carefully documented, as the process went on we involved the students in the design aspect, and it was an infill project at Queens, and at the end of the day it had such a kind of passion to it - and a lot of that had to do with the user groups, the engineers themselves being so directly involved in its constitution - it's kind of a cool thing it has one of the first green walls in Canada. It's an infill project it achieved very high ratings I used the BREEAM system from England because I thought the LEED system for evaluating the sustainable features of the building was inferior. BREEAM is the betamax of the sustainability world; LEED certainly seems to have won out over everything else. Anyhow, one of the reasons why it won an RAIC award, this site is bounded by two existing buildings so we basically in filled the parking lot, so what we basically did was create this atrium space that runs through the building that fulfills several characteristics firstly the roof itself gathers water for cisterns; secondly it brings light into a three-story atrium space that isn't just a mutant dead space, it's filled with program - these are actually electronic labs and multipurpose labs, the circulation works around so you can always look into it, so it reinforces the notion that it's very important that people rub shoulders with each other, and talk to each other and have a dialogue that's ongoing and you can't hide in any part of the building. That space is also used as a dynamic buffer zone for the mechanical system and of course for getting natural light in. All exposed structure - steel system - is quite evident, how it is working. And you can see that's a skylight system along the sides. Also, there's the green wall, there's the three-storey space, it's actually the return air for the office building component, all [the return] air comes through there, all the air from the atrium space is drawn through that wall and there's a huge mechanical duct behind the wall so it naturally filters out the particulates and conditions the air back into the office space. There is a test wall with 18 different types of glass different low-e coatings, different colorations, it's all fully monitored inside and out so in real time you can call up on the web, effects on the glass, the temperature on the inside and out,

with the shading coefficients are doing, so the students can see in real time effects of different times in the day on the angles of the sun and the characteristics of the glass. And throughout the building there are aspects of that where you can call up on the web what's going on with green wall. There's smart lighting systems throughout it and how that is working. There's movable partitions so you can half close-off spaces, re-configure them quickly depending on the project at the time. Mechanical systems are all fully exposed and explicit so the students can understand. Live building features - temperature, residue, humidity - are being fully updated all the time. In a typical building you might have 100 data points in the mechanical system for monitoring, this building has over 3000 data points. We did some things that are anti aesthetic, they look like crap in fact, they are tough to detail, but the building is sitting on rock so we carved holes to show steam tunnels and foundation sitting on rock. This is straight out of Popular Mechanics, I always loved cut away cars, so we cut away a piece of the building and show how the envelope is actually working. These are slight fictions but the idea is to cut pieces out of the concrete to reveal rebars, of course these are not real rebars so we had to redesign the whole rebar cage, but I wanted to show rebar in its actual condition, so that you feel that you're understanding how the rebar cages actually work. The stairs can be de-tuned to take some of the load that the hanger is taking off the stairs - these are accelerometers on the stairs, and strain gauges - so you can load students up and plug in a computer and see the effects on the structure by putting students on and then de-tuning it etc in real time. The mechanical systems are quite elaborate we have several varieties that are again fully monitored. So we have 2 areas of in-floor radiant heating with the manifolds shown and monitored so students can see how the system works. All electrical is exposed. These are smart lighting systems that turn off - that have a series of monitors built into each one of the systems - so in the offices for instance they are light sensitive so if it's sunny out and you're getting ambient light there is a solenoid that switches off the light, occupancy sensors so if you're in the space it's on, if it's not it's off. Each two lights in the office area have ip addresses so they are fully web addressable so you can tune your light on your computer to raise and lower the intensity. Also - at that time it was very sophisticated - an entropy wheel which was technology only used in skating rinks for heat exchangers used in the building. Everything on the web, all the time, real-time, so the students could be looking and using. Now this is something we do all the time, we evolved this system of working with the users where we project onto a white board where you can draw over the top of the projection and take a digital camera and take a picture as documentation. This has now evolved where we project a plan, draw over the top of it, take a photograph as documentation, and that is what you refer

to and take it back to the office and show people. This is now old-hat but at the time it was pretty novel.

Ultimately its one of my favorite buildings just because it's not really, I dont think of it as a pretty building I think its a handsome, but I think again building its constitution is the direct effect of its interior intention.

What was the inspiration for Queens?

It's hard to say what inspired the design from that perspective. The way I work I like to let the program, and the desires of the client define the architecture. You just keep trying to create elements that will have affect in terms of the program. In Queens I have a landlocked site, it's a parking lot between two existing buildings so how the hell am I going to get light it there right off. So clearly I have to make some skylights into the thing or devise some method for getting light into what is now a huge floor plate. Then I gotta have a front door and drive all the students to the very back so it connects to a third building you know, so there is a promenade that goes through the building, so at a dumb level you just draw a line. Now you got that line running through the thing, then that defines some notion about the skylight and I then I realized then what I wanted to do maybe it was a predilection, I have a thing for big roofs, SKAET had a big roof, this has a big roof. My second favorite building which I was going to discuss has a huge roof and is a 2 million square-foot building in Shanghai. I like to make the roof into a machine that has different capacities. So, because we decided to go with a green agenda with is representative of the best notion of building today and the best thing to represent the students, then the roof had to start taking on different characteristics. It becomes a light machine, it becomes a water collection device, it becomes a way to allow air to stratify up into that space and out of the mechanical room. It's also a piece of explicit technology that you want to display, in this case steel. I also wanted to create a zone in the building that was an open teaching space that would be the heart of the building. So out of that, that is the inspiration ultimately, an agora for education that is enveloped by a building that is creating both amenity and is doing that in a sustainable way.

As you stated with your first building that you design from the inside out, is that always your principal or do you have a certain ritual that you go through when designing?

I think that am pedantic that way. I try not to design anything until I've met with the users and have a long analysis of their needs.

You said there was over 3000 data points, 18 different types of glass, exposed r-bar in parts of the floor - was there special contractors brought in or any custom work that you are very proud of within this building?

No. In fact the low bidder won the job. They're not the best contractors I think, and it was a real problem getting them to do what we wanted. For instance the mechanical system controls had to be a company that the university used before so it meshes with their overall system, and they didn't want to do any of it. It took us a huge amount of arm twisting to get them on board to do it and to put the extra data points in. Now what's interesting is that since then now its just a matter of now of course they do it all the time because everybody is demanding it more now to know exactly were their energy is going. So this ultimately ended up being a test bed for them. The lighting system there was really on one group in Canada doing intelligent lighting systems at the time and it was Canlight, and they had really great systems and had a significant premium to pay for them, we had to pre buy the system effectively.

Do you have a medium of choice?

I design a lot just straight digitally but I am a sketchbook guy. I've always loved drafting, I used to be huge fan of plastic leads and mylar back in the day. But I have to say the first time I saw something being drawn on a computer I was instantly drawn to it, so I'm an early adopter, in fact I taught computers and design back in Waterloo for a year, but I'm a big fan of the pen, and in fact this is a tablet computer where you can draw on the screen and I use that all the time and its a major dilemma for me as this was state of the art 2 years ago and basically you cant get anything that good anymore since the tablet format is seen as, I don't know how it is seen but the machines are very low end, so I can't get a machine that runs Autocad or 3d-Studio adequately and has the tablet function as well. You can see my child drew all over this [showing lid of laptop], so computers are something we always have to integrate with in the industry as architects. The romance of hand drawn pencil is never something that interested me much even though I loved it and liked it romantically, I don't think there is any downgrading of the thing using your computer.

Do you have software of choice?

Well I am AutoCAD. I love drawing in 3d in AutoCAD. I use SketchUp a lot, I use 3d-Studio. I like doing 3d work in AutoCAD and dumping it into SketchUp as the presentation capacity in SketchUp is pretty remarkable. You can move people through spaces in a way that you just cant in most other programs.

What about Revit?

Revit is an interesting debate, it's tied to building information management systems. It's the holy grail of doing the perfect virtual building before you build it. I personally think it's complete nonsense and it is driven by AutoCAD Autodesk owners, people who basically don't draw, and certainly by contractors because what they're looking for is to displace their job onto us, basically getting us to do their interference drawings so that we lay in the mechanical and electrical into this perfect virtual perfect model. That's what people forget, that the act of abstraction is very important to thinking, so taking something that is three-dimensional, making two-dimensional, and having someone reinterpret it again as two-dimensional or three-dimensional or whatever they want on the contractor side, is very important to the evolution of the building and construction, and everyone seems to have forgotten that abstraction is what made us architects in the first place brunelleschi projecting the world onto a two dimension surface is what made it happen. So this kind of notion of creating a perfect thing is absurd. I've tried doing two projects with it now and I can't believe how slow it makes things. You cannot make changes with it. The changes take forever because you're changing a 3-D model. You're not changing a very simple line that represents something on plan, you're actually trying to change something that's represented. Its a fundamental misunderstanding of what design is. Nonetheless, its coming and I'm not going to have any choice, we're going to get dragged into it and everyone's having trouble implementing it. The simplest buildings are easy to do it. Larger more complicated buildings are not.

For example, for The Munro building we laid out this beautiful mechanical system. The sprinkler guys never do what you tell them, and when they did their sprinkler fall instead of going from one end of the building to the other, they started it from the other end to the other end. So it meant all the mechanical relationships were screwed up and we had to redo the whole thing anyhow. So having a perfect model what's it going to do for you? I can't even get my mechanical engineers to draw more than a single line drawing and now they want me to get them to do three-dimensional drawings, and at the same time do it for the same money that they paid me last time. Well, it is not going to happen. We are rushing into Revit headlong without understanding its fundamental impact and the fact that it displaces huge risks onto architects.

To continue, in every area of the country they have different ways of dealing with engineers. Out in BC for instance, it doesn't matter what you draw mechanically, the mechanical engineer comes in does his own thing. He specs his own

equipment, he doesn't really care about your spec. Hell in BC it's hard enough to get people to bury conduit in slaps, they like to service mount everything, whereas here we do it all the time. So how does it fit in with each culture? If we're just making 3-D models, if that's what it is about, then why do we try and make it all working drawings and 3d models? The other thing is that we also forget that all of this software has embedded in it architectural content. Even AutoCAD has architectural content in it and it's not that easy to make curvilinear things in AutoCAD, as we all know, and that's why Form Z was so successful. But it's very easy to do classical architecture in AutoCAD for example array, mirror, all those things are very classical notions of repetition and rhythm and that's embedded in the program. Well, Revit is all that times 20. When you pick a window and put it in, well it's somebody else's window, it's not yours. It is somebody else's notion of how things should be drafted. I think it's actually potentially very destructive because its very difficult to make sure that it's your stuff as opposed to somebody else's and of course the manufacturers love that because I can take that and now you're committed to their manufactured product. That being said I'm actually drawing a house right now in Revit so that I'm better at using it personally so I can talk about it. The more I use it the more I hate it. [laughter]

In the time of Frank L. Wright the architect was the master builder, the mechanical engineer, the electrical engineer, the structural engineer, the furniture designer. Do you think the prestige and responsibilities of the architect have dissolved over the decades and are dissolving more with the use of such software such as Revit?

Well yes and no. I'm not sure. That's a complex question. First of all not too sure if the master builder idea ever really existed. For example, my grandfather the engineer he was an electrical engineer. He worked for Toronto Hydro he was a very good draftsman, clearly from his drawings. One of the things he did was design hydro substations. He designed the substation at Glen Grove on Yonge and there's a church across the street and as part of his job he designed the equipment he also designed the building. The building is Neo-Gothic thing and it's actually quite good. Huge wood doors with big studs on them with the doors open. It's just a warehouse with this humming machinery and gantry cranes and equipment. But on the outside it looks like a church rectory. And that was his job. There weren't formal boundaries of this is what architects do and this is what engineers do. So engineers often design buildings and vice versa. The RC Harris water works was done by an engineer and there is no architect associated with that. So, in terms of the master architect, that's a bit of a fantasy. Number one people didn't use them that much, people just built crap and away you went. The

professionalizing of architecture created in some ways these boundaries, and now these boundaries are fixed, and engineers don't design buildings anymore and we really don't do engineering anymore. There's a lot of reasons for this, as buildings are so immensely complicated now so when I'm renovating a house and you tear out the ceiling and there's four-inch studs in the roof and there is no insulation anywhere, single glazing, they don't build them like they used to thank God and everything is kind of made up. Well now, when you think about a house and how incredibly sophisticated it is – the electrical systems, the 200 amp panels, the data, the telephone, the lights, the dimmers, the double dimmers, the 3 pulse switches on and on and that's just the lighting systems. In Wright's day you might have had gas[laughter] – and the mechanical system on top of that, think about the complexity of the envelope now for the modern house and that's just a house. The rain screen for example, the principals of the rain screen, that's an incredibly sophisticated thing: pressure equalization, the brick is on the outside of the building, the insulation, the air space, the gap, the technical details of just the gap and how you wick water out of it, air/vapour barriers, the stud system, and on and on it goes etc. etc. Just that section of the wall is incredibly complicated. But it uses way less energy, it provides a lot more amenity, comfort in the way they just didn't have in Frank Lloyd Wright's day. I can't say that our role is diminished, it's gotten fundamentally more complicated. Look at the crap I have to do now to make a building and the people I have to interface with and the conversations I have to have. There is a kind of misunderstanding of what architects do. There is a book that Nula Beck wrote years ago called Paradigm Shift. It talked about how the digital world is going to change everything. She did this catalogue of knowledge workers and she said the most intense knowledge workers were architects, because what we primarily do is manage information. We don't draw, drawing is just a vehicle for managing information. We collect information from all over the place, we make a drawing of a building and that's the way we disseminate information, through specifications and drawings. That's a kind of a profound concept because if you look at what I do all day, I draw – I'm really lucky when I draw – but actually I spend a lot of time talking to environmental consultants, I spend a lot of time dealing with mechanical, acoustical, structural etc. It's my job to orchestrate them and bring them together and make them work definable. And then on top of that, do what we excel at and that is to have the vision for the building. And there is no way anybody is going to diminish the vision of the architect, no matter where we go people will always make fun, people made fun of Frank Lloyd Wright, hell they made fun of Michelangelo, but at the end of the day who has the vision. Sit in a room with 30 people there's only one person in the room who can actually see the building, and that's what we actually do, we

can see it in its totality and that's a profound thing. That is actually not getting diminished at all, it's actually getting more and more complex. We just like to complain [laughter]

You see, what my commentary about Revit is that at the end of the day, is that we still have to make the building, is that you're going to be fighting the software all the way. Jesus Christ, it's hard enough to get people to use layers in AutoCAD, seriously, let alone drawing in 3d. And the data on people who have actually bought Revit platforms and who are actually using it, it's less than 3%. The actual data and its penetration into the market is abysmal. And everyone is blabbing away about it. At the OAA convention it was nothing but BIM, BIM, BIM, and LEED, LEED, LEED, and it was just a farce because nobody is actually using it. KPMB did Manitoba hydro and they tried to BIM it out and apparently it was a nightmare.

When John Lennon wrote the song, "In My Life" he had a moment of revelation; he was in a different place as a song writer and knew he was better. Whenever you designed and finished the Munro building did you feel like you had broken through your own personal barriers?

I think Sheridan was that for me. I'm not convinced it's just purely a creative thing, I think everybody has moments, Tiger Woods must of had moments like this in his life. I think I've had it skiing, I started skiing when I was four I remember when I was 14 I used to be crazy about it. I'd go skiing every weekend, whatever I could do to go skiing and there is some moment where you're blasting down the hill and you just feel completely out of body it's just the coming together of a particular passion plus time. I think architecture and anybody that is any good at it works at it all the time. The book that Malcolm Gladwell just wrote called The Outliers, the big deal is it takes 10,000 hours to be great at something, like gee what a surprise? You mean it's hard work? [laughter] Everybody is talking about this as if it's a new concept. As Edison said, was it Edison? No, it was Einstein saying that genius is three percent inspiration and 97% perspiration. But there comes a moment when all that effort actually pays off, it's almost, there's an ease to it, and a confidence to it, and a kind of moment where you draw something for five hours and you don't notice time going and you stop and you look and you go my goodness, and you know that's good.

Have you ever looked back on your career and thought you could be better?

I always think I could be better. I think architects, if they're good, they're neurotic about it, you can look back at some of your work with fondness but you always

think you could do a better job. And hope you do a better job in the future and always think you've lost it, oh my God I've lost it.

What do you do as a stress reliever?

I joke around. The corner of my office is a continuous laugh fest. I tend not to get angry just make jokes and try not to drink too much [laughter].

Have you any personal stories you can tell me about your buildings?

I actually have one from Sheridan that I've always liked. I became very good friends with everybody, with the steel guys, not just the foreman but also the workers on the job. There was a guy who was the foreman of the electrical contractor, and we had a change order where everything had changed on the layout of the boxes on the floor. I had just gotten a laptop, it was one of the earlier laptops. I had AutoCAD running and I would just sit in the trailer and draw stuff. We had this problem, some layout had changed, so everything changed. The last thing you want to is core drilling after-the-fact; it's a nightmare, you have to x-ray slabs, nobody can be in the building when you do it. So the change happened, and it was all very slow getting approved, and it finally came through but when it came through they were actually pouring that slab. Ferdinando, this short Brazilian guy – he was like one of these barrels and he wore chef pants these crazy colored pants. It just made no sense he was just the oddest looking guy on-site with a big belt and a hat – we just sat there and redrew the thing on the computer. Every time I finished a room I would hand it to him and he would go up to the deck. Then the final one I finished printing it out. I went up to the deck, the third-floor deck and you're walking across rebar and there's two layers of rebar and I hand the thing to him. He goes and spray paints the spot on the site. A guy comes and screws the electrical box in, and Fernando meanwhile has gone and got the conduit hose the flexible hose and he's pulling it through the rebar. He hooks it up CLUNK. Another guy is coming from the other side and he hooks it up CLUNK. And the concrete just goes WUSHHHHH over-the-top. And there is just this moment when you look and the two of us Ferdinando and I were standing there, that was amazing. Because even a year before that could never have happened. The fact that you've got this computer got a printer your in the shed. The guy who has designed the building is also the guy who's doing construction and you've got a relationship with the crew that I will never repeat because I can never spend that much time on site anymore. I just felt like crying there is something so gorgeous about it, and it was so much about drawing, it was so much about the construction process and personality and everything else. There was just a real beauty to it, it's just one of those stories that I love.

How do your projects reflect social betterment?

One of the things we forget as architects is how lucky we are sometimes. Those are both programs that you'd die for, [Munro Hall / Sheridan] it's like being asked to do monastery or a church in the middle of New York. To be asked by a group of impassioned, dedicated academics who are very keen on teaching the future students in a new manner, and in a germane manner, something that is up-to-date and current, the idea that teaching has something to do with what what is going on in the larger world, that's an amazing thing because it means you've got a client who is dedicated, and every day that you're talking to them they're thinking of the potential of the building to support their passions and desires. So, right off that is a very lucky situation. If you are dedicated and passionate about it then your building is going to have good effect in the world, and it will support an agenda that is fundamentally about bettering the world. People who are doing animations they see themselves as important within the culture of the world and contributors to the world, so if you have a building that supports that then you're already doing something good for the world. Certainly, for engineers most of the engineers that I know, or those at school anyhow, they think of themselves as being the people that are going to define the future hopefully for the better. In the case of Queens which has a particular social agenda, we put a café that is student run in the place, we put the engineering society right at front door so it's for the students it's not put in the back. We fought all the way along when someone from physical Plant says the students will wreck that, and we argued, no they won't if you treat students with respect they tend to respect things. So far it's being borne out. So, the building reflects the notion of being a good citizen and trying to do best practice and supports of the desires of the faculty to do the same.

What drives you to be an architect?

Who knows that's a complicated question, what drives me? I've a friend who says what obviously drives architects is pure ego and the love of their own production [laughter]. So maybe that's what it is? You cannot deny it; again any architect that I know that is any good also has an immense ego. It requires an ego that allows you to stand in front of someone and say this is the right solution for your building, and definitely that's an act of ego and confidence. You could be wrong, he could be totally self delusional. Christ look at some of the crap that is built out there, of course people are delusional about that. But it requires a kind of ego and a love off your productivity and your work to do that. And I'm only half joking that is the love of your production because there is something when you draw or you see a rendering come up on the screen you look at the magic of it is, ohh look what I've done. In my business there is almost always three years between drawing the

thing and getting it built, and I still find when I stand and see something that I've designed built there is a magic to it that is profound and it still shocks me. I think: it's just what you do; at an existential level, you get up and go and do your job, that's what you're trained to do. You like meeting people and being with people, working on stuff and teams, and so on and so forth

What inspires you and your designs?

Everything. [laughter]

Everything?

Seriously everything. Inspiration doesn't come from any particular place. I'm a big fan of lowbrow woodworking magazines. Every once in a while there's just a little nothing in there, it might be a paragraph this big [small hand jester] that has some sort of concept in there of how to work wood that you think you can really do something with. I'm currently working on re-cladding First Canadian Place, and we're currently taking all the white marble off replacing it essentially with white glass. One of the inspirations for that believe it or not, are doilies. We are doing a very sophisticated frit pattern that is creating a shadow box effect, basically three laminations of glass. If you look at a doily up close lifted up you get a moré effect between the shadow and the object itself, it's serendipitous.

I'm inspired by, I don't own a fancy car but I love looking at cars. I'm inspired by boats, sails on sailboats, my wife's paintings. I'm being disingenuous. It's easy for me to talk about architects that inspire me. I like Renzo Piano, the high-tech guys. In terms of everyday things that inspire me I think in fact again that's the sort of thing that most creative people are generally curious so they are drawn to things that interest them for intellectual reasons, not necessarily for aesthetic reasons, but then they have a profound affect on their aesthetic judgment.

Like right now I'm trying to do this thing where, I was in some bathroom in Kennedy Airport in New York and they have cleaned the mirrors with some abrasive surface so that when you look into the mirror you can only see yourself in, and as soon as you turn sideways everything goes foggy. So I'm trying, I found some security film for computer screens that does the same effect and I am developing a wall within a building that I'm doing with all of this film so that there is data behind the film, or a mirror, so you can only see yourself or the data when you're staring at it face on, but as soon as you turn side ways it turns black, so when you walk by it data will come at you, and disappear. And that's, you know, I was just washing my hands at the airport.

Do you enjoy the details of your buildings or the building as a whole?

Nope I like it all. Hell I like garbage rooms I like it all. I find mechanical rooms exciting, it's complicated, my interests are fairly broad. I have another building I want to show you. This thing I won when I presented at the World Festival of Architecture in Barcelona last year. It's a huge beast in the middle of Shanghai its 2,000,000 ft.² It has a hotel [Sheraton five-star] in it, it has apartments, it has office buildings, it has 500,000 ft.² of shopping mall in it. And, in some ways it starts with a detail. Actually, I don't understand what I'm doing in China. Why me? I honestly don't get it? Why does someone want me to fly literally half way around the world? And why is it so important for us to share ideas across boundaries like that? But somehow it's fundamentally human to do that. Then you're given this agenda to do a building that's 2,000,000 ft.² What do you with that? 2,000,000 ft.² is huge. How do you make that humane? You want - people are going to live and sleep and fuck and eat in this space. It's so huge that the possibility of making something awful is always there. So how do you enliven that, give it some beauty and richness at that kind of scale?

So, you know, I was looking at patterns and precedents for these things - you know you were asking what's inspiration, I think this is one of the most gorgeous spaces there is, it's in the Forbidden City, this thing which looks like a computer chip, and trying to make courtyard spaces that are comfortable within the city. So these are your original schemes and again the concepts again of the large roof surrounding the courtyard, and the courtyard brings peace to the place and provides some sort of amenity. And then to create some sort of interior space with a shopping mall that isn't just hideous, and then that's overlaid with some notion of, of, sustainability that led to this idea of operable glazing on the exterior system, which ultimately - this is the way I design stuff. It starts with an idea of how to frit, how to make a pattern that's within the millimeters of the glass - so when you ask is it just detail, and how does the detail inflect the entire thing - so then serate the edges and then ultimately put in the serations, operable units so that you can open your windows. And then create these zones - this is kind of an idea of front entrance etc. etc. And you always have to deal with clients, and then these are the drawings, and then lots of cladding studies to understand how operable windows are going to work within this context. Study of frit patterns. The machine of the façade for advertising, because in Shanghai everything is about this: how to make it look decent because it can become hideous very quickly. Did a lot of work in construction; you can see the atrium spaces are now running up the side of the building, and the serations in the atriums are part of the mechanical system, so it's like taking lessons from Queens and applying them at a much larger scale. I love the construction; the fucking insanity of construction in China is amazing. There's

no definition for clean walkway through the construction space, so everybody's just stumbling through the scaffolding, it's so different from here.

Is it still in construction?

No it's done, I had a very interesting experience because I stayed up there for five nights and realized it's so odd you almost never go back and visit a building you worked on, it's rare and it's really rare when you actually get to stay in one.

Do you listen to music when you design?

I'm a big fan of jazz, it's funny my wife can remember the lyrics to a song if she listens to it just once. She thinks that most of the music I listen to is elevator music, as I find lyrics distracting. I am a fan of classical music I like Bach and Mozart, I like opera and I can't understand the lyrics so it becomes sonic. I actually have a thing for rap music, particularly rap music from France. I used to love drafting to it, there was something about it, it's like a machine tempo and rhythm that's layered with some kind of crazy anger and passion that you don't necessarily have to understand a word that's being said you just feel it and that's great for drawing to.

How would you describe your architecture?

It's generally driven by technical concerns that are overlaid on top of client desires. I've never been that interested in designer architecture I guess. It's hard, I guess. It's fairly idiosyncratic in some ways because it just comes from my personal interpretation of what clients need. I don't know how I would describe my architecture. Somebody once said that my architecture is relaxed modernism, it doesn't have a pedantic stylistic requirement like Richard Myers. It's embedded in the culture it's being built in. I don't mean the specific culture, I mean the client group, the construction group, the locale. So it is more about that then it is about me personally trying desparately to impose my design will.

For instance we did the ROM with Daniel Libeskind. Personally I've got a lot of problems with that building, personally it's a great success from a lot of other factors but I just think there's way too much imposition on the culture of that institution of Daniel I Libeskind. Forever all the curators are going to be fighting against the building. So I can tell you what I'm not and that is what I'm not. Fundamentally, I can't even understand the desire to that, that building could be anywhere to be for anybody. It's irrelevant and all that's relevant is that Daniel Libeskind designed it and there's something somehow to my mind that is antithetical to my notion of what an architect is.

What is your interpretation of architecture regards to daily life, living in it, working in, and building in it?

That's a huge question and I guess one of the interesting things about architecture is the reality is in the world probably 80% of the structure of the world – and that's being overly generous – are not designed by architects. That being said though one thing that we are all fundamentally concerned with, is we need shelter and a place to eat, live, and raise our children. So we are all continually in, and around, and about, associated with architecture. That being said architecture with a capital A, personally I go back to the great quote by George Dubuy, he said that architecture is fundamentally about power, always. It doesn't matter what society it's created in, it's all about power. It's possible to be interpreted in several ways, that's either positive or negative. The fact of it is to make buildings the way we make them requires a huge amount of effort and capital – and that is human capital and financial capital that goes into them – so they are imbued with a monstrous amount of will, and ego and desire culturally. I often think about the re-cladding we are doing at First Canadian Place and that is a two million-square-foot building that was built in 1976. The original designer is almost irrelevant – that's Edward Realstone, New York – we [B+H] were the architect on the record with the thing. We are kind of like the priests, the keeper of the icon. It is probably never going to get torn down. Forever us humans are going to crawl over this thing and keep it and manage it, and we kind of live for it. We are building this machine to crawl up it and re-clad it, that's basically a factory in the sky, and it is going to take two years to do. And the people who work and live in their have a life underneath in its base. It's one of our great anthills that we are going to keep, it's our cathedral, and it's an expression of a social will that again is all about some display of power. Some people would look at it as negative and some people would look at it as positive, but nonetheless it's a communal thing that we've made that we're then going to maintain for quite some time. And then that expands out to the city and God knows what it means for the world. So my personal relationship to architecture and what it means for all of us, it's our way of communicating with each other, and living with each other, and expressing ourselves to each other. It's actually a very deep act, its not something that's casual, it's actually something that's profound. As architects it's our job to try and make that a positive experience because we are handed this power to do good with it

EB ZEIDLER INTERVIEW

EB ZEIDLER INTERVIEW.

DATE: 24TH JULY 2009.

TIME: 10AM.

LOCATION: 315 QUEEN STREET WEST, TORONTO.

Where were you born Eb?

I was born in Germany in a small town. My father was there doing his practical work. He was studying at University. And so ... and my mother moved with my parents, it was her parents, and so ... but then after two years my father finished his studies and got a job as a professor in Liegnitz, that's in Silesia, and we moved there and from two years on until 17 I was there, and then I joined the Navy. And then I came out of the war and actually my generation was kind of totally different from the next generation – I was kind of a youngster in my class and, let's see, my age-similar mates didn't go in the war but I did go in the war, and I had a, you know, it was kind of a horrible experience. I mean, we went ... the flotilla I was on, in the Navy, we were in Russia. It started off with 2,400 men and ended up with 10. So that ... and I then went to, and actually it was just an accident, because we had been damaged and I was on a destroyer, and so I was called back, and we were just leaving for our assignment at the Navy academy, and so, and I walked over the gang plank and the alarm went. And the rule was when the alarm went you had to go back when you were on the gangplank. When you're on land, you can leave for holidays. And just by accident, the Captain stood beside the gangplank, and he said, "When was your last leave, Zeidler?" And I said I'd never had one. And he said, "Did you hear anything, you asshole?" [Laughter.] And I said, "No, sir!" And I ran onto land and walked away and then I - I was a Lieutenant by this time - I walked through the city and there was my old mate, and he saluted me, and I said, "What the hell are you doing here? I thought you were on Z28?" And he said, "Well, didn't you hear? They were all drowned." And he was one of the 10 survival of that ship, and that was the end of the whole thing. So anyway, I came back and I really couldn't laugh anymore; I mean, it's such a dreadful experience - all your friends, everyone is dead - and then I worked for a while as a carpenter in a business and was looking for a university to go to. And then I came to Weimar and the Bauhaus - that started again. The old Weimar teacher that had been in prison camp or anywhere else but Russia, had come back to Weimar to start the Bauhaus again. And they said, no chance, our first year is absolutely filled. And I had, while I was still a student at high school, my brother was a teacher at University of Breslau in Berlin, and I had gone there and listened to lectures, you know what I mean, and, so he got a letter from them that I had my first two semesters done. Which wasn't really right. I mean, I attended them, but

I wasn't registered. And so they said well third year is free, and there were only 5 people in the third year because they were all, that was the age that went to war and upper years, and they were all dead, you know, and these people, they were either some girls or some people, and one had, you know, only one arm and the other one had only one leg, and so they were all kind of cripples, you know, they were a few friends of mine – they became friends – and so I started the third year. And then studied there and finished my studies, and in the last year I was very much trained in the Bauhaus style. They were all the old Bauhaus people. There was a fellow named, Professor Lind, I became later a partner of his, who was a student of Mies Van der Rohe, and kind of and he didn't go with Mies Van der Rohe, he went to America. And then, therefore, he ended up in prison camp and everywhere else, you know, because he stayed in Germany. And, so I worked with him, and he was a charming man and a great designer, but through prison camp and all that why he had become an alcoholic, and so he always was having a little drink [laughter]. And I worked with him, so, and then I, actually was before that, for a while was Egon Irene ... And he was not from the Bauhaus, he was the Putzig generation, that was kind of an area that was trying to connect with the past in some way – be modern but connect with the past. And, so, anyway, my first buildings with them really, but it wasn't my buildings, you know. And so I built some in Germany, but, let's see, my first buildings here in Canada, were really more lean towards the Putzig generation, and that was an idea that architecture isn't just function and construction – boom – you know, that's architecture, and everything else was not necessary. I mean, Mies Van der Rohe had a certain sense of beauty but he didn't admit it. You know, he said we do it strictly structurally and functionally, and that's the end of it, you know. While the ... and then, it's automatically beautiful, but we don't talk about it, you know. And the people that came from the Putzig generation, you know, and I kind of felt know that isn't quite true, there must be architecture is more than just function, it's also emotion. And these two parts sit on either side and then one. And it isn't just that function dictates the emotion, and it's neither that emotion dictates the function. And then modern architecture kind of fiddled around and was either totally emotional or the post-modern became totally functional and built crazy buildings that had nothing to do with anything that was in there was just for the sake of beauty. And I feel always that there was a connection that you had to feel well in it and at the same time it had to be functionally right. It wasn't just a matter of building a great building. Neither was it a matter of just building a functional building, you know. That may not give you the feeling that was right. And that was my feeling. The first buildings I had were in Canada really because I went to Canada and it was also funny, because I went back to my university, and they said,

“Hey, we're all going to Canada,” and there was an architect from Montreal who had told them that Canada needs architects. But he was totally wrong because he didn't know the, and that was honest misunderstand in Germany because in Germany you couldn't do anything without architect. I mean, even if you made a kitchen alteration, you needed plans by the architect submitted to the authorities. But here, if you submitted anything to the authorities, as an architect, they would say, “My God, what's wrong with the guy?” And, you know, because the developer did it himself, you know, he just did the thing. So and, and you know, he said, well, for example, Peterborough has one architect, you know, while in Germany, a city of 50, 60 thousand would have 60 or 70 architects there, you know. But it was a different system, you know. And so I wrote him a letter, okay, I will go, and then I got a letter from Canada saying that I had an employment with the firm of Blackwell & Craig and they would give me a job as a junior architect. Well, and I said, what does an architect get in Canada? And nobody knew, you know? And I said, finally, well what does a bricklayer get in Canada? And the bricklayer got a hundred dollars at this time a week, you know, and so I thought, well, I'm getting at the moment four times what a bricklayer gets and I would not get as much, I would get maybe half. And that would be all right, you can live on two hundred dollars. And I came to Canada and I got a job and I got twenty-five dollars [chuckle]. And I said to my then, not partner, but boss, Jim Craig, well, can't you pay me a little more, and he said are you crazy, I got fifteen dollars when I started. [laughter]. And actually twenty-five dollars was enough, because I, in three months, I bought a car. You know, which, you know, I mean, money, of course, has changed. And, so, anyway, and so I started there and then a friend of mine went with a firm, timber structures, and he asked me why don't I come with him because they pay more and so on and it's better and you can do something. So I went there and then designed few churches for them that they would build with glue lam arches and then Jim Craig called me and said would you mind to come back to our firm, and he then offered me hundred dollars – it was a fantastic sum, you know. And I said sure [chuckle]. So I came back and took the churches with me and that was my first jobs, really, that I built these churches and then some houses. And from then on, it developed, you know. And Mr. Blackwell died, it was very sad, and it was funny, I parked my car every morning at a gas station and would go in the Chinese shop to get some stuff, and so, that morning, it was announced that Mr. Blackwell had died. And so I went in the store and the Chinese man said, “Ah, old boss dead.” And I was getting married at this time, and he said, “Getting new boss.” [laughter] So, anyway, and then we practiced as Craig and Zeidler and then Jim Craig died then I was on my own. And then I hired some guys and they became partners and so. But I mean, basically, since

1953, I really ran the firm, you know, and the partners that I had were more the organizing, the financing and doing the other stuff and then, finally, they decided just to leave everything off and add my name in there, but I mean I'm always partner. And I'm now a partner, I'm a reader. I'm retired but I still work and do certain jobs. But I do a job in China now, but I don't travel there, that's somebody else does in my ... just go there.

Whenever Mr. Blackwell and Mr. Craig passed away, was the name of the firm still Blackwell Craig?

No, it became Craig and Zeidler, and then when Jim Craig died, I had a chap named Alf Roberts, and it became Zeidler Roberts and it became then ... for a while Bill Strong came in and it became Zeidler and Strong and, Craig Zeidler and Strong first, and then So kind of every two years the name changed, because at this time it was that only living partner could be his name on the firm and then when that changed we just left it Zeidler, yeah.

Ever since your first beginnings, apart from moving over to Timber Structures once, you've only worked at two firms since you came to Canada?

Well, I was a partner with Mr. Lind, uh, Dr., Professor Lind, but I think that work was more or less, I started to design my own stuff, and but I didn't really follow the straight modern way that Lind followed, and designed mostly, and he designed, didn't design anymore, I just designed for the firm. And I followed kind of the feeling of Egon Iremann; I was very much involved in that and then I developed that thinking and when I came to Canada, I developed that further. And, so, the work was based on that. I mean, it was not strictly modern, it was not strictly post-modern in the certain sense it was this feeling of having a unit in which these two things fit together and not one commanded or the other one commanded; they both had to fit, and, and, but what the main thing was in architecture were the people. Not the building. I mean, it wasn't to build a masterpiece and then just go and say, "Ah," you know. But the question was to build a building that people felt, "Aha," you know, "I feel good here," and this is a place to worship, and that is a place to heal, and that is a place to live, but they all had the same thing of your emotions – how you feel about that, you know. And then the other things like financing and money and so on of course played a thing in there, but no matter how much you pressed the money down, it still had to give that emotional sense, you know. And, you know, that was always my fight with the client. That to say, you know, actually, the part that, you know, money controlled the building was only, or came only in when the pure developers started. Because, at the time, when you built for an owner, where there was the owner, the architect, and the

contractor, you know, you had strong say in saying something and the owner had, of course, controlled the money, but he was willing to give some money, because, if you think of the financial end of a building, only 6 or 7 per cent is the building and 93 per cent, let's say 70 per cent is salary and 15 per cent are the other costs, so when an owner looked at the building costs, and you said, well that costs 10 per cent more in your building, it was only 0.6 per cent in his calculation. Because, if you build a building, that is it costs so much, but that is only 6 per cent of his overall budget. So if you increase it by 10 per cent, that's only 0.6 per cent that you add to the project. So he was quite willing to do things that would give a better building on an emotional sense, so that his workmen would like to work there and so on, which was important one felt good or that views were right and so on. Rather than fighting for the money; when the developer came in, he built an office building and when it was 10 per cent more, it wasn't 10 per cent, it was something like 50 per cent more, because he had only 25 per cent of his own money invested in there. You know, at 10 per cent increase, he had to pay for it. And that doubled to this large sums, so that is a difference, and he couldn't say to people this space would make feel better, how do you know, you know? They had to move in, work there for a while, and then they could say, yeah, they worked better here and by the time he had this place rented, he couldn't say, no, you all pay me, you know, more money to make it. So he was thinking of cutting down, down, down, down, down, and it wasn't the owner that controlled the building, but some subservant of him, and he was only responsible for the rental cost, you know, so to him the rental was a big thing, and he was fighting for it, he didn't think at the overall budget. And so that is the problem that we have with our financing now. It's quite different really when you have a owner/builder or a developer/builder in how you approach the financing, you know, and you have to fight much more for the financing, you know, and you have to fight much more for a decent building that will respond to all these things you feel are important and are important.

Just one question, is your elbow bleeding? There's blood on your shirt.

Oh! No, I have a problem here, too! [Laughter - unbuttons other shirt sleeve and shows large wound]

Oh, what happened?

Well, I was building, I'm building my daughter's cottage, and I was crawling through the basement. [Laughter]

Okay.

And I couldn't find the light switch, and so I was crawling through the dark, and

there was a big hole, and I stepped in.

Oh, no.

And I knocked both arms off, and I can't really walk because I had a staph infection, so I have no feeling in my feet anymore, and so I'm a cripple.

No, no you're not. Don't say that. [laughter] You're great for your age, so you are.

I have to get a band-aid.

[Pause while Doris gets Eb a band-aid.]

You better?

It doesn't hurt, it's a, it was just a big wound, that had peeled and I took the cover off and I must have knocked it.

Oh, okay. As long as you're okay, that's good. Perfect. So, let's continue. What is architecture to you?

My feeling is that architecture includes all life. [chuckle] And we can't just build a building to make it beautiful, if it doesn't respond to people. And so then you have to say what is it really you're looking for here? There are many things that influence life. I mean, like, for example, obviously the money, how much you have to spend. But you have to look at the money in a long term, not just the short term, you know. And then you have to say, okay, fine, it has to respond to your emotional life; I mean, what you feel. That you feel good in it and you feel right. I mean, if you go in a church, that you feel the emotions that are in there. If you go in a hospital, that you healthy, and so on. I mean, like, for example, when I was in Sick Children's, I remember when I brought my son, when he was six years, in there, and the nurse would grab him and carry him away because you weren't allowed to go to the hospital with him and he was screaming his head off, you know, 'cause he was scared. And she said, "Don't worry, he'll be all right", you know. And I was sitting there, hey, hope he's all right, you know? And then my daughter, it was her little son, it was 50 years later, came in, and it was the atrium we had built as this sculpture that moves through the centre, and so on, and pictures on the wall and viewing inside, then the shopping and all kinds of things, and he said, "Mom, where's the hospital?" you know. And it was kind of a pleasant space, you know, and my daughter could stay with him. I mean, they had built hospital beds where the parent could sleep with them. And we now find on about 50 per cent of the time the parent sleeps with them, it's amazing because

there are a lot of people there are for a year in there. But, for example, when he was sick, my wife slept with him all the time. And he felt good, you know, and it was good for the nurses because they had some help if anything happened, you know, there was somebody there caring for them. And for the child, it was an experience because he wasn't suddenly solved from his normal life and put into an environment that didn't do anything for him, but he felt strange because it somehow was different.

That's interesting. So you believe people are more important; people are the architecture?

Oh, yeah. I mean, in a house, it's everywhere the same. I mean, you want to have the place so that you feel comfortable in there and that you can unfold your life and so on. And, I mean, like today when fewer people have the maid that can work in the kitchen, the old way that the kitchen was here and the dining room was here, and the laundry was there and so on, and the maid went to there and only served and then went out again, is gone. So you have now the kitchen in the dining room, you know, and the kitchen could look now as well as a dining room, you know. And so that is a way of emotionally how we change our living.

Do you see a lot of changes from 1953 to today?

Yes and no, I mean, some things have changed. I mean, now, for example, the way that fewer people have help, you know, and that the more of the family lives together and the wife is working, and you know, all that wasn't there at the time. I mean, there were very few women who would work, you know. And it was nearly at this time, like, for example, in Germany, my mother was a university professor and when she married, she had to give up her job, because it was impossible for a wife to be a university professor, you know. I mean, later on she became again, but that changed. But at this time, it was quite clear that the man was the powerful element in there, period, and no woman should ever disturb him, you know?

From a design perspective? Are there many changes in layouts?

You know, I think you can live in a well-designed house 50 years ago, a hundred years ago, or two hundred years ago. I mean, there are certain things differently; I mean, for example, my cottage, which I bought from somebody who built it in 1920, you know, and had Chinese help, and the kitchen and the sleeping quarters for the help were separate, and you had to go through an open area into the dining room, you know. Now, we made a roof over there that's more convenient and I designed my daughter's house the kitchen and the living room is one, you know. Because why? I mean, because the woman prepares a meal or the man in

some families. In my daughter's house, he loves to cook [chuckle], and she doesn't particularly. [chuckle] And she's an interior designer and so she rather designs than cook, you know. And since different. I don't like to cook and Jane does all the cooking, you know. And so I help occasionally, but, and, you know, this kind of lifestyle has to be responded to.

What influenced you to be come an architect? What made you go to the Bauhaus?

Well, since I was a little boy [chuckle], my mother wanted me to be a lawyer. And of course she thought I was gifted for that and my father wanted me to be an artist. And I became interested in architecture when I was 10 or 12. I mean, I played the violin to a certain age, you know, and became quite good at it, but then I gave it up, I didn't like it. And I became an architect when I was 13, and I designed buildings and I drew buildings, and I looked at things. And my parents never interfered with that. I mean, they said well, if that's what you want to be. But there's nobody else in our family who's an architect, so.

Was there one key moment that solidified your decision to become an architect?

Yep, when I was 13. I hated to play the violin, and I, they had me in a band playing and so on, and I was a very small kid. I grew later and so I had a three quarter inch violin, three quarter size violin, and my father wanted, took me to the performance there, that I was playing, and I was up on the third floor and he said, come on quickly, and I said okay, okay, I'm coming, and forgot to close the violin case, and then the violin fell out, fell on the stair, and I fell on the stair, and we both sat down, and the violin didn't look like...and so I had to bring it to the master who prepared them and said don't worry, no rush. [chuckle] And I never touched it again, so.

What was your first building?

Well, I really think, while I built buildings in Germany and designed them, I kind of prepared myself for all that, and when I came here, my first building, really, was a church in Peterborough. And this is the church, here; see if I can find it. [Looks through book] Yeah, this here.

Ah, that's beautiful. Grace United Church. In 1954.

I built a number of churches, and then I built a house there, and I started this in, I started them both at the same time. See if I find it. [Looks through book] Yeah, here, this was for a family there.

The Hamilton house?

Mm hmm. And it's this here in Peterborough. It was for a family in Peterborough.

Was Peterborough booming at that stage? Was there a building boom on?

No, I got the job from them, you know. But in Germany, and I went there, and that's the reason I ended up there.

Can you remember who commissioned the job? The house? Was it the family called the Hamiltons?

Yes, Mr. Hamilton.

Can you remember what specifically he wanted within the design?

Well, I mean, the point was this, there was a very steep sloping site, and the houses on both sides were fairly high houses, and so we wanted, if he would put the living room on the street level, it would be a little house, and would look funny between these two high houses. And so we had to, and also there was no way of having a garage at the street level, or the only way to bring the car in was from the street, so we had the car driving in from the street and our entrances there, and then you walked up in the living room, and then in the living room the life, and then up above the bedrooms for these two people.

Was this considered a modern house at the time?

Well, I kind of though it was, you know. But it was also a house that fitted in the site. I got a Massey Medal for that, and that was my first Massey medal I got. [chuckle] And, so, but I mean, I designed these two buildings at the same time, you know. Yeah. So, I don't know which one is the first one. [split screen image of both buildings]

Well, we'll say they're both the first [Laughter] so we will. Was there any sort of unusual materiality for this house?

No, I used the materials that were there, the stone and wood, and, you know, that kind of developed the part. I mean, it was some building that would fit in and 50 years later, you know, they still accepted that, you know.

Is there any significant stories that you can reminisce back to the Hamilton house, is there any story that you could tell me?

Well, I think there were more stories about the church.

Oh is there? Well, tell me about the church?

Um, there was a minister there, a Scotsman, and he was quite amusing, and so he, at the opening, he said that it reminded him of the lemmings, you know. [laughter] We all marched in. [laughter] And, but, you know, it was a feeling of light, you know. We had these folded walls with light coming from behind, so when you came in the church, it was a lit church, but you wouldn't be disturbed by the windows, you couldn't look out, you know. They came from, when you went out you saw the light, you know. It was funny, for example, when we built the church, and it was at the time a hundred thousand dollars, it was a lot of money [laughter], and he had to go the Synod in Peterborough, in Toronto, to get permission. And, he finally got it after a long, long discussion. And somebody, he had, we had a cross – I haven't it here – but it was a big cross here and there. And they said that they liked it all, but they thought, doesn't the United Church have a more special feeling for the cross, like the circle around like the Presbyterians have and so on, and so on? And he said yes. And he said, "What does it look like?" [Eb makes a money sign with his hand] [laughter] And he shut up. [laughter]

Oh, that's funny. [Laughter] What did you learn from that experience?

Well, I mean, each building, you know, teaches you something, and you only maybe realize it to a certain point because it always, the client there. And, I mean, in these buildings I had a client that we were on the same wavelength, but often you have a client that says, Oh, I don't like that, I like it this way," and so on. So that the building at the end is kind of a compromise of their wishes and what you think should be right and not necessarily coming to the most splendid building or the money comes in and squeezes you down. And so, when I thought about when you said you wanted my best building, I kind of don't know if I have a best building. Maybe I haven't built it yet. [laughter] I, because each building has something, I mean, there's something you develop, and then either it gets fulfilled or it doesn't get fulfilled. And, mostly, there are kind of bangs in there that you have to change it to this amount, and you can't do that, or ... I mean, the city [Toronto] planning, for example, isn't in the way here in which you can put things together, like. And Crombie tried to get housing in the downtown area. He came to me and said if I wouldn't do it, and I said no I wasn't really that, I was interested in it, but I didn't want to do it, because why wouldn't he use a young architect? [laughter] At this time, I was 45, and I thought I must be younger than he thinks. [laughter] Who hadn't kind of the commitments I had, because I was building downtown for the various development firms, you know, Cadillac Fairview, and so on, and I know they wouldn't like it. And then finally he came back to me and said, look, if I use a young architect, he wouldn't have the power of conviction,

you know. When you do it, it would say, hey, that makes sense, you know. And so I said, okay, fine, I will do it. Ah, but, and we didn't meet some prior designs for it, and then it came through. But, and we didn't build some of the first; though, now the Trump Tower, for example, was the first residential building in the downtown, you know. But, I mean, the point was really, Canada still hasn't really grasped the idea that living is together, you know. And where there are office buildings, there should also be residential buildings and where, and there should be also stores. Not the separation that, you know, here are the stores, here are the residential, here is the business. So, at least with Crombie's suggestion, we got a residential building inside the commercial building. So that when you go out of your house, you are next to a thing. But, in Canada, really this really worked, to combine everything in one building. Like, for example, when I was worked in Barcelona, and we had our office in a residential building. And there were many offices in there, you know. And we, the men before used it as an apartment, and then we used it - it was a fairly big apartment - as an office building. So, here, you know, they felt an office building had to be an office building and only the office workers had to walk in, you know. And a residential had to be only residential and only the residential walked in and kids in the office building would be wrong, and so on. But, you know, that isn't the way life goes, you know. Life, it's altogether, you know. Why, you know, I mean, now people bring their children to the office [chuckle], but it's still a little bit different, you know. Queen's Quay, for example, terminal warehouse, is up, you know, where you have retail, office, and housing all in one building, you know. And that is essential down there. Because, you know, in the summer, it's great, you know, but in the winter you have to look out from behind the glass wall. But you need the circulation and people moving around to make it worthwhile.

Do you think the downtown core in Toronto needs more diversification within the buildings themselves?

Well, I mean, it's now moving in, you know. I mean, the Trump building is the first in the real downtown of housing in there, so we're slowly getting there.

Would you consider the Trump building one of your best buildings?

Well, as I say, there's really is no best building. And, for example, I put some Eaton Centre, you know, was one building where we developed certain things, you know. Now, the problem with every building you do, over the years, it slowly gets changed. You know, the owner has some idea, and muddles around and so the cleanliness of the original design that came through is very seldom maintained, you know. And Eaton Centre also had its problems, that they built

something and then they came back to me and said well, can, you know, you fix it up in some way? After they realized it didn't work. Then there's Ontario Place. [moving of papers] Now, that was Vancouver; we built there, and I can say that's a nice building, you know. And, but also we had to make changes there and then they built things beside there that not quite right, and so on. And, then [moving of papers] Ontario Place, you know. So, I, I'm not really quite sure, you know, if there is something like the best building. There are buildings where I did something to a point, and then for some reason, it didn't happen or was changed later by things. And if you look at a building after 20, 30 years, there are a lot of actions and additions, and so on. There are a whole bunch of buildings, I brought them out here, you know, hospitals we did in Israel, and so on, which had to fit certain things, you know, and so I really can't say that's my best building.

That's a very fair answer so it is. Would you be able to state what would be your favourite building?

No, I mean, I love them all. It's like the mother, which are, is, you know, sometimes the worst you love the most because you fought like hell to get that far. [laughter] And so you love what's came out there, even if it isn't the best. [laughter]

Okay. Could you discuss some buildings that you've done throughout your career that are highlights?

Well, I mean, um, you know, what we have done - I don't know, what, 40-50 buildings in my career? But I mean, these buildings I showed you are the buildings I thought are good, and then this was published almost 5 years ago, and then I have a bunch of other buildings here that have developed; I mean, the Eaton's Centre, and many others; Trump Tower, for example, is an interesting project, you know, because it was the attempt to get housing in a very small site, and the city gave us the right to put it in, in this area.

Tell me about the Toronto Eatons Centre?

Before we got involved, they wanted to destroy the Eaton's Centre, and so on and so on. But we felt it shouldn't be, I mean I feel the sad part in Toronto is the way we own property, and that kind of makes a bad city. I mean, like, for example, we say, you know, here's mine, here's yours, here's yours. You get the right to build a ten-storey tower, I should have the right to build a ten-storey tower, and so on, or a twenty- or a thirty-storey tower. And so the ... things happen, you know, three towers stand side by side can barely look at each other, you know, and around there is no man's land, you know. And so that is a problem. I mean, for example, in other cities, across the world, in, for example, they have in Australia a ruling

in Gambury that if you have a building on a site, your right is for the size of the building as it is, and if you want to change it, and we agree that it's changed, then we say yes, but you have to pay us the increase in land value that develops from there. And through that they could control how the growth is. I mean, for example, I find in China, there's, for example, there's a fairly good way in which you can build the things. I mean, not that they are brilliant, but at least they have more control. I mean, we're doing right now a project in China and, you know, we can do certain things that we can't do here, in which we say, well, I mean, this is what we want, we want to build an inside court, we want to build a tower that they're related to each other and so on so on. Here you bring a building in there and bring the next building in there because, you see, you have the right to do that. And then you have the right to hold out; you, you have a perfect site and you don't sell it. I mean, for example, when we did the Eaton's Centre, the corner building was not owned by Cadillac Fairview, and so there was an old store in there, I forgot what it was, some... and we wanted to get that enclosed in it because it was a major point, the corner of Queen and Dundas, I think it is. And they said no, you know. And so we had to build our building around there. And it was crazy, you know. And then, when the building was finished, they sold it, you know. I mean, there's all this kind of problem that comes through poor city planning, you know, and poor laws that control the planning, that the city planning has the power to say you can't do that, you know. I mean, for example, in Germany, there's if, if you have assembled a site to do certain things on it, and one holds out for crazy reasons, if you have a certain percentage of the land assembled, then this guy has to sell it at that price that the rest of the land has been assembled, period. And he can't say, ha ha, you know, I want a hundred million for my site, you know, which is only worth a million, you know. And therefore he either won't sell it or finally they bite the bullet and buy it, you know.

So the building on the corner that you had to build around at Dundas and Queen. Was that a financial problem?

It was financial; they couldn't buy it at the time. I mean, he was kind of crazy. He thought, since he was the last piece there, he could charge like a hundred million dollars when it was only worth five, you know. And, so they said no, we show you that we can do it without you, you know, and then he sold it after. But by that time, it was too late, you know. I mean, now they are planning maybe to do something again, but I mean it's all ... But you see Eaton's Centre, for example, was the saving of an area. I mean Eaton's Centre, when it was built, was becoming the area there, the bad district. And there was child being killed and that started the push to hey, why don't you do something with the area? And that developed

then the whole thing to develop that whole block and with that, really, life came back to the downtown. I mean, Eaton's was moving out up to Dundas Street, you know, yeah, up north, and Queen Street became the bad street. And was Eatons that had turned the whole thing around. But, then, also, for example, you had Eaton we had to deal with and they didn't play ball, you know. And I wanted to have the galleria going all the way through from Queen Street up to the north street, but Eatons said they had been there and said no, you know. So we had to let them out in the middle and stop our galleria there. And then they realized they made a hell of a mistake, which I told them all the time, because the, what is the street, north of Queen Street there, the subway station there? Anyway, the people getting out there wouldn't get out there anymore but they would go on to Queen Street and get out to go in the Eaton Centre and the upper part of there, and then they got used to it and they didn't go through Eatons Centre. And so then they realized that was a mistake, that they should have a way from, to get out at the station and then move to City Hall and so on even if Eatons is closed, you know. And so I mean all these things kind of are difficult to assess at the time and when you say I, they say, oh well you're crazy, you know, that isn't so, you know.

But you foresaw a problem?

Well, you know, it was obvious, you know. There's nothing to be foreseen, you know. But they didn't believe me, you know, they felt we have done it until now and now it's open, but I mean, we first built an underground connection and then after that so that people would get out there and the traffic would more modify again.

So, how many children do you have?

Three daughters. And one son. When our last daughter was born, he was round about six or seven and she was kind of ten years behind the first one, the last one. The first three came all bang, bang, bang, bang. [chuckle] And then the last one came quite late. And I came home and I told the girls you have a sister, and they're "Ahhh." When I came in my brother's room, in my son's room, and I said, hey, you have a little sister, there was no sound, and I thought he was asleep, and I wanted to wake him up and then I realized he was crying. And I said what's the matter, and he said I don't want to grow up with three sisters. [laughter] But actually, he was kind of, and he is kind of, the big father for her, you know. One Christmas, she was round about three and he was eleven, or something like that, and he got a job, and he worked and he bought her sixteen presents, you know. Kind of little junk, you know, a little shirt, a little shawl, and so on. Wrapped them all up, and had them in a Christmas... And she, like a little princess, went through and paid

no attention and he was heartbroken. All this work and nothing [Laughter].

Do you have any specific design rituals you would go through whenever you begin a new project?

Well, what I always do is, when a design comes, I mean, now I'm working with other people, but I mean usually, when I used to alone, I would work the same way. I would do maybe five different designs for the thing and, because you never know which way you should go, you should go that way, that way, that way. And then you would sit down with the client and with the contractor and everything else and would discuss it. And they would say, well, maybe this design is good, this is no good, this is no good, that is good, and so on. And you would develop these two further. And maybe get a third design going. And then you would discuss that again, and you would go through and through it until one design is left over. And you never know, really, with what you start, you know, because it's each time a different way of looking at it.

Do you have a medium of choice, for example, pen, pencil or computer?

Well, I mean, I work with a pencil, you know, but now with the computer, I'm not really a great computer guy, so I give those to the computer guys and they draw it up. Because, I mean, the basic thought of the design is outside the computer. And then, you have a certain concept and then you put that in the computer.

Do you think computers have aided architecture?

Oh, yeah, totally. If you go in our office here, now, everybody sits on a computer [laughter] but me. Well, the computer, now, has kind of expanded the initial time and shortened the other time. I mean, because when you have a computer drawing ready in the design, it looks like the finished building. Before that they were kind of, you know, if you saw it, it was a design, and you would work through. But I mean, like, I'm doing this job in...let's see [moving of papers, opening of zippered case]...in...you know, I did this rough sketch, and then I did a rough sketch for this tower, here, that we had to develop. And I worked on it for two days, on seeing how I do and what I do and then, you know, it was a day that, you know, the sketch was drawn up in a computer, you know. And much better than I can do it by hand.

Do you enjoy sketching?

Oh, yeah. [shows sketch of Moscow Square] That was sketched up in Moscow, we did a project there. And this was in Moscow Square.

[Eb takes a sketchbook numbered 85 from his bag and continues to show me

exquisite drawings that he has drawn from real life and design schemes from projects.]

That's a book here of eighty-five. This here is ten year's old. I have, keep the diary, and I've always put my personal life and what I design and what I'm doing. And the sketches I do and altogether, and so, and it's kind of interesting. I go through that now and I'm doing eighty-five, and there's a lot of things I forgot. That there's buildings I designed or arguments we had, and then they come back.

Have you ever thought of publishing this? Publishing your sketches?

Well, I'm trying to do now, but I have such a big book [laughter] and I have to get somebody who has ... I have round about two hundred diaries by now, I'm on two hundred and ten. [chuckle] Yeah. Here I'm at two hundred and thirty. And that was year diary number hundred and eleven. [chuckle]

Now, what are you writing in your sketch books? Are they just thoughts?

It's my thoughts, everything. I mean, I give speeches, and I put them in here and what I thought about it, and how I did the building, and what happened in the family.

Thank you for sharing. Your sketches are beautiful, i hope you get them published. What drives you to become an architect? What has driven you all these years?

Well, I mean, I don't know, I enjoy it, that's kind of ... Like, right now, I feel I'm lucky to get in some projects. [chuckle] And then work on it again, so.

Would you put it down to luck, or just raw talent that you have?

Well, I think it's like, somebody smokes, and I [laughter] do architecture.

What inspires your designs? Is there something, whenever you walk onto a site, do you envision it in your mind?

Well, I mean you ... As I said, it goes through various stages to develop it and then it comes closer and closer. Now, some come quite closely; I mean, there was, for example, when we did Ontario Place, they wanted to put it in the old Exhibition grounds, and we felt that was a mistake, because the Exhibition really didn't know what they were doing. And it was supposed to be a place for Ontario, so we had the idea of putting these buildings out in the lake and then it would be Ontario Place, rather than part of the Exhibition. And I had first the idea I wanted to do something I had just done McMaster, and McMaster is kind of a 90-foot spacing of a block that goes out. Let me see if I have a picture here. [Eb turns pages in his

book] I don't have McMaster in here. But, you know, they were every ninety feet columns set, and the columns were all services, and then there was an area in between there that could be served with anything, because it was interstitial space and the space in between there. And so you could do either offices or residential or anything in there. And that was the great idea, that you could build a hospital that could be there for a hundred years, but every ten years, you could make a change, because medical science develops and certain things become new, and so on. And, I think I told you that already, like, for example, when the exchange operating rooms came into thing, like the donor rooms, I mean, when you, for example, gave your kidney or a dead body or a kidney to another point, you had to have two operating rooms. 'Cause in one, the donor had to be operated on and get that kidney out and that had to be transferred from this operating room in the next operating room and then put in the body of the receiver. And that needed certain operating room techniques, and certain connections. And so when we, when that came up, for example, we did the hospital in Nova Scotia, and it cost us a million dollars to make these changes. But at McMaster it cost us a hundred thousand dollars because it was all there, you know. And the main thing was that, if, you know, the operating room had to keep going. So, every night when they're finished with the operations at five o'clock, everything had to be sealed, cleaned and then the workmen had to go in, and then they had to leave at four o'clock in the morning, and then you had to spend two or three hours to clean everything up again; that then the team could come in at six o'clock. But at McMaster, they could come in through the ceiling and the operating room would be sealed off and there was no problem. And, actually, I have some pictures where they're operating on one side and on the other side they do the changes, and there are glass walls in between there, you know. And so, that was the advantage of that system.

Do you have a building of preference that you like designing?

No, I mean everything is for human beings, so I've done hospitals, I've done theatres, opera houses, residences, offices, you know.

Which do you find the most demanding?

Anything. I mean, there is no change, because the human being is complex, you know.

Do you have any music you listen to whenever you design or music for relaxation?

No, sometimes I have a radio on, yeah, on the weekend or so, or at home. But, I'm not really that the music makes architecture.

How would you describe your architecture?

That's a good question. [chuckle] Well, I, I feel that each time you have to develop something to fulfill the demands that are there, and out of that develops architecture. I mean, you know, I mean, sometimes you do something crazy because the client wants something crazy, and so you try it. I mean, we're just doing a tower that turns around in the far east and so, I mean. I don't know, I mean, there's a certain building to it. I mean, each time you look for the answer to that and each time you hope to be better and improve it, and so on. But what is there is there and should not necessarily be destroyed. But, I mean, unfortunately, there's always the problem that somebody comes in and muddles around with it, and then that's something that my not necessarily be right, you know. I mean, like, Eaton's Centre, we had things, and there always somebody was hired and did something and then we came later on back and kind of tried to correct it, and so on. And it's, it's, you know, it's ... you need a connection with your client. And, you know, your client is a very important man. So, and if that connection doesn't work, you know, then the building's suffers from there.

Would you comment on the style of Frank Gehry?

Gehry's buildings don't fit everywhere. I mean, there are buildings where he has done very well and others where he kind of just has pushed his trademark on top of it, and, and to me that isn't right.

What architects have inspired you throughout your career? Would you have a favourite architect?

Frank Lloyd Wright had quite a marvelous way of dealing with the various possibilities and I admired him very much, yeah. And I admire some of Frank Gehry's work; but I find that, you know, like, for example, here at the Art Gallery he hasn't put his thing there, it still has, you know, some feeling. Well, I mean, you know, Frank Lloyd Wright was really the one I, I felt, because he had this feeling of architecture that was modern and yet motivated too.

Is there a building of Frank Lloyd Wrights that you have a special fondness for?

Yeah, well, the one in Japan that finally was knocked down; the, ah - what was it called, it was a hotel in Japan that he did. And it was the only building that survived the big earthquake there. Of course it was built on the muddy ground, below, and then, unfortunately... And I stayed there, and it's wonderful. And then I, you know, they knocked it down, you know, for some crazy reason.

SHIRLEY BLUMBERG INTERVIEW

SHIRLEY BLUMBERG INTERVIEW.

DATE: 6TH AUGUST 2009.

TIME: 2PM.

LOCATION: 322 KING STREET WEST, TORONTO.

Shirley Blumberg, thank you for taking this interview.
Pleasure.

Tell me, where were you born?

Cape Town, South Africa.

How did you end up in Canada?

The oil crisis of 1973. I was going to immigrate from Cape Town to London, England, and then the oil crisis hit in late '73, and there was no work in London for architects, and it all was pretty grim, and, so, that made me look over to Canada, and at that time, Pierre Trudeau was the Prime Minister, it was Expo '67, Canada looked refreshingly apolitical compared to South Africa. I didn't think about the snow, because I'd never encountered snow before – and here I am. [laughter]

What age were you whenever you left Cape Town?

I was 21.

So you'd already been to University?

I was actually three years, I'd completed three years at the University of Cape Town, and then I did a practical year, which was a requirement there, of the program, in London, so I worked in London for a year. Then I came here to U of T [University of Toronto] and finished up my fourth and fifth years. So, yeah, I grew up there, basically.

How did you find the cultural changes?

Huge.

Have you ever went back? Visits?

I went back for the first time in twenty-six years, um, a year and a half ago. So that was amazing, 'cause when I left, or the last time I'd been there before, was when it was, you know, fully in the sort of in the Apartheid regime, and, so, going back a year and a half ago was pretty amazing.

Have you still got friends over there? Childhood friends?

Nope. [laughter] Everyone in my high school class basically disappeared. They're all over the world. Yeah. So, I have friends everywhere. We were the class that, kind of, all that generation, it's like the lost generation. A lot of people left.

Do you have any siblings?

I do. I've got a sister in England. They had these Union Castle ocean liners that went from Cape Town to Southampton. That's the way my sister went, and all my cousins who went to London. They had the streamers and the whole bit. Yeah. That's what you did when you left. [laughter] It's quaint, now.

Did you come straight from Cape Town to Toronto?

I actually came to Canada, I didn't know a soul here, and so I looked at Montreal and Toronto and Vancouver. Then I decided to come to Toronto, and applied at the U of T to finish up my studies.

What influenced you to become an architect?

Well, I came from a country where there were no role models for women, period. There were no professional women that I can recall in my community, except for one lady who was a doctor. So, it was really, I think, the fact that I loved the arts, and I really enjoyed math and sciences and that sort of thing. And my sister had actually said to me, well why don't you think about architecture? That's a good combination. So it seemed like a reasonable idea to me. And I was lucky, because I loved it, you know? I didn't really know, I was sort of fascinated by those, in those days, when you start architecture, we did a lot of drawings with moving ruling pens and, you know, those instruments, drawing instruments. And I thought that was the bees knees, right. So I probably wanted to go into it for all the wrong reasons, but, you know, I was lucky that I actually thought I'd do something that I really enjoyed.

So it was basically your sister saying architecture, and that was it?

Well, because I loved drawing, and also, I loved math, yeah. Seemed like a reasonable idea. Although there were no precedents, there were no role models, at all, for female architects in South Africa.

Did the family home in Cape Town differ much from Canada?

You mean the environment?

Yes, the environment.

Oh, hugely, yeah. Well, South Africa was very, particularly Cape Town, is very European in terms of its culture and its references. I was the third of three daughters, and my parents had commissioned a contemporary house to be designed, and it was completed virtually the day I was born, and then they moved in. So, right from the beginning, I was in a contemporary, you know, this was '52, so it was a contemporary house. It was a great house actually, and all that wonderful Danish furniture, and, you know, great terraces and views and light, all that good stuff. Cool colours on the terrace. [laughter]

Do you miss South Africa?

I miss the geography and the climate enormously. Especially the ocean and the mountains, and the climate, but I don't think about it. This is so pointless, you know, there's so many things that I value about Canada that... Yeah. You gotta sort of, you've got to sort of turn the switch when you immigrate, and if you're, sort of, always looking back, it's just a miserable existence. So, I'm absolutely grateful for that, because it was an extraordinary childhood. But you've got to sort of live in the present.

That's true. I came from Northern Ireland, so I immigrated too.

Really? How old were you when you came?

I was 21, same age as you when you came from Cape Town.

How come you didn't retain your accent?

It's sorta there.

Well, yeah.

I had to change it, completely, because Canadians couldn't understand me.

They couldn't understand you. [laughter] Are you from Belfast?

Yeah, just outside.

Oh, oh, okay. That's probably why. It was too thick?

Too thick, couldn't communicate, so I had to relearn to speak again. When talking to my friends or anyone from Northern Ireland on the phone, it switches back

I can hear it in the background.

So what firm did you go to work for after you graduated from the University of Toronto?

Well, I graduated in a recession. So, I called up every, literally, called up every firm in the phone book. And there was no work. IBI had work for me for a day. So I did that. Then they took me on because I did a good job in the one day, they were very skeptical of U of T students, and they weren't quite sure that we were equipped to draft properly. So, obviously I passed that test, so I worked there for about probably four or five months, and then a job came up at Barton Myers office and I moved to work for Barton Myers. I worked with Barton for about 10 years, and that's where, of course, I met my partners.

Barton, he went off to Los Angeles? - that is now Diamond and Schmitt?

Well, it used to be Diamond and Myers - And then they split - And it was Barton Myers. I'm one of the few people in the city who've worked for Diamond and Myers, Jack Diamond, and Barton Myers, in their three incarnations.

Well, I'm sure you've got some stories to tell?

Oh, yes. [laughter]

So, are you married now? Family?

Yes, yes, I'm married and I have one son and two step sons. And a grand daughter.

That's a full house.

Mmm hmm. They're all out of the house. It's fun. They just come back and visit.

Can you tell me about your first building?

My first building was, after I graduated, was for Barton, Barton Myers' office, and it was the Kensington parking garage. So here I was, a fresh, young graduate, and I was project architect for a building. It was, like, incredibly exciting. And the structure, itself, was designed by Regents Christopherson who were parking and structural engineers, and, so, what we were required to do as architects was really clad the structure. And at that time, it was only a one-storey building, but it also had a roof deck, obviously. So that was my first experience with actually taking a building through and doing working drawings, and I did my first stair design. And the stair was pretty, that was sort of the, I guess, pretty well the only feature of the design that it was built into the expression of the elevation, the stair tower. And, um, I was blown away by designing stairs. I thought that was, like, the most amazing thing, because it's such a three-dimensional project. And such a three-

dimensional problem, so, I'd never actually been through that in detail, the whole thing, so, I still remember that was, that was pretty exciting. And then, actually, years later, as K.P.M.B., we did the addition to the Kensington parking garage, and I, re-did it, again! [laughter]

Did you change the stairs?

Added on to the stairs, yeah.

Same design as the other one?

Yeah, yeah. It stood the test of time.

So what sort of cladding did you put on it?

Oh, gosh. That was glazed, with steel, and I can't remember what we did on the rest of it; I think it was... I think, Oh, I remember - of course. It was brick. And then that was for, was when I was with Barton. To be contextual, to relate to the buildings in Kensington Market. And then we sort of switched it up a bit, when we did it as K.P.M.B., did a few more moves, and we did these little, sort of roof elements, basically as eye concepts, you know, almost symbolic of the Market. Because that's where everyone goes and parks when they go shop at the Market. So you can see these little sort of, um, roof things over the stair towers from Spadina and it was for the signage.

The way you tell the story you're full of confidence.

Full of confidence? No! It was scary doing a stair!

Were you scared?

Of course! Yeah. I'd never done working drawings ever. Well not as a student right. It was cool, it was a small project and you needed to focus on certain things, so it was great to learn.

What did you actually learn from it? Have you any stories?

Oh, this is going way back. Just maybe the stair was the thing that was the most challenging and the trickiest because the integration with the elevation and the glass, and so on. But, no, it was great, because, you know, there was no enclosed space other than the stairs, and that was handy, so we didn't have to worry about the rain and weatherproofing and stuff. And then I did all the field review, which was good, and... No, I don't remember so much from that one. I've loads of stories from other stuff. [laughter]

What was so special about the stairs that got you so excited about it?

I think because, as a student, you don't kind of understand because you're dealing in the theoretical. And, you know, we had some building construction courses and some exercises, but you don't really get it until you have to actually put the three-dimensional little puzzle together. And I think that was what was really cool, and with the stair, too. And Barton was great. He was a great teacher in this respect, and in terms of detailing; And the way the handrail works as you go up the flights of stairs, and you want to make it nice and smooth, you've got to stagger the stairs to make sure that happens, etc., etc., etc.

And this was before computers, of course?

Way before computers. It was the dark ages, oh yeah. Well, I started, actually, when I was a student. I used to work, before I left the country, I worked for an architect, who was called, he was called Pius Pahl and he studied at the Bauhaus under Mies Van Der Rohe And he did houses, he was an amazing guy. So, I did full-scale details with a ruling pen on paper. And I was the only person working for him in his studio. His studio was attached to his house, and we'd break for lunch and his wife would make a fabulous lunch, and we'd sit there for a couple of hours and he would bring out his books from the library and tell me all about the Bauhaus. So, that was pretty cool, yeah.

What is your best building?

Well, um, you can't really say, if you're an architect, what your best building is, because, um, it's like – as I mentioned to you before – it's like asking to choose, someone to choose between their children, and they're all like children to you, you know. The amount of time. In fact, the gestation period is longer for buildings than for human beings. Um, and I think also the way we practice. When we started up K.P.M.B., we were very clear that every building would count, we would never do bread and butter work. Everything we did would matter. And we'd give it the same kind of emphasis and attention. So, I've done such a huge range of buildings, I would also hope that, as a practicing architect, my best work would be ahead of me, right? Otherwise, I would sort of give up, you know? That's the great thing about architecture, it's like you're never done, there's always mountains to climb, which is, which is fun. There's always challenges. So I've done so many, been fortunate to do so many, but I think, I guess the highlights would be the more institutional buildings that I've done, rather than the commercial or residential buildings. 'Cause they're just, they tend to be way broader in scope, and more detailed.

Could you maybe discuss one or two of them?

Yeah. Sure, sure. When I started out, like one of the first buildings I did as a, was sort of a bridging project from Barton to K.P.M.B. was the Hasbro corporate headquarters. And that was put up in Rhode Island and that took about ten years, and that was a great learning process. It was the conversion of an old, new England mill building. And from, you know, many, many projects later, I guess, I guess when I look back, sort of highlights for me would be some of the institutional projects, like definitely the ballet school, the National Ballet School, I did with my partner, Bruce Kuwabara, and Mitch ... from our office. That was an extraordinary opportunity that, I was privileged to work on a project of that scope and ambition for a client like that. It really is one of the best schools in the world [ballet]. And that was an amazing learning opportunity. And Bob Simon was our client, and he was amazing, he was a great visionary in terms of exactly what he wanted for the project, and so we were really extremely well challenged by that, which was great, you know. They say you can't make great buildings without great clients. He was truly a great client. And also that, what was exciting about that building, too, because for us everything about architecture is really, in the end, about city building. A lot of our work is in the context, is in an urban context, and that's what we're passionate about – about place making and city building. And there, that was a much bigger project in that it was like a private-public partnership with Context Developers, who did Radio City Apartment Buildings at the same time as we did the Ballet School extension, expansion; and it was all based on the old C.B.C. lands. And so, what that project was really about transforming a rather derelict precinct in the city. So that was quite amazing in terms of the urban design impact that we were able to have on Jarvis Street and that precinct.

Another one that was really a highlight is the Gardiner Museum, again with Thomas and Bruce from our office. And that's taking, was taking an existing building and completely transforming it, and adding and enlarging it substantially. And setting and really creating a new platform for a small institution in the city. And it's interesting, because I think it's a sign of a really mature urban culture, that you can have a small museum like that. And, again, we had great clients, great patron, Ron Gardiner. So that was, that was a real pleasure, to do a building at that scale, as well.

There've been others, like, for educational buildings, academic buildings like Centennial College in Scarborough. I think was a really, was a project I really, really enjoyed enormously, because it was to take a community college and to try and give them, again a new platform, a new, a kind of a signature building and try,

in a way, help them envision what their future is. It was also a very, very skimpy budget compared to what other colleges were building at, at that time. And we were able to, I think, create a very vibrant academic community for them. So that was, that was kind of a gateway building to that whole Scarborough campus, where U.T.S.C. is.

Another one is the James Stewart Centre for Mathematics in Hamilton at McMaster University again working - mathematicians who are amazing to work with. It's such a pleasure working with people who are so smart, way smarter than you [laughter] And they get it, about architecture, so again, that was a real pleasure. And we were able to do some very interesting things, that were sort of spatially, in terms of transparency into the program and to really open up an existing feature of the building to create, again, a very vibrant community for studying mathematics. So that was a lot of fun.

Another one was, which is actually sort of a pet project of mine and Bruce's, because, again a project that has take a long time, done on an absolute shoe string, is the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre. Where we took an old industrial building in Don Mills and converted it into a cultural centre, and that was done over a number of years, a number of phases, as the community, which is very small, really, was able to sort of figure out how to fund this. And on a total shoestring. So it was, that was pretty interesting, to be able to do that.

I think we've done a fair bit of residential and commercial buildings, which have also been pretty interesting for us, but one that stands out for me is a mixed-use building that we just completed in Denver last year for an American developer in their lower downtown historic district. The first contemporary building in the historic district, so that was very challenging, because they had very, very strict guidelines, and we were able to develop a building that they thought was contextual but not narcissistically, which was fun.

So out of all these buildings... you're children...

Yes, yes.

Would you like to talk about one more in depth? The Ballet School? What inspired the design?

Well, the Ballet School was, what inspired the design for it - it really was a vertical campus for these kids who were grade six to twelve, and they have a full program, academic program, and it's an elite training facility. So they have an extraordinarily

intense life, academic life, in the building. We had twelve studios in the building; the studios are very, very high, floor to ceiling height, so the typical floor to ceiling height is about six and a half meters in the building, which produces very, very unusual public space in the building. So immediately, you were ahead of the game then, that's pretty cool. And, what we were, we envisioned, because we had two historic buildings on the site, the original Havergal Girl's Cottage plus Arthur Mowat's, that was the first Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, his house. We had to incorporate these two heritage buildings, we had to connect to the Betty Oliphant Theatre, which is sort of, if you think about it, that stage in the Betty Oliphant Theatre, that's what it's all about - everything that goes on in the new building, in the training centre, is leading up to the performance on that stage, which is, basically prepares them for performance in the real world. So, because Jarvis slopes, we conceptualized, we created almost a kind of a stage, if you like, with the landscaping, with the streetscape, and we have a series of buildings, contemporary and historic buildings, so they're almost like dancers, or actors, on a stage, and we have courtyards. So, it's quite against the street, which is quite a rich urban edge with these pavilion buildings and courtyards. And, then, in the background, behind the existing Oliver Mowat building and the new pavilions, we have the rest of the studio buildings, it's kind of an "L", the studio buildings, which is a huge volume, but because it's so far back, it doesn't have a sort of an overbearing presence. And the idea there also was to bring the program to the exterior, to the façade. So it's a very transparent building, we're very lucky we're east facing, or we couldn't have done that. [laughter] So a stroke of luck. And so we're always fearful now that we will be responsible for traffic accidents on Jarvis Street. Because, when you go by, you see the kids in the studio, particularly, if you can imagine, on a late winter's afternoon, commuters are going home and you see all these beautiful ballet dancers practicing at the bar, so I think it's, a lot of people have sort of commented on that. Well, it's very unusual, you know, they don't come along that often. There's only one actual ballet school in the country. And we did, we toured London, Paris, and Seattle, with our clients, to look at what had been done in those ballet, those ballet schools, and it was a real privilege to work on something like that; it doesn't come along that often, you know?

Right now, actually, I'm very much engaged in a project in Waterloo for the Balsillie School of International Affairs, with Jim Balsillie. You know, where the Seagram Museum is, which is now C.I.G.I., which is the Centre - uh, sorry - yeah Centre for International Governance and Innovation, which is his institute, and it's near the Perimeter Institute, and the Canadian Clay and Glass Gallery. So it's all in there. So it's the rest of the site, where the Seagram Museum is, where

the plant used to be. So we're building a school, and it's actually, it's interesting because it's a collaboration between C.I.G.I., the University of Waterloo, and Wilfrid Laurier University. And it's about global innovation, international affairs. So, it's pretty interesting.

I never heard about it?

Yeah, it's pretty interesting.

Is it just in the early stages?

Ah, well, right now we've just started working drawings. But I think it's sort of interesting because it also will play quite an important role in revitalizing that area of downtown Waterloo. I should say Uptown Waterloo. Great projects. Oh, yeah, spoiled rotten we are. No, we have great clients, we're very fortunate.

[Shirley points to a poster] Actually another one which is amazing; I didn't even mention, is the Film Festival, which is going on right across the street. Another – you see, I forgot one of my children – this is a project that Bruce and I have done with Matthew Wilson from our office, he's the project architect, and that's an extraordinary, again a kind of a one-off project, if you like, 'cause I don't think there's anything quite like it, anywhere else. It's the permanent home of the Film Festival, but it's not just for the ten days of the Festival; in fact, they'll still use the city as they do. But it's for 24/7, all their programming for the rest of the year. So, Cinema Tech Ontario, Sprockets, everything they do will be held in that building. So, it's massively ambitious. The whole podium is for TIFF, and then there's a condominium tower above. Again, it's interesting, there are a lot of these projects in Canada where there's a private/public partnership, which creates a public or cultural benefit, and I think the Ballet School would be one, and then this is another one.

Is it a work/live, or is it just separate?

No, no. It's separate. And they have sort of, as part of the marketing efforts, privileges; so they'll get, you know, special privileges in terms of access during the Festival, and that kind of thing. But, no, it's separate. Basically the whole deal with, the whole development deal finances, helps finance, TIFF, and allows them to get a home and strata ownership of the podium.

Would there be any stories from any one of your children that you would like to reminisce?

Well, for instance, I mean, it's funny, the kind of ... I always used to think, when I was a student, okay, like you [laughter] Okay – the design, you do the working

drawings, you get through that – thank God – then you just go ahead and build the thing. But it's not like that – at all. So, by the time you come to bid, like half your work is done, and then getting it built is like a massive struggle, getting it built properly. And so it takes many, many – that's why we work in teams; it takes like such a different combination of talents and skills to actually get something done. It's really difficult.

So, Centennial College – we had... It's a very simple sort of concept, it's two bar, parallel bar buildings, but pulled apart, so you have atrium public space, and then there's a whole one entire level grade difference from north to south of the site. So, what we have is, you enter both north and the south and you come in and then there are what we kind of dubbed the Spanish Steps; that's these massive steps that go down to the lower level, where you enter off of the southern entrance where the TTC busses and so on. So, above the Spanish Steps – are you with me so far?

And this whole atrium thing kind of opens up to the view of Highland Creek and the city. It's quite nice to the south. And it was an incredibly tight budget, right? So, we, we basically, on stilts, have this sort of what we call The Egg, which is this shaped auditorium piece, it's a lecture theatre, all right? And then there's some classrooms above, so it's like a volume, and it's clad in wood. It's the only place we could use wood.

And everything else is very, very simple, dumbed down, but, obviously, because of its central location, we get a lot of mileage for it. So the guy who was in charge of physical plant and I didn't get along – I mean, this is not unusual – you'll find out in life and architecture. But, anyway, and they had a very, rather dim view of the students who were, a lot of them were fresh off the boat, from all over the world, and they were, you know, they were grabbing with all the different kind of cultural customs, issues, trying to get everybody to sort of get along and make it all work, and so they were very, very stringent about maintenance of the building. So, for the railings of the corridors overlooking these atria, we had to do models – I think we did four or five? – and we had to test it out, we could, we had to slope the top of this ledge. We wanted to make it so that you couldn't actually physically put a bottle or coffee cup on there because otherwise they would do that and then they would fall over and kill someone down below. Understand how that happens, right? So, I'm there with the head of physical plant, on the site, and he's looking at this beautiful thing we're so proud of, this lecture hall, right? Volume clad in wood, it's beautiful and at the back we had a big frame as part of the design, and the grills for the mechanical, electrical, and windows, what have

you – and he looks at this and said it looked like a massive frame, and, therefore a ledge, about 20 foot above the lowest level, and he said, oh, you have to take that ledge away. I said I can't do that, it's a beam. I don't care, you've got to take it away. Why? Well, the students are going to take coffee cups – these are lethal weapons in these colleges, you understand, throw them and other junk onto that ledge and then it creates a problem for maintenance. I said, well, I don't see that they're going to be doing that, and even if they did, you can reach them with a ladder. And he said, it's unacceptable, you can't do that. And I said, look, in my experience - and this is the God's honest truth - when you actually treat people in a respectable way, when you actually believe, as I do, that you can actually create a better world for people, a better learning environment, they actually feel differently and, and behave differently. If you build them a prison, they'll behave like prisoners, or if you build them a zoo, they'll behave like animals in the zoo, in a cage. But if you actually build them something where the message is, we think you are pretty cool human beings and that you have potential to be even better, their behavior adjusts, right? He didn't go for this. It was too airy fairy for him. So, then I said, okay, may I speak to the student president, please? Or student leader? So he got really freaked. He said, why? I said, well I'd like to explain to him, or her, that as architects we've spent years, now, designing what we think is a great building for them, for them to learn in, for their future, and I'd like their commitment to respect it, so that I don't have to wreck it, or change the centerpiece here. He backed right off!

[laughter]

No more about the ledge. It was too scary for me to actually speak to the student leader.

That's really good. [laughter]

They don't teach you that in school.

No, they don't. [laughter]

Physical plant people, they're not all bad, I must add.

Do you go through any design rituals when ever you start a project?

I think what we do, is we sort of jump in the deep end, and you try and just immerse, you totally immerse yourself in it. It's like the only thing on your radar. And, at that moment in time, as much as is practical, and you try and understand it, you try and really, really understand it because out of that understanding comes the kind of the big idea, and every project has to have its own, has to have

the big idea or really has to have a thesis or it obviously isn't a very good piece of work. And that comes out of the understanding of what kind of a place this is to be, and each one is different. So you try and get inside, you know, your client's heads and understand what they want and what their objectives are, but it's also, architecturally, our own objectives in terms of what we're exploring in terms of the built environment and architecture. So, it's many, many, many things feed into that – everything feeds into it, you know? Your whole experience, what you read, places you visit – everything, you know? That's the cool thing about what we do, right? And, it's almost like, architecture, for me, is almost like having a series of affairs, although, I wouldn't know that, of course, in practice. [laughter] Being happily married, and all. But, it's like, because you, you have such a, a deep engagement with your clients, such intense engagement for a few years, and then – poof – you're off to the next one, right? And you go back and visit occasionally, but it's like, then they take the building and it's off and running. So, it's kind of interesting. You learn an awful lot about different disciplines and businesses and pursuits through that, so it's really quite fascinating that way. And then, you know, we brain storm together, and sketch.

Do you have a medium of choice, Pencil, paper, computer?

Well, for the, to begin – Bruce does an awful lot of sketching and thinking about it. And I also, I like to sketch in grease pencil. For me that's my... You need something really fuzzy and that's not precise, that's vague, because you're sort of groping around, and, and when you do sketches you kind of suggest several things, and it doesn't ... Like, I hate the computer, and I don't know how people can design just in computer. I think you need to sketch first to see form and idea and then test it out on computer. And we build models and we do all of that. And we use the computer, 3D renderings and everything we can, really.

How do you choose materiality?

It comes out of again, the thesis of the project. We, we attack that very early, actually. Again, it comes out of that understanding what the big idea is of the project and the tone of the project and what we're trying to express with it, and the context. Sometimes the material, like, for instance, the building we're doing in Waterloo, because it's an industrial context, and Waterloo is a brick city, our clients said, well, of course you're going to use brick. We said, well, sure, so, guess what, we're using brick. So, sometimes it's as kind of straight forward as that, but then other times, you know, like, for the first Film Festival, for instance, on the façade we are exposing, we're bringing through, to the façade some of the theatre volumes, and some of them kind of come out, protrude out, of the façade,

and then sit back and you then can see some behind the façade. And then the others you can't see. But it's basically the idea about the Film Festival is, it's like – it's a whole city block, you know, so it's like a city of film with sort of these walkways, routes, almost internal streets and then the surfaces themselves are almost like buildings within it. And are very whacked, and kind of – what do you call? – ancient spaces. Pretty interesting, actually. That's very exciting. It's under construction now.

How many theatres are actually in it?

We have five theatres in it.

Is everything going to be under that roof? Are the five theatres catering to the Festival for the week?

No, so for most of the year, all their programming would be done, so they won't, for instance, be having Cinematheque Ontario at the AGO anymore. All of it will be there. Sprockets, all their minor festivals will be there, and they'll also run movies, you know, every evening and that sort of thing, right? Regularly. During the Festival it becomes the headquarters for the Festival, and they'll probably run movies for the industry there, and have some for the public, but the public venues – like, our theatres run from 550 down to 100, so it's too small, they need bigger venues, so they'll still use Thompson Hall for the openings, they'll still use all the other theatres in town like they do. This'll be in addition, be their headquarters, and there'll be great party spaces there, of course.

For cinema's royalty?

Well, actually the cool thing about the Toronto Festival is that it's for the people, it not like Cannes, which is for kind of, you know, just the cognoscenti of the industry, this is actually for industry and the public, which is what is very nice about it.

Did you meet any talent whenever you were designing this? Brad Pitt didn't offer advice?

No, he didn't, he didn't. I'm really surprised he didn't ring me up. [laughter] It's okay, I'm over it now. What was really great was the working process there. It's tough to do a building about film, actually, when you've got a board – TIFF – who all have different ideas about it. And they wanted the building to very much represent the idea of film. So, there's one school of thought that, which is the sort of more campy, literal school of thought, which is, you know, you do film spools and all that kind of stuff, right? That's not us. And then there's the other

school of thought, which is where we went, which is actually the sensibility and the experience of the building is infused, if you like, with filmic qualities. So, in other words, issues of sort of physical qualities, transparency, translucency, shadows, silhouette movement, all of that stuff, light play and shadow play, all of that stuff that you associate with film. Because film and architecture is an interesting discourse, right? How can you actually engender a building with some of those kind of qualities that are filmic, right? And so we worked with, there was an artist's committee, which was fantastic, that Niv Fichman, the producer, lead, and Atom Egoyan was on that, and Don McKellar, David Cronenberg, there's a whole bunch of wonderful directors – Patricia Rozema, Paul Gross, directors and actors who participated in that. And Ivan Reitman was also very much involved; he's, basically it was his family's land, and so he linked up with the Daniels Group, the developers, and he's very much involved in the whole thing. So, it was great, actually, because there was, that was the most challenging thing, was the representation of this building.

That's interesting, because you treat it like a cinematographer would treat a film set. The focus being the lighting, vision, materiality etc. Framing the shot in essence.

Exactly. But we're doing it in real time; it's not virtual it's real, right? So, all of that is fascinating, and Atom Egoyan, God bless him, when we were having that debate one day, about the literalness versus the sort of more abstractionness, if that's the right word, term, where we were – he said this should be the anti-Paramount, referring to the Paramount Cinemas up here, which used to be the Paramount Cinemas. So, all of those things, about you know, how much, how many screens you have in the building, how literal you are – it's very interesting, that balance, it's very interesting.

With such a large number of people dictating to you.

Oh, it was hell! [laughter] Oh yeah, yeah. That was, that was very tough, to actually get consensus.

How long did that take to get sign off?

Oh, gosh. Ages. At least six months. We actually won it through a competition. And then we, we changed it, you know, and sort of the basic parti was there, but we changed it a lot. Yeah.

We spoke previously just about making every building count. So, how do you choose your projects?

I think for us, first and foremost, it's about making architecture. And, so, that's the first thing, that's almost the first kind of cut criteria for us – how much architectural potential is there? Does the client want good design? We're not for everybody, you know? And I think it's, it's really good and healthy to declare what you're about as a practitioner, and try and go look for those projects. It's like declaring your vision of what you want to be, who, who you want to be in the world of practice. And then we'll look for other criteria like, who's on the selection committee, or if it's a competition, who are the judges, 'cause sometimes they're looking for something completely different than what we do, and it might be a waste of time. Does it have a decent budget schedule at all, decent client. All of that.

What is architecture to you?

Ah, I think it's a kind of belief that taking this, given this building type, that we can actually make a difference, that we can actually, you know, in our own modest way, make a better world. In this little spot. On this site. That we can actually create something that has resonance in terms of, and the potential to transform peoples' lives. 'Cause I think we've seen how bad projects – if you take, for instance, like the classic sort of housing projects in the States, that they had to blow up. You know, environments have, can have an incredibly negative effect on people, and so the corollary is that I think architecture, like music, can actually have a transformative effect on people's lives. I think you have to believe that; otherwise, it's a very dreary profession to be in. There's too much stuff you've got to do that's kind of labour intensive and a bit on the dreary side.

So, that's how you describe architecture - How would you describe your architecture?

I think with our architectural work, what we're interested in, as I sort of said earlier, really is about city building, about the urban condition. And I think that influences the idea of public space, and I think that influences the way we approach our work, so even if it's an interiors project, and we've done a lot of those, some really interesting interiors, we still look at it... Like, we did a project in New York, for instance, 270,000 square feet in midtown Manhattan for an ad agency, and what was fundamental to the way we conceptualized the plan was the sort of urban geography of New York, and how that affected the orientation and the kind of key space, public space, within the plan related to the stunning view of the East River as you exited the elevators. So, we are very much rooted in a kind of in context, I think, and then also this idea very much about community building,

about a real commitment to public space. In our academic projects, you know, for us the space between the program is the public space, the social space is just as, if not more important, important than the classrooms, because, you know, it's really our conviction that learning happens just as much outside the classrooms as in the classrooms. So, program, while we, we're diligent about program, for us it's less interesting, it's really architecturally lies between the program, and that's a comment about the permanent armature of the building, which is, you know, its exterior, its interior. Public spaces, how you move through the building, and then the program changes, you know, over time people use it.

How would your architecture reflect social betterment, in your eyes?

Well, I think with, with the Ballet School, we have transformed a very dodgy area of the city, Jarvis Street, which was, when we started the project, was basically stomping grounds for prostitutes; it was, it was pretty bad, pretty unsafe area of the city. And, together with the residential townhouses, we've actually created a healthy community, with public spaces at grade that are actually safe for people to use and pleasurable for people to use, and it feels like a city, again. So it's sort of healed that part of Jarvis Street, I think, so it's like an inflow, it's completed the street scape there. And sort of has turned that whole area around. I think that's the power of the project, you know? It's the potential. And then I think that's at the kind of the urban level I think we're very conscious about and we're so – I mean, it's pretty amazing to be working in Toronto at this time. To be able to build a city, help build the city as we have, particularly with the cultural superbuilt projects, which we did quite a large number of them. And then inside I think we, we've, I think we've, we've really affected peoples' lives, both the student who study there, and the people who work there, the teachers, the administration staff, and so on, you know? And I think a lot of it is not only the spatial quality, but also the quality of light in the building, particularly in this climate that makes a huge difference.

The east facing glass.

Yes, we have tons of light in the building, which is fantastic. And then also I think through that building, because it is a vertical campus, you, as you go up through the building, you, we discover the city by the views you see from the different levels, you know, which is very interesting. That's always a kind of nice surprise, because, you know, short of a sort of "beam-me-up-Scotty" device, it's hard for us, we just imagine what we would see at the high levels, so it's, it's amazing, you know, when it's under construction. And there's something that you imagine to be there, but it's even better than you imagined. That's very cool.

One of the firms I have previously worked for they hired a radio controlled helicopter operator to fly a helicopter with a mounted camera to take pictures 100 feet up into the air so they could gauge the views the potential site might have.

That's fantastic, that's good. And I think for TIFF, I think it's going to transform this precinct, and it's already a very, very vibrant part of the city. It's sort of, I think you could say the most congested part of the city, between the baseball games and the theatres, and Thompson Hall, and all that, it's crazy, you know, on a matinee, Wednesday matinee, you can't, all these people from Buffalo, coming off their busses, you can't move on the sidewalks. So, I think such, that's going to make a massive difference in the quality of life of people working in this area and now living in this area. So, that's, that's pretty interesting, to be able to affect peoples' lives that way.

Yes that really does strengthen your views on architecture.

In a modest way I think you've got to believe that, you know you can make a better world; otherwise, why bother, right?

How long have you been practicing architecture?

Oh, God, forever. Since '76, I graduated.

So, thirty-three years?

Yeah, I guess so. Yep.

So what drives you? What inspires you? What gets you out of bed in the morning?

When I was a kid, I would get bored stiff. So I spent my whole childhood with my nose in a book, 'cause you can't get bored when you're reading books. My mother was very worried about me; she thought I was weird. So did everyone else in the family, but there you go. [laughter] But I've never been bored in this profession. And I think I'm really fortunate 'cause I've got great partners and amazing people in the office. It really is a pleasure, working with our teams in the office. And, so every day it's sort of I always conceptualize or envision it as like coming into the office is like a giant pinball game. And so I walk in the office and someone pulls the lever and you go bouncing around between the projects and it's – every day has at least three crises, you know? But as long as no one dies, it's cool. And it's just, it's very, it's very engaging. It's very interesting, challenging. And it's great also, I love, you've got to love building to be an architect, and I do love that, I do love the fact that at the end you have something physical there, and figuring that

out, you know, how to put them together.

What do you do as a stress reliever? 'Cause this is a high-stress profession?

Extremely. Be warned. [laughter] Be afraid, be very afraid. Well, I think you've got to be the kind of personality that does strive – or thrive – on good stress because good stress is fine, you know, when you're enjoying things, right? What I do is I, I walk to work in the morning, it's 35 minutes, and then I walk home. And that time is amazing, because I can think about my day here, think about a project and sort of slowly, you know, get into the office mode and then decompress on the way home. And so I notice since I've been walking to work, since I've ditched my car and walk to work, which is environmentally very good, my stress levels have gone down. Oh, yeah.

So it's a combination of physical activity, walking, mental and spiritual?

Yeah, I think so. And then I think it's also like when the older you get you realize that actually, you know, most problems are soluble, so you don't panic, and you kind of have the maturity to not get stressed out when things happen. The only time a building almost blew up – literally – yeah, let's see, that was kind of scary. It was Hasbro, the corporate headquarters, and we had a thousand people in the building. They were working in the building. We were expanding and doing the renovations face by face and thank God I was inside that day. The electrician came running for me, and he said you gotta come right away. And we went straight to the huge transformer room. He had just switched the old transformers over to the new transformers. The electrical engineer had undersized the transformers, and I was about, I would say, a hundred feet or more away from the transformer room, and I could feel already the immense heat it generated from the room, and he said I need your permission – he was like, unbelievable – I need your permission to take the building down because I'm afraid it's going to blow, it's going to explode. So I said take the building down, just shut it down, and then I went to explain to my client, the CEO, why we had just taken away all his power. But he, he was relieved not to have the building blow up. Yeah, so it was a bit scary. And I can, to think if I hadn't been on site that day, I wouldn't know. That's a bit scary. But that's the closest I've come to disaster. [laughter] So it is quite serious. But you do have to have a sense of humour; otherwise, that's critical for stress. You know, you've got to really enjoy it and have fun and because of the people. We're really blessed by the kind of clients we have and the people in the office are amazing. It is a lot of fun, although it's stressful, you know?

Are you happy? Would you choose another career?

You know what? Actually, I am. Sounds a bit Pollyanna, but I am. I really do, it takes an awfully long time before you actually figure out what you're doing because it's, it's a reason why it's a long apprenticeship, right? And they don't teach you, there'd be no point teaching you the stuff you learn in practice, anyway, in school, because it's not the right conditions for it. So, there's so much to learn, but, yeah, I do love it.

Do you listen to music when you design?

No, I'm usually, no, it's usually, you know, in the office, working in the office. We don't, no, no. But if I'm working at home, I do.

What sort of music?

Usually classical. Kind of takes the top off, you know?

Any particular preference?

Oh, there's a really good ... I don't know, there's a whole bunch.

What hobbies do you have?

It's hard to find the time for hobbies.

No hobbies?

Hobbies, hobbies. Architecture. Walking. Pilates. No, I don't really have hobbies that I can think of, there's just life, you know? I read a lot still.

You live for what you do?

Well, yeah, I think, I think you know, one is really blessed when one actually does enjoy what you do, and you feel the most important thing for me is I still feel challenged, and I'm learning, which is very cool, you know? 'Cause I think above all I hate being bored.

So, what sort of house do you live in at the moment?

We're in a Victoria semi that I renovated in downtown Toronto. Three stories high.

It sounds like a silly question. I'm just curious, 'a lot of people have a childhood home elements in their current home.

Hmm. It's hard to, yeah. 'Cause South Africa's so different.

I've never been, but the images I've seen are beautiful.

Yeah, it's beautiful, Cape Town. It is, it sure is.

I don't know how you can come here and switch that part of your life off especially in the dead of winter in January looking out over the snow?

It's a bit rough. I know once, when I first visited Vancouver and I stood at English Bay, I started weeping because it was the closest I'd come to Cape Town.

PETER CLEWES INTERVIEW

PETER CLEWES INTERVIEW.

DATE: 10TH SEPTEMBER 2009.

TIME: 9AM.

LOCATION: 317 ADELAIDE STREET, WEST, #205 TORONTO.

Peter, thank you for doing this interview.

All right.

Where were you born?

I was born in Montreal.

Whereabouts in Montreal?

I was raised primarily in a, a kind of a, well it's a district of Montreal called Notre-Dame-de-Grâce which is just, just beside Westmount, and then I, my family eventually moved to the suburbs - Beaconsfield. And the FLQ crisis arrived, 1970, and I was considering, well, I was planning to go to university around that time. I actually went in '73, starting to think about where I should go and decided not to go to university in Quebec and ended up going to University of Waterloo. Never thinking that I would ever settle in Ontario and particularly not in Toronto. Growing up in Montreal, Toronto is sort of the Anti-Christ, and, you know, a city that lacked culture, imagination, but I met my wife, only and current wife, at, when I was going to University of Waterloo, and she's from Toronto, and I ended up in Toronto.

You fell in love and settled?

That's right, that's right.

Do you have any siblings?

I have two brothers and two sisters and they all eventually ended up coming to Ontario as part of the whole Anglophone exodus in the early 70's. One sister now lives in the United States, but everyone else lives in Toronto.

What did your parents do?

My father was - have you seen the program Mad Men?

No, I've heard so much about it, but never actually seen it.

My father was in advertising. Again, originally with a Canadian, a large, large Canadian advertising agency at that time, and they had offices all across Canada; their head office was in Toronto, although it was a bilingual company, and so he

also eventually moved to Toronto and became President of the agency. It kind of coincided with the Anglophone exodus from Montreal.

Is he retired now?

He's dead now....my parents.

So, why did you choose Waterloo for architecture?

I think two reasons: one was, I didn't want to go to school in Montreal – it would have been McGill. Primarily that kind of adolescent angst where you want to get away from your parents, you want to get away from your home life. Thought if I ended up going to McGill, then I would, you know, end up hanging around with my parents. And, so my father took me to Waterloo on a little - I was still in high school – on a little kind of trip to see what was going on in Ontario, and I met a very nice professor there, Joseph Somfay, showed us around the studio – I think Joe's still around? Maybe not at the School?

Not at the School, but I know his name

He's a practitioner now. But he thought, I thought this guy was really cool. He had a, he wore very casual clothes, he carried a big knife on his belt – why I thought that was cool, I don't know – and big cowboy boots and big long beard, and long hair, and I thought... This is, you know, you gotta think this was like 1972, and I thought this man was really cool. This was a place I wanted to go to – the studio seemed very casual, very open-minded, very creative. I also went to University of Toronto, and I had an interview at the time with Peter Prangnell and his disciples, and I found them extremely arrogant and pompous. And I thought, well, of those two places, I think Waterloo is where I'd like to go. My father kept trying to push me to University of Toronto, the kind of ivy-league university, and apparently prestigious university, and I just was just resisted I ended up putting it as my last choice. You could rank three schools, they were all three schools in Ontario, and I ranked them one, two, three, which was Waterloo, Carleton, and U of T, which really actually pissed them off. And they accepted me, but it was a conditional acceptance, and it was just my little way of sort of pushing back.

So, what inspired you to go into architecture?

I think it was growing up in Montreal at the time. Montreal in the 60's was really coming into its own. It was, relative to the rest of Canada, it was a cultural and international city. Obviously has the antecedent of the French culture, but, also, it was a very open-minded culture, in the sense that they were interested, and the city was interested in the best of the world and what was going on. And

Expo '67 I think was the zenith of that period, in which it was an exposition that really spoke, I think, to the cultural maturity of the city. Its open-mindedness. I worked at Expo as a student, as a guide, and I thought, you know, I mean, this is an amazing place, and I was intrigued by the architecture of Expo and the, I guess the diversity and the eclecticism, but also the modernism. And the city at that time was also undergoing a bit of a building boom. There were a lot of office towers under construction, and there was just a sense of optimism that the city was in a period of renewal. And I became really fascinated with that and fascinated with the act of construction. I used to hang around construction sites when they were building the Decarie Expressway. I would kind of wheel my bike up and watch these guys building that. I just was, just was fascinated with the act of construction – how you could build buildings in a process that seemed outwardly extremely chaotic.

So you were just mesmerized by it, you were just taken by it the skyline with all the construction?

Yeah. I mean, it was a very naïve kind of perspective. I mean, I was a teenager, even before a teenager. As long as I can remember, I think, I wanted to be an architect.

So tell me about your first building?

My first building was a country house for a couple; they were friends of our family. We knew them growing up in Montreal, they were our backyard neighbours. And they had children that were roughly the ages of our family, and so the kids became great friends, the parents became great friends. And they came to, they moved to Toronto – I was going to say “immigrated” – ‘cause it was a bit like that – immigrated to Toronto within a couple of months of my parents and they both ended up in houses just down the street from one another on Mississauga Road, near the country, the older part of Mississauga, the only nice part of Mississauga, from my perspective. His name was Al, Al Bisent, and Al was, he was actually a wonderful man, he had confidence in me, and said, Peter, look I've bought a cottage – well, we knew he had bought a cottage in Ontario. He had owned it for less than a year and it burned down. He said, look, I need to rebuild the cottage, and I'd like you to be the architect. I'd never done a building. I was in second year university, had no idea how to put a building together, and at that time I was also very enamored with the work of Arthur Erickson. Arthur at that time, I think, was arguably the premier architect in Canada, and I think, arguably, the only Canadian architect that had received any kind of international recognition. And it seemed to be he was doing truly original architecture. And – this is important,

because when I came to do the cottage, I was deeply influenced by some of Arthur's west coast houses. And there was one in particular called the Catton house. Catton house was a house – or is a house, I presume it's still there – that was built on a slope site, and the entire house was kind of very, very angular, following the incline of the slope, and for whatever reason, I thought this was a really cool house. And so I quickly came up with a design for the, for Al Bisent's country house based loosely on this concept. And it was also, it was on a slope site, but not nearly as severe as the Vancouver Catton house. And, I mean, they loved it, and I remember, you know, it was, they started it in the... I remember, I went to see the site in the middle of the winter, and we had to walk in about three miles – the snow cover was so severe, we couldn't drive in. And we went through the process; by early spring the project was under construction, and it was around this time, it was sort of early September that they had just moved in, from when the house had been commissioned in terms of all the systems and so forth, and they invited me up for a weekend, as a kind of a celebratory weekend. And it was fantastic, and I was so extremely proud of having done this, not knowing the first thing about putting a building together. And, by the way, there was a Mennonite contractor from the Kitchener-Waterloo area that they'd worked with, and they were really wonderful people, basically camped on the site to build the cottage, they were very grateful for the work, they thought it was fantastic that they could basically stay up at the beautiful lake for the summer. But they also really helped me, knowing and being extremely experienced in putting buildings together. They said, Peter, look... One of the first problems was there was very little lateral stability to the building, because it was a three-storey building; it was largely all open, there was an upper floor, cutbacks, and, particularly on the third floor, a bit of a loft, which was all the rage at that time. And when they framed the building, we got up to the third floor and the contractor said, Peter I want to show you something, and he proceeded to plant his legs somewhat far apart and did this and the entire building started to this [makes swaying hand gesture]. He said I, I think we can solve this problem, and here's how I think we can do it. So, I was – I learned a lot – and I was very grateful. There was a very, very unfortunate thing, however. About a month after that, the long weekend that I went up in September, the house was burned down. And not only was their cottage burned down, but also the cottage beside them. And it turned out that it was an arsonist, and he had burned down their initial, you know, original cottage, which they, I think I neglected to say it, they had bought the cottage, and had it for about a month and it burned down. And so it, my first building, you know, had an existence of about a month and then disappeared. And at that point Al Bisent and his family said, look, we've had enough of this. This is our second loss, and they ended up selling

the cottage to their next-door neighbour who had also lost his cottage. I gather they rebuilt somewhere. And they eventually arrested the arsonist, I believe.

Unbelievable... So the same person burnt it down twice?

Yeah, yeah. And a number of other cottages on the lake as well.

Was it a personal vendetta?

No, it was – and I don't profess to know much about arson and arsonists' minds – but they, there's some kind of strange psychological profile that drives people to burn things down, and it's not a vendetta, it's just something they feel compelled to do. And they – he got caught because they did plaster – it sounded very, very forensic investigation, kind of right out of that show on television...

CSI?

They did plaster casts of tire ruts on the property and various other things and were able to make, you know, to construct enough evidence to demonstrate that he was guilty. But it had been fifteen or twenty buildings he had burned down over a period of about five years.

Which lake was it on?

It was called South Muldrew Lake in Ontario, near Gravenhurst. And the neighbour was a family by the name of Zeigmiller, coincidentally, are also, I think it's a Kitchener-Waterloo family. But heavy construction, they do roads and bridges, quite well known in Southwestern Ontario. I've never talked to them since, nor have I seen what they did, but I gather they consolidated the properties, they reconstructed the building, and that's where it is.

What year was that?

That would have been around 1975, maybe? 1976? I was in the middle of school.

'76 – thirty-three years ago. That's quite a first story. [laughter] So it is. So, what would you consider your best building?

Now, I knew that question was coming, and I had to really think about that, and it's very hard for me to really narrow that down to one building. I need to preface this by saying that I think that the work that I do, that our office does, is never, for me, good enough. It's full of issues and mistakes and unresolved conditions, and it's a constant challenge to do better, and so I'm lucky. First of all, I get, get kind of perplexed by that question, because I don't think we've actually done anything

that's really great, and I mean that sincerely. I mean, I think we've tried very hard, and I think our work's getting better, but it's a constant struggle. So, I, there are two buildings that I'm very proud of, but – if I'm allowed to say two buildings – but – and they're both very, very different. The first one is a building that was commissioned in 1997 as a housing project, and it's called 20 Niagara. And it's on a little park, on the west side of Toronto, called Victoria Memorial Park. And why I'm proud of this building is because of, not the physical kind of quality of the architecture, it's more the idea that the building is based on. The context of this project is that in 1997 it was a year in which it looked like finally the economy of Toronto and the economy of Ontario might be improving, and our office had gone through a very, very difficult recession, really from about 1990, 1991, to 1997. And we had very little work, and it was really a period of survival. And our office, we set up our office, it really got going around 1987, and so it was still a relatively new office, and so when we hit the recession three or four years out, we didn't have enough built work and enough of a reputation to really carry us through. And so it was really, really quite traumatic. So, when this project came to us, the development proponent was a gentleman by the name of Howard Cohen, and Howard was a former city planner, and he had decided that what he would really like to do was get involved in real estate development. So, this was his first project. And I thought, from that perspective, it was interesting. I also thought that it was interesting then and I still believe now, passionately, that housing is really the basic fabric of any city, particularly North American cities that are grown, and the urban areas. Not the suburban areas. I think the suburban housing question and problem in North America is a massive problem, and I'm sure it's architectural. But within the urban centres, I think that the problem of housing is, I think, a fascinating one. And I think that there're, particularly in Toronto at that time, there have been no really serious design-based practices that have been engaged in the problem of housing for quite a long time. I think that there was a lot of very innovative housing in the early sixties, when Modernism – late fifties, early sixties – when Modernism really took hold in Toronto, but it really became sort of forgotten, or disregarded as a reputable form of work for serious architects since that time. And, so, for that reason as well, I saw this as a challenge – how could we do a housing project in Toronto that demonstrated some very kind of important ideas about what makes good housing, and how you could contribute measurably to the kind of culture and the fabric of Toronto. It also coincided with, it was a city planning initiative called the Kings. And the Kings were attempting to deal with the problem of the, the residual industrial architecture of Toronto, both on the east side and the west side of Toronto – King/Parliament and King/Spadina. And these were turn-of-the-century industrial

buildings, up to now kind of known affectionately as brick-and-beam buildings. The city had for years prohibited the occupation of those buildings other than for industrial uses. As industry moved out of the central area of Toronto, as it did in most North American cities, and it tended to move toward suburban sites and arranged along major arterials like, in Ontario, the 401 highway corridor, these buildings became essentially redundant as industrial buildings. But the city held onto this for a very long time – No, no we must preserve employment in Toronto; therefore, we must not allow the conversion of these buildings, as other cities had done, into housing or offices or other commercial uses. And finally the city realized that this was an anachronistic idea and that it really needed to revitalize these two sections of Toronto that had gone into quite serious decline. Not only were there a lot of abandoned buildings, vacant buildings, but a lot of buildings had been torn down. They were replaced with surface parking lots because they couldn't make a go of the building from a commercial perspective. Which I think was a very sad thing for the city – it lost a lot of great, nineteenth-century industrial architecture. So, I was partly asked, in the development of 20 Niagara, to develop a building in concert with the city's new proscriptive zoning bylaws that they intended to enact in both King/Spadina and King/Parliament. And it was a very seminal zoning initiative, because it dealt with the idea of both form as opposed to used space zoning. Most North American zoning since the Second World War has been based on land use, which is when, you know, we'll put our industrial areas here, we'll put our residential areas here, our retail areas here, and everyone will be happy. And when you think about a lot of European cities, take a city like London, and I'm not that familiar with the actual zoning precepts of London, but what I do know is that, as you move through that city, there isn't a clear, used-space zoning. In other words, you can go one building might be someone's house, another one may be an office, another one may be a dress shop with apartments above. But what there is, is a coherence in the fabric of the city, and from street to street and block to block. And that's really what I think Toronto was trying to emulate. So, we worked on this building, and as we worked on the design of it, we tested some of the built form provisions that the city was floating out there, and it did have an influence on us, and what was built largely became a poster child for that new zoning initiative. It's also, I think, an interesting building because it challenges the idea of apartments, multi-unit buildings in Toronto. At that time most multi-unit buildings had been based on the idea of the modified slab block. And even, there have been a lot of rental housing constructed in new Toronto in the sixties and seventies, and then there were... When Toronto started to embrace this idea of condominium ownership, as opposed to rental tenancy, there were serious developers - Tridell I think was one of the first – that largely

took the slab block and used that as the basic idea for their, for their projects. And there was really only one housing type, and it was, you know, 15 stories, 20 stories, 25 stories – whatever they could secure in terms of development approval, and these were very, very simple, straightforward, double loaded buildings. And Tridell, to their credit, I think, took that building type and took it as far as it could go in terms of the delivery of the unit. And they refer, and a lot of developers refer to housing as “product.” So they tried to almost industrialize the delivery of that product with a view to trying to keep the cost of that housing unit down. Because it was also a very recent idea that people would buy units in a multi-unit building. Part of that had been the great, sort of, post-Second World War dream, which is, when you had some money, to get either, you moved out to the suburbs and bought yourself a house with some green space. If you couldn’t afford that, you bought one of the Victorian row houses in downtown Toronto but you knew that this was a temporary kind of place, almost like a half-way house, and eventually you’re going to make your way to the suburbs. So to buy an apartment in downtown Toronto was a big deal, and it was – what you’re really saying was look, I kind of like the idea of living in one of these slab block buildings in the centre because of the convenience presumably from the location that comes from that. But it’s also a tricky proposition, because that was sort of like your first place. If you’re a student, you lived in one of those buildings, or if you didn’t have any money and couldn’t afford a house, you lived in one of these places. So what Tridell was trying to do was offer housing at a very, very attractive price to really say to people, look, maybe you can’t even afford a Victorian row house on a sketchy street. What we can give you is a brand new apartment, you know, well located. But it was really quite banal housing, it was very uninspired housing, there was really no idea in it, other than the constructional systems they brought to bear to build what essentially a kind of a, in Toronto anyway, a 1960s idea about, well, multi-unit housing. So, 20 Niagara takes, basically, the idea of walk-up apartments that was, until the Second World War, was the dominant form of apartment housing in Toronto, and says how can we improve that? How can we, basically, look at the idea of townhouses, and single-family houses, in terms of the amenity that they bring to the connection to grade, the idea of through ventilation, the individual identity, potentially, and put it into a building that is like a goosed up walk-up apartment building. But, because of reality, accessibility, and also convenience, it has to have elevators. And how can you do that on a small site. And Tridell, had typically ignored all those small sites because they just simply weren’t economical to develop. And so, and one of the things that characterizes the Kings district in Toronto is relatively small sites. These are properties that are almost original properties. They may be 30 feet, 50 feet, 90 feet wide by 120 feet

deep, which follows the original plan of subdivision from the turn of the century. And so really that’s what 20 Niagara is about. It’s trying to develop a prototype that increases the level of residential amenity within these buildings, recognizes and tries to encourage people to live downtown, and tries to look at the problem of small sites and how to make buildings that are economically developable. In other words, that a company can develop this and sell it with a reasonable expectation of profit. And then contribute back, I think, to the culture of Toronto in terms of the building of a new fabric, fitting in, so to speak, the missing teeth within the Kings district where there’ve been a lot of buildings torn down, and really encourage people to, to come back to the city and stay in the city. I think for that reason it’s a building that I’m very, very proud of. It’s not a building that would make into an architectural publication – say, well this is very, very kind of groovy architecture or refined architecture – it’s more about an idea about building in the city that’s a very, has a strong specificity to the city of Toronto and what it was going through at the time.

How many stories did it end up being?

It ended up being six storeys. And we ended up doing a bit of a, what I would call a piano nobile which is the issues of small sites, with a requirement for underground parking, once you have a ramp that accesses that below-grade, you often have nothing left over for official parking, and that’s one of the first things that often defeats the small sites, is the requirement to get cars below grade. So, what we did there is we raised the building up about 8 feet – that’s, hence, the piano nobile – we brought cars in at the ground floor and then tried carefully to disguise that parking through lining it on the park side with entry lobbies and planting and walkways to really say look, this is just a building raised up. And it has the advantage of giving the first-floor residential a bit of a grade separation from the park, and the park is by nature a somewhat public place, and those units on the ground floor participate, I think, in a fairly sensitive way to the park in terms of having very generous planted terraces, private terraces, that overlook the park. When you sit on those terraces, you feel some sense of privacy, but the building also speaks to the park, as it were, in terms of having these planted terraces, and saying, look, this is a building that has eyes on the park. This is a way, also, to build buildings in Toronto that very unabashedly face onto and confront and engage the park. A lot of parks in Toronto, the way the housing works, is it’s often very residual. They have a laneway and rear garages, and the building’s really turned away from the park. And we’re also interested in this. How can we really engage this park? And kind of articulate it, and make it a more special park than it was? It was interesting, when I first went to see the site, it was

a vacant lot, and the park was a bit scruffy looking. And Howard said to me, look, I think this is a great site, can you go and have a look at it? And I thought, this is a terrible site – it's tiny, it's a vacant lot, it's on a scruffy park, you know – how are we going to make something of this? And, often as buildings do, they can transform in a very measurable way a neighbourhood by the simple act of insertion of the building, if it's a good building or if it's a bad building. And I think that this building went a long way to taking this area, the King/Spadina area, and saying, you know what, this is a very special area; it's a quiet area just off the downtown, it has tremendous potential of becoming a beautiful residential neighbourhood, and I think that that building – at least, I'd like to think – that that building is a very seminal building in the creation of what has become a very emergent, and very good, residential neighbourhood in Toronto.

You said it was the poster child for this new fabric, new building typology. How many other buildings have you done that followed this same typology?

Well, I think not in all of our residential work, but in a lot of our residential work, we try to look for the creation of new types, and I could say that 20 Niagara was a new housing type that had never existed in Toronto. We've had other projects with that same developer and other developers in which, depending upon the location and the zoning, we have experimented with the idea of type. We did a project, for that same developer, at King and Sherbourne, a number of years later, that was really, it's principal preoccupation was in creating a higher level of unit amenity in a double, using a double load slab building, albeit thirteen stories. And saying how can we take this basic type and increase unit amenity. And, so what we did is we actually went back to some of Corbusier's work in terms of through block units, two-storey units, skip/stop corridors, and experimented with that concept in this building. We've also done a fair amount of what I would call point block towers. That if we actually have to go high in Toronto, the slab block building is not a particularly graceful, and can often be a kind of a ponderous building to insert within the city fabric, and it seemed to us that if we're going to go high as Toronto intensifies, then what we should try to do is build fabric buildings that whereby a certain portion of that building is allowed to go high but not the entire block, certainly, or the portion of the block that the project might occupy. And from that I was, I was really influenced by the midtown New York zoning bylaw in that, when I was working for Arthur Erickson, which I had subsequently did after graduation, we worked on a project for Donald Trump in New York; it was never constructed, but we studied the midtown Manhattan bylaw, and it's a fascinating bylaw cause it deals with, and it's a bylaw that's antecedents go back to the Equitable Life building, to I think 1908 New York, which was a basically a

block near Wall Street that went straight up about 30 stories. And it was really a reflection of the kind of development pressures that were going on in Manhattan at that time with no, virtually no, zoning restrictions. And it was that building that New York thought that, if we allow this as the precedent, we'll continue development of the blocks particular on this section of Manhattan, we will build a truly horrific city. And so New York went to a form-based zoning, in part, and that zoning you could see in the midtown section of Toronto, particularly – rather, New York – particularly, where you see a whole series of buildings that go up with a street wall and then have a series of terraces and often end up in a small little towering centre of the block, and that's all about bringing light down to the street and providing sky plan exposure for pedestrians on the street looking up. And it seemed to me that, in studying that bylaw, that there was maybe something that was germane to Toronto, and so we started to promote this idea of very, very small floor plate buildings. And the first one we did was a project on Lombard Street, 33 Lombard Street, and this is a floor plate of around 500 square meters, and put that in context. Tridell and others may have been developing buildings at that time four or five or six times that floor plate size. And no developer in Toronto believed that you could develop a building that size of floor plate and make it economical. What we tried to demonstrate in that project, and in subsequent projects, was that you actually can, you can create tremendous unit amenity in terms of having a lot of corner units, which promote the idea of both multiple views and light and also potential for cross ventilation within those units, which is always a problem in any kind of building in terms of its ventilation. I would say it's some projects we've done, housing projects, I'm not proud of we've got ourselves in situations in which we realized too late in the game that we shouldn't even be involved in these projects. And I think most architects are honest with themselves if they found themselves at that point in various, various times in their career, some less than others, and to that I, you know, I commend them – it's obviously a difficult thing as a practitioner. In the film *My Architect*, talking Louis Khan's I think, grandson, interviewed I.M. Pei and I.M. Pei said, listen, I have to earn a living, I couldn't do the work that Louis Khan did. Louis Khan had a singular focus on doing amazing buildings, and, you know, the hell with making a living, and the hell with my professional reputation, I want to do amazing, thoughtful buildings. And I.M. Pei was an extraordinary architect who said, look, I haven't always done the best buildings, because I've had to earn a living, and I thought, even at that level, there's an admission that his work isn't as good as he felt it could be, because he had this need to, as he said, earn a living.

Do you feel the same way?

I feel the same way all the time, constantly. It's a real challenge. And I really, really admire single-minded architects, both in this city and this country and in the world, internationally, that have the ability to say, look, my work is more important than my life, my lifestyle, and I think that that's – well, I know that's a luxury that I can't afford, because I made decisions in my life in terms of my family and everything else that – I can't do that – but what I've tried to do – and we're still working and we've got a long way to go is to try to do our work in a naked way that has regard for the realities of living, but also do as good a work as we can possibly do. But, as I said, it's a real struggle.

Would you care to mention any of your influences?

Well, there's a firm that I really admire, and it's Herzog & deMeuron, a swiss firm. I admire them because I think that they both have the luxury of, seems to me, taking on projects that, which they don't repeat themselves – it could be a particular project type, particular location, particular client in which they said, well, we've never done this before, so we're fascinated with this; what can we do? They're very experimental, both in the idea of the buildings and the use of materials and a lot of attributes that go into making a project really exceptional. And what they do, is they think in form, they're the exceptions and experiments in form for the entire architectural community around the world. The sorts of things that we should be thinking about its not to say that you could take a Herzog and deMeuron approach and try and build a city, 'cause what we have is a series of individualistic expressions. And, you know, I think of China, a lot of its particularly commercial architecture in Beijing and other cities – that's actually what they're trying to do. And I don't believe you can build a convincing city in that manner, because you lack a coherent fabric. But I do admire that firm, because they do push things and they get us to think as a collective community, I think. Think differently and challenge our thinking. And there are many others like those – I mean, that firm pops into mind. There are a lot of very, very good firms, a lot of them in Western Europe, some American firms that are really sort of game shifters for me.

Would you care to talk about your second best building?

Yeah, yeah. It's a very, very, it's extremely different building. This is a lab building at the University of Toronto called the Terrence Donnelly Centre for Biomolecular Research. It sits on College Street, the north side of College Street. It's part of the U of T's Medical Sciences Faculty. It's, I think it's for me, it's a really, really interesting building for a number of reasons. The first is that the University of

Toronto is growing out of relevant sites; I mean, it's, what's fascinating about U of T is that it's an ivy league university, at least it has the ambition to be. It has Victorian architecture and Georgian architecture that really speaks to that kind of antecedent within the campus but it's also knitted into the grid of Toronto. And so, often, it's hard to understand where the city ends and the university begins. But, as the rest of the city is experiencing, it has very few opportunities for development left. It is not a kind of a post-Second World War campus that characterizes much of southern Ontario, which is the big, sign and suburban, like York University. They build a ring road and they set in a series of look-at-me buildings within, and they can basically expand for the next 150 years. U of T's really restricted. And so the site that this building sits on is the remnant of the street, Cattle Creek Road. And it was an impossible situation, sitting between two historical buildings within the University of Toronto and sitting literally on top of the street, the remains of the street. And so there was 65, 75 feet facing condition between these two buildings. So, it seemed to me, this is fascinating. How do you insert a building into an extremely tight site, and how do you do it in a way that has regard for the buildings on either side that are both historical and respectful to the architecture of those buildings and other buildings within U of T that really form the kind of identity of that university? And then, also, how you do a building that speaks to what is going on in the building. Expresses outwardly the sense of what is happening there, that is a building that is of our time, and also a building that, and perhaps I should have said this at the outset, enhances and promotes the idea of connectivity throughout the campus. And that site was a major pedestrian linkage between College Street and King's College Circle, which is the major kind of formal public open space within the campus. And kids, students, walk along Cattle Creek, walk through the medical sciences building just to the north of our project, and out into King's College Circle. So it was a major transit way. So, what we did was we, we actually lifted up the building, physically and metaphorically, and allowed a very public ground floor to the building, which I think also is very important in university academic buildings. That there's a sense of publicness, collegiality that goes a long way, I think, to enhancing education and kids feeling a part of an institution, and really encouraging them to learn and take something from their university experience. It's also a building that is a collaboration with a German firm, Stefan Behnisch and this is something that I've had a fascination with ever since I started the office ten years ago, as the name Architects Alliance, which is to work collaboratively with other strong designers, either domestically or around the world in a way that makes for better buildings, that we can learn from them, they can learn from us, and that, hopefully, the sum of the two offices' involvement creates a building that is not of either office, singularly, but something

that is stronger, something that represents the best of both offices. And I think that this building does that. And, so, it's not a building that we could have created on our own, and it's not a building that Stefan Behnisch's office could have created on their own. And if you look at the work of both offices separately, I think you can see very strongly the influences of both offices in this building. It is also a building that challenges the ideas as we try to do in our work, challenges some of the conventional precepts of that type of building, which is a lab building. Lab buildings want to be large floor plate buildings, as large as you can be with highly efficient floor plates, and there's a kind of a, without getting into the banality of it, there is a kind of way to organize a lab floor that deals with support spaces, what they call instrument rooms, the open lab areas, and offices and write-up areas. And, so, we said, look, we want to do a very small floor plate building because we're trying to insert this building very sensitively within this site, and regard for the historical buildings around. And we also want to do a building because this is a university academic building, it's not a commercial pharmaceutical lab. We want kids to learn here, we want to enhance the amenity of the building, thereby enhancing the learning experience. So we want to create labs that are beautiful places to work in and to learn in. And for all of those reasons, I think, it's a very successful building, it's a building that I am extremely proud of. But, and I said at the outset, it's not a building we could have done by ourselves, and it's not a building that Stefan could have done by himself, I don't believe. It's a kind of, this very fantastic collaboration, and, since that project, we've pursued other collaborations. And we've pursued collaborations, and we are right now doing some work with some very highly regarded design firms from around the world. And I believe that architects are fiercely ego-driven, particularly very strong designers, and it's both good and bad. The strength of their ego is what drives the work, but it also makes them fiercely independent, fiercely competitive. And so it is very unusual for design offices to collaborate. It's more typical that they will look for a partnership with another firm, if they have to, that supports their mission. And so it's typical the design office will partner with a production office. Or a good, strong designer-production firm will partner with a local firm if the work is not within their geographical area. But it's highly unusual that two design offices would agree to participate on a project. And to me that's a fascination of mine, and I want to continue doing that. So for a very different reason, it's a building that I'm very proud of. A very different reason than 20 Niagara.

So the building itself was a success and the collaboration was a success, it was a win-win situation in every area?

Yeah. It wasn't without its problems. Buildings are prototypes. We, I think, in

the latter part of the twentieth century, as consumers, we have become used to and attuned to the expectation that whatever we buy or use will be as perfect as it can be, whether it's a service or whether it's a product. And it really is a kind of the, the post-industrial age. The problem with buildings is they are prototypes. When you buy a car or a stereo, or whatever you're buying, it's gone through a whole prototype development. And – you can tell my age by saying “stereo;” I should have said iPod or computer – it's gone through a whole prototype development in which, through that process, they have presumably identified a series of suppositions, initial suppositions, about the design that prove to have been problematic, and so buildings by nature are extremely problematic, because they are prototypes. And particularly buildings that challenge conventional ideas. So, yeah, the building, the building was not without its commission problems, the collaboration itself was not without its personality and other problems that you get when you, you naturally get when you get very passionate people working together. And you get fiercely independent people working together. You know, that's mine, not yours, and vice versa. But I think, on balance, it's, was a very good experience, and I, you know, I'd do it again – I am doing it again. And I've learned from it, you know.

Thinking back about the building, was there any specific story that you would like you like to tell?

There's probably many. The first one pops into my mind was we used an American lab consultant. He's an architect, an architectural company in the US. And we knew nothing about labs, we'd never done a lab. We really had, in a conventional way, in terms of the section of architects, we had no basis for getting this work. We got the work because a couple of key people in the University of Toronto wanted something exceptional. So you needed to carry a lab consultant, 'cause, as I said, we'd never done one. And this gentleman, I remember, when we proposed the idea of a lab floor plate that was about a quarter of the size of what he felt was an idealized plate, he just shook his head, and he said, “that puppy won't hunt”. And the fact is we did prevail, we did create a building a quarter of the size of his idealized floor plate, and it does work. And I think – I'm a bit of a contrarian – when somebody challenges me like that, I really want to prove them wrong.

So the puppy did hunt at the end of it?

Yes.

Do you have any habits, whenever you go to design, do you have any rituals as far as you know: draw with a certain pencil, listen to a certain type of music

at the beginning...

I don't have particular habits. What I, what's important for me is to start with an idea that underpins the building. What is the idea of this project? You know, I'm sure every designer says that, and before we actually start doing something, I try and diagram what the idea is. And that's a process, sometimes it comes very quickly, and sometimes it takes quite a bit of time. The other thing that I like to do is I'm a - and people find this really odd - I'm fascinated with computers because it allows you to design. Like, doing buildings is basically sculpting in many ways, there's a whole sculptural component to it, you are working in three dimensions. And what the computer gives me is the ability to work in three dimensions in a way in which I can understand more quickly mass of building. And, so I made a concerted effort to teach myself how to use the computer, and I often will take a day off work and just work at home, listening to music. I work on the computer to try to take an idea and articulate it in a way that it at least starts to look, or have some resemblance to a building. I think I'm one of the few partners or principals in an office that actually does this. At first blush most people think it's a complete waste of my time - why are you doing that, that's almost like drafting. And I do it because it helps me to conceive the building. The other peculiar thing I do is I like to render buildings. It used to be that I would actually fully develop a computer model, and I, I just don't have the time to do that anymore, and I really do enjoy doing that. But, I'll often get something going, pass it off into the office, the office will work on it, articulate it, develop it, then give it back to me, and I will actually produce the renderings for it. And I do that because it, it's not because I want to be a rendering artist, it's that I want to try and portray the building in a particular way. A lot of what we do - I gave a lecture at Waterloo a number of years ago about this - that the communication of an idea in our culture is almost as important as the idea itself. You cannot communicate the idea - and I of course learned this, not of course, but I learned this from my father, who ran an ad agency - if you can't communicate an idea, convince people of your ideas, then you have nothing. It doesn't matter how brilliant you are. And, you know, architecture, like a lot of creative professions, is rife with highly creative people that are never successfully realized, are able to articulate their talent, because they can't communicate it. Either in their personality - they're just difficult or stubborn or whatever - or they're so wrapped up in their idea, they can't convince a layperson that, you know what, this is a very strong thing here; I think this is worthy of being executed. And, so, that's why I do the renderings, and I'm always frustrated about the lack of ability that people have to actually be able to convincingly render a computer, or, render a building using computers. In high school I took a film arts course, and I remember the person who, the teacher who ran the course, said - she was

just an English teacher - she had a belief that, if you were a good writer, you could articulate your ideas through writing, then you could be a good film maker. That it's the act, film making is the act of articulating ideas. And, I've always believed that, to be a good architect, you need to be a good articulator, and the base kind of case for articulation is drawing. Those in my office who can draw really well, then it's irrelevant what the medium is, whether it's a computer or a piece of paper with a charcoal pencil. If they're good drawers, they're good drawers, and the medium is almost irrelevant. And, so the ones in my office that struggle with an inability to render a building - it doesn't matter how sophisticated the computer is, and the software - they can't produce a convincing drawing. And growing up, I drew and painted and was, you know, fascinated with it, I took as many drawing and painting classes as I could when I was going through architecture school, and for me the act of drawing's always been very, very important. You know, now I suppose we're in the post-computer age, or post-industrial age, rather than computer age, and I've had to learn this medium to be able to continue. It's a bit like Jack Diamond doing his water colours or Renzo Piano doing his water colours, it's my version of water colours.

That's interesting, I don't know if you want to state it - what sort of software do you use... and which, do you prefer using?

We use a software called ArchiCAD, which is an object-based software, it's been out for about 10 years. And I think it's a fascinating piece of software because it's both left brain and right brain. It is software that is based on, I think, the way a building is constructed. A building is constructed through a series of elements, and it is, so, from a left-brain perspective, you can take that software and you can produce, for example, a bill of quantities. And that is a very powerful tool. From a right-brain perspective you can model and articulate your ideas and design within this software. All the way through, from schematic design, all the way through including production drawings. You can continue to work in the file and update the building automatically, so if you're working, for example, in a fenestration pattern within the elevation of a building, that will update with the plans, that will update a window section, or a window schedule, it'll update a bill of quantities. And to me it's a truly modern piece of software. I've had huge frustration in trying to get my office to adopt this software. I would say a large percentage of people don't understand my obsession with this software when the dominant platform is AutoCAD. They simply don't understand it, and they said, look, Peter, if you want to do modeling, we can do that in Rhino, we can that in 3D Studio, we can do all this, but you're running a parallel model, you're running this thing, which is basically an empty three-dimensional model we use to study certain aspects of

the building, and then we have to take that and go back to AutoCAD and work in two dimensions. It's a bit of a hangover from the days, I think, in which offices were highly structured. You had designers and you had draftsmen. The draftsman sat at a board all day and drew things up in a very technical way, and the act of creating production drawings for a building, working drawings for a building, is essentially the act of creating a book of instructions. It's to convey to someone how to assemble the building that you've designed. The best way to do that, I think, is to actually take the pieces, and use the software. So, as I said, it's been a constant struggle. I can't find people to hire that have worked in this software and I have a real reluctance within my office to really adopt it. But I really think it's a modern software. And it's one we should be using.

I used it way, way, way back, oh, a couple of years back, just building custom log homes.

Well, there's this curious thing in the software, embedded in it, is the log home thing. And I have to wonder if this is – I think it's Hungarian software – if this is some kind of inside joke about how Hungary views Canada, or North America. There is this weird thing.

Yeah.

Yeah. If you want to do a log home, you could do it. I own a cottage in Georgian Bay, which is a log house, it's a kit-built house – it was built in the '60s. It was a company that doesn't exist anymore, I think from British Columbia. And there were a kind of squared-off cedar logs, and it's this remarkable thing that it all fits together. And there's something really fascinating about that, in the simplicity of it. I constructed a three-dimensional model of that cottage while we were producing changes to it, and I realized there was this ArchiCAD feature, being able to do logs.

How would you describe your architecture?

It's very Canadian.

It's very Canadian?

By that I mean it's very practical. It's deliberately not ostentatious. It's based on a sense of amenity, and respectful. I love, both love and alternately get depressed looking at publications in Architectural Review, which will show, you know, extraordinary, sort of emblematic projects from around the world that are, they look completely original. And often they're based on a particular shape, they're so unusual. You could never have imagined that you'd do a building in that manner,

that it is truly original, you'd never seen one like that before. That is a very difficult thing, I think, to culturally assimilate in Canada, because it is a country and a culture that is born of this idea of practicality and respect, and sort of knowing our place, or accepting our place in the world, we're not a world leader, we're a second- or third-tiered country. And I don't mean that in a derogatory way, it's just the reality. We're not a world leader either of finance in terms of financial power or in terms of cultural power. We're a new country, we're a young country. So, I think that our architecture is really indicative of that. I think that, you know, you're work is who you are and the place you come from.

So your work is primarily Canadian, to be more specific, Canadian in Canada, or as in all the provinces, or Canadian as in just Toronto?

Maybe as in Toronto. And I preface that by saying that – and I think I said at the outset – I think our buildings can be, and need to be, a lot better than they are right now. I think Toronto is becoming – and I said this – I'm quite fond of saying this in the last little while – I think Toronto is becoming an interesting place. And I think, for the first time in a long time, the promise of multiculturalism and what it can do in terms of a contribution to the collective culture of this country is being realized in Toronto for the first time. And it's being realized because it, its multicultural roots are becoming middle class. And once they become middle class, they can contribute in a way, confidently within an economy, and start to assert – not in a negative way, but in a positive way – what they think is important to them. And what we are seeing in Toronto, more than anywhere else in Canada, is really that cultural expression, a very eclectic expression, and I think that what will emerge from that will be an architecture that really speaks to that, that kind of emergent culture. I don't know what that culture will be, I don't know where it's going, I think it's fascinating to watch it. If you think of other multicultural cities in the world – I mean, New York usually comes to my mind – New York has a kind of a – I love New York – but it is a kind of an aggressive city that's born on, comes out of, out of, of capitalism. It's a really sort of capitalistic expression of, you know what, I want to really excel at whatever I'm doing. And here we're going to do it. And overlaid with that is this, you know, cultural diversity and kind of expression of that through the arts community in New York that's here. We've got money, and culture does tend to follow money, we've got money, and now we're going to show the world what we can do with ballet, opera, music, art, whatever it is. So, New York has this amazing kind of creative scene that's unparalleled in the world, but as a city, it's a very aggressive city in terms of its built manifestation. I don't think Toronto will be that, I think Toronto will be something else. And I think that Toronto, it's cultural community, or its business community, is and

will be informed as much by multiculturalism as the arts community. And I think, you know, for example, in the banking crisis that's enveloped the world now, what has gone in Toronto as the financial centre for Canada is very, very different from anywhere else in the world. And it comes from, I think, that kind of emergent, collective Canadian identity in Toronto that says, you know, this is who we are. And why we're, why we never became really affluent during the last ten years financially, in the financial centre, and why we haven't had the big kind of downturn is because of that. You know, much has been written about Toronto in the context of the family compact, going back to Bishop Strachan, and how Toronto was always the place that was controlled by very powerful families to the annoyance and consternation of the rest of Ontario – there's always been this kind of animosity between Ontario and Toronto. And that still exists. But Toronto is not Ontario. As New York is not New York State. As New York is not United States, Toronto is not Ontario. Toronto is an emergent, I think, city state; it's not Vancouver, it's not Montreal. It's something new, and I think potentially, potentially something very exciting. It's taken a long, long time.

Can you foresee the future of Toronto, say twenty years from now? Fifty years from now?

I wouldn't even try. That's a very strange noise. I wouldn't even try. I mean, I don't think you can possibly know. I do know, when I say it's becoming an interesting place, I mean I don't think it is an interesting place. I don't think it's...I think it has a long way to go. I think that its buildings, its architecture, could get a lot more interesting, including our office – a lot more interesting. You could also make an argument, that's why it's difficult to speculate, that I think it's a kind of human condition that we yearn – first of all, we have, and much has been written by neurologists about this, we have all of this deeply imbedded within us – as a yearning for the past. A nostalgic yearning that comes from our brain – this has been described to me as a remarkable thing – that filters out unpleasant and difficult experiences and amplifies the great ones. And so we, we always tend to look into our past. There's our own immediate past, or in the past of a place as being better than it is now. I think architecture in North America – obviously the antecedents are Western Europe. Western Europe went through a long period in the Industrial Revolution, before and after, of building of cities that had very convincing fabric. And the came, not from the middle classes, they came before the rise of the middle class. We look at those cities now, and we say they're amazing, because they're consistent and they're also beautiful, and there's a real craft and art to building. What we now see in Western Europe is also a very, very strong, affluent, large middle class as we have in North America. And cities in Europe are

fragmenting, as they are in North America. Paris has some of the worst suburbs of any city in the world, yet, when we think of Paris, we think of 1910 Paris, 1917 Paris, central Paris, and we think, why can't we be like Paris? Well, Paris can't even be like Paris anymore. London can't be like London anymore. And Rome can't be like Rome anymore. And, so I think the entire western world is struggling with, what is the middle class culture? How does it assert itself, and how does it articulate itself in its cities and in its architecture? And I think the jury's still out. We don't know where we're going to go. You know, Jack Diamond, Eb Zeidler, they yearn for days of those kind of consistent-fabric buildings. And Toronto has that in its Victorian architecture, its Victorian domestic architecture. In that kind of pre-Second World War architecture in communities like Riverdale where street after street is the same house type and there's kind of a grace and elegance in those streets and predictability of those streets. Which we don't tend to have now. But something undoubtedly will emerge, but it won't be that. I don't know if it will be a type. It might just be a sense of a place.

That's very interesting the way you talk about the identity of cities, Paris not being its own, Rome is not its own. Contributing to that, the massive blanket of Americanism, the fast way of life, you know, fast food, fast shops, fast living, has swept right across Europe resulting in lose of identity. America brings freedom, and any specific little pockets of culture are just getting blown away because they don't really want to do this anymore, they don't want to be traditional, they want to taste America, and I think that has paid a huge contribution to the identity of places, and what is Americanism to replace tradition?

Well, it's an interesting thesis that you raise. I, a number of years ago – it's actually quite a number of years ago – there was a Canadian writer, a gentleman by the name of Gwynn Dyer, who's more locally known as the guy who writes about war, he has a fascination with the military, but it's kind of a hobby of his. But he's a journalist and he's a writer, he's a very thoughtful person, and he did a series on CBC radio, part of what they called the millenium series, which ran in the year 2000, first of all I think I should try and get a transcript of this radio show, but it was a four, six week show, and he started with the thesis: is the world becoming Americanized? Or is the world becoming democratized, and America was the first country to go through that process. And, in the end – if you could be so lucky as to get a transcript, it's worth reading – his conclusion was the world's becoming democratized. So that what we see in America is the logical evolution of democracy. When you get, coupled with, through a democracy, a rise in the middle class. And, it's what you see, obviously in Canada, or what you see in

China, like in emergent, industrialized countries, India, Western Europe. And so it's not American, it's just – in some ways it's a good thing, in some ways it's a bad thing but it's reflective in kind of a very human, important human ideal of an expansion of the middle class. Which I think most people would agree is an important thing. You know, what's inferred by that is that you're gradually lifting people out of difficult financial situations and giving them the ability to support themselves in a positive way, contribute to their place. So, I mean, it's a fascinating debate.

I've never heard that thesis before. In the back of my mind I see America as being, the first tree to have fallen in the forest?

Well, they certainly are ambitious, they certainly are aggressive. And there's both good things and bad things in their aggression and ambition. And perhaps more aggressive and ambitious than most countries. So, maybe what we see in America, if you accept the thesis of democratization, is a more extreme view than what we will see in other countries. I mean, China, China is like a, it's not a democracy, it's some kind of weird, well, dictatorship, but it's a benevolent dictatorship, with a kind of a ruling class, political class using free market economic systems that came out of democracy. And so the way it articulates itself probably would be very different from the way American has articulated itself through its democracy.

So, say we follow that path, we believe that this thesis is correct. How would you see Toronto – just to tie it back into Toronto – how would see Toronto ending up? Again, is it just unpredictable?

It's unpredictable. For a long time I've felt that North America – I have nothing to base this on, it's just a gut feeling I have – is that North America became wealthy after the Second World War because it had an intact infrastructure, and it – what was significant about that – was two things: one, it didn't have to reconstruct its infrastructure – as Japan did, and Western Europe; it also could sell materials and products into both of those regions of the world and make money off it. And so, it had a market, a very captive market. And through that process we became very affluent and what goes along with affluence is a sense of expectation and entitlement. And I think what we're having to deal with now – for a fair amount of time in North America – is that there are other people who have caught up, and now we have to become competitive. And it's very, very hard for us to accept that. What Western Europe had – it was sort of like the rich family, you know, it had generations, and generations, and generations of wealth, and so, yeah, it got knocked down in the Second World War, but it came back up very quickly because it had wealth. Wealth in its banking industry. Wealth in its assets. Wealth

in its industrialization. Wealth in its intellectual capital, in its students and its universities, that North America didn't have. So – didn't even come close – and so they bounced back. But China and India now are challenging us in a very significant way. And we're – it's really, really hard to know where we are going to go. You know, there's much debate, I think, about globalization – is globalization good, is it a humanist movement, in which it tries to raise the lot of the world, not directly, but indirectly. Or is globalization bad? And that's the debate.

What is Canada going to become?

Well, I think we know what it's not going to become. I mean, Lester Pearson said that the 20th Century belongs to Canada. It can't. Canada is not big enough, it's not wealthy enough, to be anything other than what it is. It can become better at what it is, but it is in a position in the world that will never be significant. And it starts with its land, which is completely impossible, geographically. That we support this idea of a country, that much has been written about, that it's about a hundred miles wide and it goes from coast to coast. I mean, you can't build an efficient infrastructure in a country like that. So we pay a price for that in terms of our wealth. And the desire to support people wherever they choose to live. And this is reflected in our social policies, political level, very strong regional policies within provinces and municipalities. They're all about supporting people at a local level. It's, as I said, you pay for that. There's a price to be paid. We also are in an impossible country climately. In which we – it's very expensive in terms of energy consumption, And from an environmental perspective, as well as from a geographic perspective. We have to import a lot of what we eat, in terms of fresh produce, and so there's a cost to pay for that as well. And then we have the worst of everything, which is we, we are blessed with natural resources, but we don't have the capital here to exploit those resources. And that's a very typical condition with a lot of resource-rich countries is they don't have the financial ability to develop those resources, so they outsource that. Now, other countries that do come in, access resources, and we are paid a labour component of extracting. You don't get wealthy that way. But it's far more complicated than to simply say why don't we just do this ourselves? Take an example of the zinc company – Sudbury – suddenly escaped me – doesn't matter [Inco – now Vale Inco]. That was just sold, a number of years ago, to a big Australian company [not Australian, Argentinean]. It's because they didn't have the financial horse power to continue to develop the mine sites and assets that they have. And so, we will always be in this situation, always be in this position. The great hope, or what I would look to for what the future of Canada is in its cities. We are interesting, compared to the Americans, that 70% of us live in cities, and 30% in the rural. And in the United

States, that's inverted, which explains their politics, I think, in part – the left/right thing. And where what will happen, it will be in cities like Toronto, and so if there is something that emerges here, it will be in almost city-states. And that Toronto really needs – it's being held back, I believe, in, in a system of government that has its antecedents in the British North America Act in terms of the division of power, both provincial and federal. And it's gotten bigger. It's economy's bigger than most provinces in Canada, and yet it's treated like a city. And so it can't raise capital, it can't, it has limited taxing powers – yet it's, it's operating almost like a small country. And that has to change. Otherwise it's going to be hampered and never will realize its potential. And it's also within the context of the Family Compact – both Ontario and the rest of Canada hate Toronto. They resent its success, they resent its apparent arrogance, they resent its apparent ugliness, its apparent lack of identity and respect for people. All of that, I think, is very unfair and very untrue. But it is what it is. And for Toronto to emerge as a spectacular city, it needs a very, very strong leadership, a political leadership to start with. And that is the whole problem of late 20th Century, early 21st Century Western politics is that, I think, coincident with the rise and expansion of the middle class, we don't want strong leaders. Gwynn Dyer said look at the antecedent of representational democracy – it was based on this one very simple idea – that we had Ottawa and we had the regional centres in Canada. You elect a member of parliament to represent you in Ottawa. So, there is a constituency office, and then what you do is you go to Ottawa for four months of the year, which is why parliament only sits for four months of the year. People have forgotten the whole process. So, you go to Ottawa, you elect your member of parliament to represent you in Ottawa, you elect someone you think you feel comfortable with. You trust them, you respect them. You might not agree on all issues, but you said on balance you know, Aaron, you're the kind of person I want to represent me in Ottawa. Because – you know, by the way, it's, it's an eighteen-day horse and buggy ride to Ottawa. I can't get there; or a five-day train ride, I can't get there. I can't be there. There's very little access to media – there was no media to speak of, relative to what we have now, other than newspapers. Now what we have is an expansion of communication, an expansion of that middle class in which everyone has an opinion on everything. We always did it, but now we want to assert ourselves. Now we want to second guess every single political decision that's made. And we want to do it in armchair politics. We want to do it before the fact and after the fact and we won't admit that we've changed our position. And so we, we've become central ungovernable in a conventional way. We don't want a strong leader, we resent and suspect, are suspicious, of strong leaders. This thing with Obama in the United States is to me a fascinating, fascinating political event. Already that guy's been

taken down but he came and elected on the basis of ideas. Not policies – ideas. Which is the way we used to represent ourselves in Ottawa, which is people who represented ideas and a temperament and an import that we identified with. And I think a large measure of the people in the United States identified themselves, and still do, with Obama. We have a mayor in this city – I know him very well, I'm friends with him – who is a very good mayor, and he's caught between two worlds. He's caught between the idea of a kind of a humanist notion that comes out of the labour movement, about being fair to people, and also having to take major decisions that affect us collectively, and not individually. So, the garbage strike was a perfect example. There's a collective imperative in Toronto that we need to deal with our fiscal situation. And one of them is, you know, a big cost of that is the delivery of services; hence, garbage and outside workers. But then there is the imperative of being fair to people. And he wants, he is, in his heart, a good person. But he cannot be a strong leader if he cannot take those strong decisions. And sometimes you have to say you know what – taking that as an example of the entitlement of unpaid days, which is, amounts to these sick days – 17 sick days, paid sick days here, which amounts to a deferred pension; now, that's really what it is. You can't afford that anymore. We've got to do this now. So we need a leader who can say you know what – it's like a game changer, someone who can come in and say we've got to reconstruct this, to give Toronto the tools. And it's this, and many other things. It's the relationship between Toronto and the province and Toronto and the federal government. And until we get a strong leader, Toronto will always be a fair to middling place. It will be an interesting place, but will never be a great place. And the question, really, for all of us, is do we want a strong leader? Right now we have a leader that we elected and deserve. And I don't mean that in a negative way. Miller is the person that we deserve, is the person where we are caught in this dilemma – who are we? You know? Do we believe in supporting the individual or do we believe in a larger idea of a place? And then how do we reconcile those two perspectives, and it's an open question.

RAYMOND MORIYAMA INTERVIEW

RAYMOND MORIYAMA INTERVIEW.

DATE: 24th September 2009.

TIME: 10:30AM.

LOCATION: 32 DAVENPORT ROAD, TORONTO.

Where were you born Raymond?

Well I was born in Vancouver British Columbia Canada. In a ghetto known to us as Japan Town, but more widely know as Jap Town.

Did you have any brothers or sisters?

I have no brothers, that's a very interesting story within itself. But I have 2 younger sisters.

What did your parents do?

My father was a school teacher when he was young with the intention of becoming an engineer. He had a very good brain, very gentle and very good with his hands. My mother was married young, very young. The age difference between us two is 18 years. So she was more like my sister. She was the daughter of a mining executive. I spent time with the grand father on her side, and he was more of a poet. Loved to write, loved to compose wonderful haiku on a moon gazing platform in his back yard.

What did your father teach?

He taught primary school and then his older brother Sam - my father's name was John - asked him to join him in Vancouver to run a hardware store that Sam had started. This was a Japanese way of doing things, So without really questioning too much he came to Vancouver. He never wanted to work too long in the hardware store. The brother was more interested in adventure, coming to a new country, starting a new business, and then not really interested in the management of it, and left the business for my father to run. Which was not really what he really wanted to do, but he carried on. It soon became a big burden and he soon ran into a big depression.

When did your parents move to Vancouver?

My mother and father married late 1928 and in January they took a ship from Yokohama and sailed to Vancouver. At that particular point being a winter crossing, which was really bad. My mother used to say, "I was sick on day two, so I think you were conceived on day 1 [Laughter] and since you've gone through all this storm you will never suffer from motion sickness" Which was absolutely

true.

So have you never been sick traveling?

Never, I was never sick traveling. Its fortunate, mother was right.

What influenced you to become an architect?

What influenced me is very simple I nearly died. This was when I was 4 years old. It was a very bad scalding from a stew that was boiling in our home. Fortunately as it came down, the oven door opened and my face was under the oven door. So all my back and arms were in a bad way, and I was confined to a bed for 8 months. My father arranged a bed by the window so that I could keep in touch with the outside world; and not to be isolated totally. I use to watch this construction going on across the street. As a child a little over 4 whatever this small construction was, was a big palace. I used to watch these men dig ditches and pour foundation, and lay blocks. Every once and a while there was a young man with a roll of drawings and a pipe who used to come on the site; and there was a great big rock on the side of the construction. He would spread out his drawings on this rock and he would smoke his pipe, and the smoke would go up - and I thought, oh what a talent. After what he said all the men after gathering around would nod, not like the construction guys now. So I said to my father, everybody likes that man, he seems to work really well with the other people, could you find out who he is? My dad immediately went across the street and talked to this guy and talked to the other men and came back as I watched and I was getting excited. He said, The man is called an architect. I said, ohhhh, well I'm going to be an architect. So at four and half the decision was made.

So you never diversified from that path?

No, never. At eight years old I told my father that I was going to marry Sachi, this is my wife. Well we had met when she was two and a half months old. Because the two families were very good. They lived on the same block on the same side of the street, so they met and we met for a pre news years kind of a get together. So I saw my wife all my life, and I said to my dad when I was eight years old, after I saw her playing the hoko the japanese instrument and tap dancing. I said, Dad I'm going to marry Sachi after I become an architect, and dad smiled and said, Hey Raymond, you might change your mind, you're going to be either consistent or very boring. I said, Dad I said I was going to be an architect, and pointing at her I told him I was going to marry her. That's what we did. So I've know my wife nearly eighty years, it has been very good.

It was almost a natural premonition.

I always believe that God opens the door for every child. God opened the door when I had that bad burn, it didn't seem like a wonderful opening of God's door but that happened. Having Sachi as a childhood friend and play mate was another lock. Then I had another chance to spend time with my grand father in Japan, which gave me another layer of thoughts and experiences about nature, about the moon, about poetry, and lots of Japanese sayings. There are a lot of good things that happen, sometimes in a bad way. The war, world war two, when all the Japanese Canadians were incarcerated, which was a really big experience.

Did that happen to you?

Oh yes. It happen to every Japanese, 22,000 of them, there was absolute total discrimination. That's when my fathers true nature came out. He said to me one day, and this was early 1942, he used to call me Junichi when he was very serious and I would like you to come and speak to me. It was the first time that my father and I had a man to man talk, and I was so proud of that moment. He said, well Junichi I received a notice to board a train to a war camp in three days and be separated from the family. I want you to understand that its impossible to close the store in 2 days and your mother is pregnant - that was my younger brother which we lost; I used the word we because I wanted him so much as a brother - and Canada has gone to war on a democratic principal, individual rights and I have to fight the contradiction. I thought fantastic at 12 years old having this conversation. Here is this mild, gentle school teacher with the courage to brace himself against some sort of a situation that he doesn't know anything about the outcome. Later I realized that there is a difference between truth and honesty. In this case the truth could be as understood by a Canadian: the war makes you fat, the Japs are to be put into camp a because they are the enemy, we have the right to do this. But my father saw the truth beyond that, of humanity in terms of God; and he was honest enough to say, hey I'm going to act on it. Those are very difficult things, one learns a lot, and architects should learn a little more about truth and honesty. I think we are sometimes dishonest, and we are not truthful, why you know? Is it money - the finances that creates the world? I think not. That was that wonderful, clear identification of modesty and courage, and as I grew older I thought that was a wonderful thing that my father taught me. And of course he said, I don't know what's going to happen to me and I don't know what's going to happen to the family but I must do it. So a few days later Mounties in street clothes came and picked him up, and I watched him walk out of the store. The most frightening was the third man who stayed behind, a big tall guy and he took everything that we could use for communication. He even took my crystal

set that was attached to the radiator. But before he left he pointed his finger, a big long finger, and I'm twelve: if we see you outside after sunset, you, your mother, your sisters will be shot. Before this time my mother knew about the European situation and the Jewish holocaust. She said, I don't believe this, this is Canada it is happening here? It was a shocker. Those are influences that came much later, 60 years later, in the war museum for example.

Truth and honesty, is that a virtue / life lesson that you have applied to your life?

Its very difficult let me explain to you. I'll give you an easier example. If you were living in Amsterdam during the war, the German law was the law in Amsterdam. That would be considered possible truth. If German solders come to your door and say do you have any Jews in your house? What are you going to say? Be honest and say yes? Of course you say no. So you saw beyond the truth of the law, to serve that you are dishonest, and think there is a justification for that. Same thing applies here. Look what's happening to our Inuits and the first nation people. Us southerners are thinking very complacently that's ok kind of thing. Well that's being really dishonest to yourself, the truth is not the truth. That's the worst of the two situations. I think architectural practices in many ways should think about it, and if we do we would have better architecture in Canada and throughout the world.

So if people are true to themselves they are true to the situation?

A lot of us have joined the shallow society, money, greed, social respect from other unthinking people, and that doesn't produce great architecture and we suffer from that. I'm the greatest nationalist outside of the country, inside I'm critical of our attitude. Really its an anti-creating competitive environment.

Do you see that just within Canada, or whole wide?

No, it's worldwide. If you think, its easier to join the crowd, than be dishonest, but you don't use the word dishonest.

I think you were leading to, when did I do my first architecture?

Well, the struggle of the beginning of World War 2 we were finally sent to a huge internment camp in B.C., in a place called Slocan, and our camp was called Bay Farm. At that place there were two public baths, there was no private baths and each one had a male and female section. I went to a couple of those public baths, to the men's section of course, and young boys would see my burn and scars and

they would say, he's diseased don't touch him. That was ok, it was just the kids, but adults as well, and I almost started to see my own community of Japanese Canadian as the enemy, just as bad as Canada who never understood, who never listened to the people. They sat into a conclusion that people accepted as truth, based on very based on very few facts, in fact the military stated at that time, that they dont see any need to incarcerate the Japanese Canadians, they don't see any weapons, or ammunition. In fact the irony of the thing is that the Americans didn't incarcerate the Italians and the Germans, first of all they were white and secondly who was the national hero in the US at the time? It was Joe Dimaggio a baseball player that saved a whole Italian community. These are very interesting sort of things that have come up, and I am only touching on them just at the superficial part.

My father was away in Peterborough in prisoner of war camp by this time, and I have nobody to really talk to about what to do, at the time my mother about my qualms and despair is not going to help her so I decided I had to help myself. I realized that there was a river the Slocan River at the other side of the small mountain. So I decided instead of hot tears I would jump into the river. It was better to be cold than to suffer from any tears. I never told my mother as she would be shocked and try to stop me. So I built a little platform on a tree, so that I could get on top and watch for people and if nobody came I jumped into the river and take a bath. What I start to discover was how beautiful nature was, the sunrise the sunset, the sound of the light and the whisper of the river. I watched these insects and animals and what I realized was I better do something. So I started to build a tree house.

That was a real struggle, that was my first foray into architecture. I had an axe for a tool with a flat head on one side, I had some rope, six nails and I went to the saw mill where I worked for 7 cents a hour, and they knew me and gave me a few lumber to brace the building. With that I struggled and built this tree house, mostly out of branches from the river or in the forest. When it was finished the people couldn't see it, and if I got caught, thinking as a 12-13 year old kid, I would be charged as a saboteur. So I never told my mother and never had anybody help me because as soon as I did that word would spread and it wasn't a club house or anything, so I built this roughly 5x6 tree house, round in shape and hugged the tree and be invisible. That tree house was magic. It was my magic place. It was a place for solitude for peace, I could listen to nature and observe nature. Then I realized that nature in all its fury - thunder storm, winter storm, snow storm is much more even temper than man's decision on the short term, that our social

decision are, [makes fluctuating hand sign] how do you see through that? That was a very interesting question that if you base yourself just on the social, your life itself is minimized, you have to rise above it. At that time I would look at the ground down below – we were still in square feet – that one square foot is different from the next square foot and the next square foot and the next square foot. God the whole world is different every square foot by square foot, that land is very precious, and that's when I started to realize the beauty of Canadian nature. It would start to help me back towards and realize maybe if I appreciate the beauty of Canadian nature I must start to love Canada itself. To do that I have to love my community. So I started to do this, and actually I learned to fly with my imagination from the tree house up and over the camp and that's when I drew a map of the whole camp and I made a second map with the names of every family that lived in all these shacks. That was the beginning of my architecture, and what did I learn? To do things with minimal material, with minimal effort, and keep the costs down in the case of the tree house, you know I built it for nothing. That became a way of thinking. A lot of people in society say, Ray you are an imaginative architect you got to be expensive. They don't quite realize that part of the imagination is to do it well and do it economically.

So those were lessons and I just thought the sensibility of each individual became very important and I felt that if I'm going to help, it's not the visual look of the building that matters it's how good does it help the humanity of each building, how does it help each individual that uses it. So roughly that's the story of the tree house and I had to take that tree house down, and nobody discovered it ever. But one day my good friend was a handicapped person, he had a club foot, and to cross the river to the other side he had to walk a quite a distance to a bridge and so I started to build a raft and I needed one more tree. The only one that was close to the river and would fall into the river was the tree house, and I had to bash it, a little before we left Bay Farm. I got him across the river.

So you sacrificed your tree house for your friend?

In a way. I discovered the magic of that tree house and how it influenced me throughout my life. One of the most important discoveries I made was one night I heard this breeze come through the tree house, going through the walls. It made this sort of sound in the night and my imagination was running quietly, imagining a battle, the end of a battle, the two sides are at opposite ends, the soldiers are tired, they are almost hoping that they would die quickly or the whole thing would just disappear. And that sound I remember forever. And you know the first sketch I made for the Canadian War Museum, is the sketch of that

sound. No architects ever make a sketch of a sound, only musical notes. That's what I made. If you go to the war museum, there is a regeneration hall and I asked not to put any signs up or fill it with all kinds of artifacts. Just the sound of nature, and the sound I heard one day when I was on the construction site, and heard this breeze going through the building, through the acoustic panels, it was a little metallic because of the material but it reminded me of the tree house 60 years before. So I went over the director who was conducting a tour of important people, and I didn't see these people and I said, Joe you got to record this thing, this better to have the sound than anything else. I didn't think he would do it but Joe did it, and a lot of people talk about it. The sound of nature is very strong, yet its gentle - it doesn't hammer you in the head like some human words, but everybody has a different interpretation, but there is an interpretation and that's the wonderful part of the sound.

Do you still have the sketch of the sound?

Oh yes, if you buy the book "In Search Of A Soul" there's is sketch in it.

Where were you educated?

I went to kindergarten of course in Vancouver in a catholic church and then Strathcona Public School in Vancouver which I had to leave because of the war grade 6, which we continued after an absence of a year or a year and a half in the camp in Bay Farm. I did grade 8 in Hamilton in Ryerson Senior Public School in two months. That was an interesting sort a thing that the principal and I had. The Principal in the school said, I would never make grade eight in two months. I said, Well you got nothing to lose, put me into grade eight and if I don't make it, i'll come back to grade eight next year. He said, that's fair. So I made made it. He made a condition with me, ok I'll put you into grade eight under the condition that you play baseball. He knew that I liked to play base ball and we won the open championships. He allowed me to become not a hero, but one of the guys, so that other student would know. We were the second Japanese Canadian family in Hamilton so I was a bit of freak you know. In high school I was the first Japanese Canadian. I remember my classmate saying to me, I thought Japanese were short, yellow, slant eye, buck teeth, glasses and knew Judo and you don't look anything like that. I never told them that I didn't know Judo to keep the fear in them, so if they got rough with me I would throw them [Laughter]. Then Toronto, then McGill for my masters.

Did you enjoy the move from Vancouver to Ontario?

Not really because we were the first family to move out of the camp to Hamilton,

there was a lot of rumours and mother was told by her friends in the camp if you go out there you'll be murdered. My father was released from the internment camp because he came to the conclusion that he's not going to go out and do damage to railway yards and all that and it's better for him to be productive and not lying around in a camp so they released him. And we received this telegram saying, they are letting me out, write to you soon. My mother decided she didn't care, she wanted to rejoin with father. So we left in February 1944 I guess and it was quite a journey. A very old dilapidated cabin with no blinds and one pot belly stove at one end of the train. As we were leaving south down Slocan Valley to Nelson, then eastward and people used to come out to the train or where ever the train stopped to gawk at the Japs, and it was almost frightening to me. But then as we came more to the east, we were getting used to it and some people brought food because it took us 6 days or something and we were not on a regular train and we ended up getting shunted here and there.

I used to work in a pottery to paint teapots, actually I was labouring and I found this left over teapot and I started to paint them and the foreman saw me and he said, Raymond you want to paint teapots? and I said yup I'd much rather do that. So he said, all you have to do, is do 26 a day, I'll give you 2 hours and give you 22 cents an hour. Twenty two cents! Wow the most I'd been very offered before that was 7 cents an hour, so that's like more than 3 times, and I said, oh yeah.

I developed a technique because I am ambidextrous and I used to be able to do two at the same time, and then so I thought he would increase the numbers but all he said was, all you have to do is 26 and if you have any time left over I will give you a place to study. So the first year this foreman, a wonderful guy, he made me study much more. And after I was getting so good at it, after 40 minutes I would have finished 26, and then I would go and study. I came first in grade 9 out of 628 students, I came first and won a gold medal. In second year was silver, 3rd year was bronze and after that was [thumb gesturing out the door] I had other interests. But the most wonderful thing that happened was on graduation day from West Hill, my father handed me an envelope, a business envelope, so I looked at it, congratulations Raymond. I thought wow maybe it's a cheque? My classmates were getting all kinds of things, bicycles, tuition for university, one father got him a car. So I opened it during the ceremony, and my father had wonderful, beautiful script. You know what the poem said? Into God's temple of eternity drive a nail of gold. Into God's temple of eternity drive a nail of gold. And I thought about that all through university and trying to fulfil that request. It wasn't just banging in a nail, it had to be forged, forged out of gold. That was the

best thing for my graduation, it was better than that car, or bicycle, and I had to work hard to pay for my way through university.

Your father sounded like an amazing person.

He was, he was a great man. Socially he may have been overloaded but he was a great man and I think my mother was wonderful too. I always feel fortunate that I had my parents and all those wonderful doors that opened, most of all. And another year or two, knowing my wife for 80 years, that's something.

Can you tell me about your best building Raymond?

What's our best building? I use the word our because it is a team word. One thing I should tell you is that we never let a project go out without really being satisfied. We don't do too many projects, we don't crank them out. As our lawyer said to me one day, Raymond you think too much about few projects to make any money, and that's quite true. We are not poor, but we are not rich architects like you know some of these architects. We never let any project out of the office without my final approval. Now the guys are running it, so it's up to them to decide what's best. I guess I would say what is the best building, some of our tiny little buildings are really good and beautifully detailed. I don't mind if somebody would say the Canadian War museum is your legacy because it meant a lot. We were fortunate enough to get the job - and what we did was, I made a request, and I think I made a request during the interview that first thing I wanted to do is, these were fighting times, the director and I should travel across Canada and listen to the voices of Canadians, and that's what we did and that was the most wonderful thing that we did. We always tend to go on a journey with a client to find out not only about each other but to share an experience. That particular one gave us the exposure to what Canadians got out of the war museum and about war. First of all we found out that women and men think quite differently. Women were more universal, men were much more earthy and talked about almost everyday affairs. For example, one woman said, War is like going to the depths of hell to resurrect a soul. No man would say that, and that's very much reflected in the lobby. Another woman said, Immaculate architect will give up part of his ego, and pick up the soul of the nation he serves. Those were wise and I discovered that Canadians are very much modest but very courageous. We don't scream and shout about how valiant we are like some other nation, and I think that's our strength, but then I think that strength is minimized by some of the compromises that politically, political decisions are made. So it goes back to the question of truth and honesty. A lot of the times the whole project was valued on that.

JANNA LEVITT INTERVIEW

JANNA LEVITT INTERVIEW.

DATE: 24TH SEPTEMBER 2009.

TIME: 3PM.

LOCATION: 533 COLLEGE STREET, TORONTO.

Thank you for taking this interview.

Sure.

Where were you born Janna?

In Toronto.

Where about in Toronto?

Forest Hill.

So what did your parent do for a living?

My mother was a ceramic artist and my father was an entrepreneur. A furniture store owner.

Did he design Furniture?

No he sold furniture. He had a chain of furniture stores with his brothers.

Do you have any siblings?

I do I have three brothers and two sisters.

Were are you ranked?

I'm the youngest.

Were you spoilt?

I think so. [Laughter]

What was the family home like in Forest Hill?

It was an old 1920's house that a provincial judge had built. It was set on a bit of a hill and it had these nice set of rambling flag stones steps that went up to it. A centre wall plan, three stories and a basement, sort of like the old lady and the shoe, just jam packed with people.

It sounds beautiful.

It was.

Do your parents still own it?

No, I just drove by there recently, I have a brother who lives in Brussels and he was in and we were driving by it and its been torn down and a really hideous, McMansion, cookie cutter full Georgian thing has been built.

That's unfortunate.

Yeah.

So how long did you live there?

Until I was seventeen.

So that's the only house you knew?

Yes.

So what influenced you to become an architect?

A lot of things. I always like to make things and build things and fixing things. And I was quite lucky to have a father who wasn't from my generation a sexist. So I would say dad, I want to figure out how a car engine works, and he would just take apart the car engine in the station wagon and put it back together again. I have two older cousins who were architects and that was really interesting to me. My mother and father loved to travel so we were always travelling as a family and both of them loved architecture.

Were did you travel to?

We travelled mostly in Europe and the middle east. My father family is from England originally, so we have lots of family in England and Scotland. Both my parents grew up in Montreal and both my brothers and sisters and Montreal is such an incredibly beautiful city and we travelled all across the states and Canada. Always moving.

Was there one key moment that you can remember that you realized that you wanted to become an architect?

No actually. I thought about it when I was in high school, but at that point I was very engaged in fine arts with painting and sculpting and I went to art school for a couple of years right after high school and I graduated from high school quite early so I pursued that. Then I realized that when I was at art school it was at the point when there was a lot of really conceptual art work, people that were doing these very political or conceptual drawings and referencing all kinds of philosophers, and I hadn't read so I decided also simultaneously that I liked to make things and

I was very interested in art I didn't enjoy being alone in the studio. So it indicated to me that I had to keep looking for what I did want to do that combined my love of making things and design and art but in a context were the work that we did was in the world were my experience in the fine arts was the work that you did was very isolated in the studio. You and canvas or you and a sculpture or even if you were doing a installation it essentially started with this solitary idea that focused on the individual. Because of those two things I went and finished my degree in political science and film studies at the University of Toronto. Then at the end of that I just worked for a year or two in film making sets and I really loved that and I loved the idea of it. It was the first time I could understand the intellectual, the Marxist term craftist, making and doing. So it was the first time I could actually see through set building the connection between making and doing and being in the world and having what you do actually manifest itself as part of our environment. So then I went to architecture school. When I thought about in high school I couldn't do math at all. I don't know about now but then you need functions relations, calculus and physics. I had done none of those in high school. So when I decided to go into architecture I had to do all of those by correspondence in the suburb. But I was old enough at that point to have the discipline to sit down and do it.

So why not continue with set building? What was it about film that you didn't like?

I love film, but set building is a fantasy. It's a total construct. It wasn't that when I was painting or making things in art school, it wasn't that it was lonely. I didn't like that that the process of making things in the fine arts context at least for me constituted a much more of a introspective process. And it was the introspective process that I felt wasn't a creative process for me. I liked the engagement and the kind of tension to reconcile your own interests and your own instincts with real world exchanges, and that to me is really creative that kind of mix of the two. So it wasn't loneliness it was more about trying to find your path.

Which school of architecture did you attend?

University of Toronto for my bachelors.

Did you realize when you attended University of Toronto that you were on the right path?

Totally.

So what was your first building Janna?

My first building was not a building I built but was a building that I inhabited. We had a German DP couple who lived with use my whole life, they came over after the war and Fritz worked for my dad and he was a master carpenter before the Second World War. So he always made things around the house, and one of the things he made for my family he made a plywood playhouse at the side of my house. It was probably 8x10 maybe, the size of a single room occupancy was the size of a playhouse for us. I would help him design it a little bit and furnish it and paint it and kind of renovate it a little bit. I always think about that house when I was in art school and I did a little series of paintings based on that house. It was a very primary little A-framed, cuts outs, dormer.. yeah I'd say that was my first building. [laughter]

Do you have many pictures of it?

I probably have pictures of it somewhere, it's certainly not there anymore. It was on the side garden, we had a back garden and a side garden and then the house. The side garden was maybe 12 feet wide and it was quite dark, with very little grass, but Lily's Of The Valley. It always smelled beautifully, and for me architecture is not just what is looked like but always about, how does it were, what story it tells, what dies it smell like after it rains. Very visceral, there's a real visceral part and I always think partly that's from that play house and also from walking around in Europe a lot. I did it with my father, he loved getting up early in the morning and walking around and saying look at that stone that we passed this morning the Crusaders probably walked on that. So it was very much about a narrative. That architecture could tell stories and quote stories.

Do you have any stories you can recall about building it?

No not that I can remember building it, I'd have to think about that.

What did you learn that experience of your first building?

I learned about working with Fritz who was an incredible carpenter. So even something as simple as that house if things had worked out differently and they'd stayed in Germany and been a master carpenter, he'd never would have done something like that, but here he was making this very simple plywood house and it was perfect, he assembled the whole thing and then took it apart and adjusted it and put it back together again. That was very cool.

How long did it take?

I don't know?

Can you remember what colour you painted it?

Yeah, white, a red chimney with a green roof. [laughter]

Did you keep repainting it?

Yes yes, I liked to peal the paint of because it was plywood, it wasn't marine grade so it would bubble and delaminate, and I'd paint it again and then Fritz would bring home, in those days just toxic enamel paint which was really exciting because it was thick and shiny which I really liked.

Was that possibly your first step in entering art school?

No I think my first step was more my mother. I was the youngest and she had always been interested in art, as I was growing up everyone else was older so she only had me at home. She started to take ceramic courses but also go to galleries a lot and she'd always take me along. So I was always in the middle of a whole bunch of artists and because there was a lot of empty bedroom in our house as my mother got more invested in the arts she would meet people who were coming to the city to do a lecture or give a course in ceramics - so they would always stay at our house. So there was always - my father would say "artists-in-residence" at our house. And then she has a studio home and we always made things.

It sounds like a really interesting upbringing.

It was, it was just fabulous and I was never a good sleeper and or some reason I would always wake her up at night. I remember she would like black licorice, so she would get black licorice, scissors and tooth picks and we would make villages. It just became this thing weeks on end whenever I couldn't sleep. I'd wake her up and we'd use this flat licorice and my father would give us licorice allsorts, so we made many many villages it was a lot of fun.

Did you eat them, or what happened to them?

No no no, I don't know what happened to them? Its funny because we sat on the floor and that's the other thing I remember so clearly making these things. Were both sitting on the floor by the window, my father would be fast asleep and there would be one light on in the room. I always remember feeling this is really comfortable, and so when I think about things now, when I want to think about a certain kind of space, not only do I think about the aromatic but I also think about light a lot. For me that's really important. In part is goes back to that because it was so comforting in really kind of fundamental way.

Thank you that was a really thoughtful story. So what was the most interesting person you met in your home?

I met so many interesting people, I don't think I could single somebody out.

The licorice houses you made, did you make a whole subdivision?

Little houses, fences, big buildings then we would make stories and sketch the stories and make more stick licorice people, it was a lot of fun, I guess my mother was the most interesting person.

This was all because you couldn't sleep at night?

I couldn't say, I just would get maybe 4-5 hours of sleep at night that's all I ever needed, so I'd go to bed then I'd wake up, I always felt well I'll wake up mom. [laughter]

Would you have a best building Janna that you would like to discuss?

Its funny I've been asked this question a couple of times, and I guess the trait answer is well my best building is yet to come. I do feel probably the building that I could take everything that I felt about architecture and everything that I thought architecture is capable of doing, and could bring my strengths, conceptually, artistically, architecturally, politically, was a building that we did called Strachan House this opened in 1997 we'd worked on it maybe five years off and on, a very controversial building very hard to get the funding for it. It was a really remarkable experience, it like making a new typology architecturally which was a very rare that one gets that opportunity to do that, and it made me really challenge my firm mental beliefs that I had, it made me understand the relationship between language and power and how space making can support or underline a persons relationship to the world. I got to engage and work with all kinds of artists and contributors to the project. It was like a piece of archeology and we literally just set up an office in this huge warehouse because we never knew what was going on behind the next wall. From the beginning to end really engaging, it was finished and it was very successful, it was housing for people who had been living on the streets. The problem was how do you get people who live on the streets to want to come inside? The housing provider was an extremely challenging, innovative, intelligent person and group of people. It was a self-governing community; the group of 80 residents would elect mayor and mayoress and they would have town hall meetings and it was really great, then Harris came along and cut all the funding and the building is still there but its not run as a community, its just run basically as a shelter. Its just ware housing if you're not a drug addict when you go in the building there you will be by the end of the week, its really unfortunate.

Where about is the building located?

It's at Strachan and Wellington in Toronto.

How big was the warehouse?

It was about 60,000 sq feet.

Can you describe the inhabitants more?

They were men and women who had been living on the street, who the housing provider called homes first, its when the homeless phenomena escalated in Toronto and they were making this huge boom in the economy that resulted in all these homeless people. It was the first time that it was a continual problem. It wasn't someone will pull this poor soldier after the war who couldn't regain to society or a couple of people who are just down on their luck. There was groups of people living all over the place. So they said something has to be done and the housing money is not just for people who can live successfully and have the social skills, there is this whole other different group of people that no ones doing housing for, we are going to do it.

Was the Strachan house designed as a traditional home less shelter?

No not at all, what they wanted to do was get away from the beds right next to one another so they didn't want a shelter. They wanted housing for a group of people who's inclination was not to want to live inside and who had maybe been living on the streets for many years and had few if any social skills and many of them mental health issues, drug and alcohol issues, and required a very different idea about housing. Architecturally the typology was the reverse of conventual multi-unit housing where there is a primary premise of private space and you try to minimize the public space. In the end what we designed was something and because of the group of people, our client group, that the actual private space was the smallest amount of space. Then it became this ever expanding series of semi-private, semi-public and public spaces. There was this whole range that seemed to answer the diversity of spacial tolerances that people could handle, not only in the process of moving from the outside in but also once they were in. So it was very much a reflection of what we learned talking to people. The client who hired us said the first thing you got to do is go out and talk to your client group. So we went all over the city and talked to people in shelters, on the streets, under bridges - and one person said to me, I'd like my house to be like a ship. Which just blew me away, I just thought it was an incredibly articulate, actually very beautiful way to think about a house. The rooms are on a perimeter, they are not very big but they are intimate and they are perfectly tuned with no wasted space, and the

whole bulk of the ship is always this series of spaces is rented with this interior community, that's actually what this building needs to be in a way. It was very interesting, but one of the things that we really realized was a lot of people would express their ideas, they would say well, I don't want to be seen in this space but I want to be heard in this space. So architecturally they had really stimulating ideas. Or, maybe I could sleep in a bedroom but I want to look out of my bedroom, so they would always express themselves and give physical analogies. So in the end we look at a lot of choreography because the quite graphic notation, cause people would say, I want to walk down the street but I don't want anyone to touch me and if I'm going past so and so and I've had an argument with him then I don't want him to trip me when I'm going by. So we would measure out, what is a typical corridor need? So the conventional way when the code says a multi-unit corridors have to be four foot wide. We would say, what is the minimum corridor dimension for two people may be able to walk past each other but cannot come close to touching each other, because that would provoke something, so give them enough space there will not be that confrontation. So my judgment was really in response to the issues that they brought up, or you had to have two ways out of every space, except for the bedroom, the bedroom was the one room in the entire place that there wasn't two ways out. But every other place there had to be, you could never create a situation were someone felt trapped. So there was an incredible amount of circulation space so in order to familiarate we made a series of spaces out of that circulation space, we realized that actually worked well for people.

That's very interesting.

It was totally wild.

Being government funded, can you be more specific with the time frame of the project?

It took about five years to get the money from the government because at that point when they started on the project, it was the Ontario Housing Policy it was called The Green Book and it was basically shrunken down middle class housing. Not at all appropriate for this group of people. So the fact that this housing provider want was to have homeless people and we don't want housing like that, and we are actually not going to make a place that has living rooms and dining rooms and kitchens and we are not going to call it that, as that references a living environment that is not relevant for these people, or master bedrooms or anything like that, it scared the shit out of everybody. So basically no one wanted to fund them. Then when the NDP lost the election to the Conservatives to Harris they

made a direct grant to the city of Toronto to cover all the money for this house, it was kind of their last hoo-raa. They knew by doing that the Harris government couldn't come back and get the money, which was one of the first things that they tried to do was to stop all the housing and specifically this project. So the city in their wisdom just told them to bugger off.

That was a nice last stand.

Yes Harris managed to kill it years later, simply through funding cuts.

How long did it last?

It's still going on, but it only lasted as a successful housing for about 6 years. Partly that group of residence is really really hard on the physical stock. A lot of how we designed was, that we need the environment that if I'm working with someone I can say, don't hit Aaron don't kick the column. So we had to work very sturdy, it became part of the design of the whole project which was in the most public areas the most tough materials, as it become more intimate we could loosen up and have more relatively fragile materials, and only when you got into the bedrooms that you had dry wall, that was the one place were we had drywall and highly finished veneers. You need a lot of maintenance to keep that up. So Harris managed to take away all the maintenance funding, then as a housing provider his government requested that they take community building out of their mandate. Once you take community building out of your mandate, you dont get funding for certain people to work with the residence and you need those people to work with the residence so that is doesn't end up like it is today, warehousing people with out any form of vision for the potential for someone's life living like this. Because unlike homeless kids if you've ever been on the streets for long and you're really young you just have huge amounts of resiliency. But what we learned through working with people who were frontline workers on the streets. After you about your late twenties early thirties if you have been living on the street for a long time, you don't bounce back really, the occasional person can but that's the remarkable person. Most people its about having a different set of expectations, what's a good life for them. Takes a lot of work and a good life might be, getting up and doing anything to hurt yourself or anyone else, maybe looking after some plants, and really not causing yourself or anyone else any harm, and that would be a good day and a good thing and it would keep you out of the hospital, off the street and keep you safe and keep the community safe.

Were did the people come from that made up the community?

Mostly west side people because it didn't seem like people who lived on the east

end of the city wanted to, you know, they had their roots, they had their whatever, so mostly west side folks.

Have you done many houses from that project?

From that project we've maintained against great odds since Harris we have been able to do most of the really interesting innovative housing in the city because of that one project we got the reputation for being people who didn't have any fixed ideals about what the housing should look like or who the client group should be. You know, for Strachan House, the housing provider said and this is a very political thing which I totally agreed with. We are not your clients the people living there are going to be your clients, so you are going to have to talk to them. We're the ones that are entrusted in spending the money on their behalf, but it comes to designing it, a lot of it has to come from your clients, like you would if you were designing the house for Mr. Harper. And we were totally comfortable doing that and a lot of people aren't. At that point quite honestly no one thought it was architecture, or as we were like wow this is better than anything we could think of in terms of an architecture project. People were like you're doing a shelter?... yawn. Or they'd look at it like social work. Here we were working with artists and we had trained a crew of homeless men and homeless women who were building part of it and were experimenting with materials. We were going back to first base assumptions of what makes a kitchen, what makes a house. Totally amazing.

The research that you've done on the homeless have you compiled it?

It's been documented with worked with two photographers Robert Burley and Deb Friedman. Deborah photographed the workers from the residence and Bob photographed the construction in the final building then an urban anthropologist Ray Anderson documented from a sociological and anthropological perspective and has written a couple of books. It won a Governors General award, for a while when it opened there was people coming from all over the world to see it, to see what a self-governing community was like. It was at a time when homelessness was starting to become a problem in many places, so there was many few projects. There were projects that were built that were kind of like the Salvation Army, basically pay and pray that sort of thing but nothing where there's a serious piece of work aimed and designed for it, and it didn't look like anything else, and because it was for this group of people.

What was the original building?

It was an old furniture warehouse that just kept growing over time.

It must have been beautiful inside?

Stunning, I've got pictures somewhere. At one point we knew there was a chimney because we could see it's sticking out the top, and go through layers and layers and layers of masonry and the things you would uncover were just phenomenal, just absolutely phenomenal. And then one day we just find the chimney, the base of it.

Do you feel yourself as experience when dealing with the homeless and housing for the homeless?

They are one of our client groups. That is the only way to say it.

Are you brought in as consultants in other projects?

No no we are always just hired as the architects, and the interesting thing about the homeless population as a client group they are always changing. It depends whether they are youth or they are older it depends whether it's a result of the recession or a boom, so it changes all the time.

So this was in the early 90s?

Yes

After nearly two decades have you done one recently?

There's a lot more for families so we are doing family housing now. What's also interesting now is that there's a lot more in the suburbs and that's harder to see. So, we did a youth housing in Peel and that's very different than doing something for youth, we did some housing for youth in Toronto again just down the street actually from Strachan house that was again in a very different kind of youth group. Very different I mean it's like no two house plans are the same, it is sort of the same thing.

In the Strachan House, what was your strategy towards materiality?

The existing building was such a rich fabric in itself, and also what we noticed was that moving from, it's right at the corner of Wellington and Strachan, right at the corner was the oldest piece of the factory, and then there was just different stages of it being built. So as we started to take back the interior to just the rough wood, timber and steel and masonry, it was like this whole exposure of outside spaces that became inside spaces. Similar to the School of Architecture, a very similar pattern of expansion for all warehouses. As we start to notice that we started to realize there was a natural parallel between outside becoming inside, bringing the outside in, whatever that vibe was of living on the street and the comforting

part of that, bringing that part of the outside in became a kind of analogy and the kind of analogous operation with the building itself. So we used a lot of the existing openings, for instance. So the town hall is this complex space that we actually documented all of the existing openings in two walls that been outside walls that became inside walls with windows and kind of crunched those out and ran the stairs and landings all through that. And so, then we were working with these artists, that how we met actually Dave Warren in our office, because he was doing public art then with a colleague, and we worked on floors that had very intense coloring in the town hall, and as it got further away from the town hall which was an expression of the community towards the bedrooms we decreased the color to tone down and mark that shift between community and individual. And we did things like we had a series of front porches, basically transition spaces that were transparent but just dropped down the scale in terms of the overall ceiling heights as you walked along there was a couple of front porches you could almost recognize them as porch like from telegraph poles because they were really inexpensive and nice and rough one. It was organized as a series of houses along the horizontal floor plate and there was three floor plates. So as you moved horizontally along the floor plate then we started to deploy front porches that was a marking point into each person's house, again all it really was to step it down. A lot of people like to renovate their houses, so we wanted something where you could do that will and the job was very unforgiving so we use very robust materials, it looked great looked great and it stayed really well. So again when we got to the front porches at everyone's bedroom, we began to drop the height we planed all the wood, we stained it, finished it and then when we will got into the room there was nothing rough, very finished.

It sounds beautiful.

It was a very very very visceral aesthetic, very interesting and I was half way through the project when the client said in the town hall there was a this really incredible staircase going up two stories around the big chimney. The client said you know people are going to want to jump, I know I said this was okay but it's not okay people are going to jump you got to do something. My partner Dean and I, we were in Vancouver when we got this call, so he started sketching, and she said you can't make it look like jail room or a hospital as that's where these people have been, so no cages, so we thought God. When we got back we called a friend, actually an artist and metal sculptor who he knew slightly, and said okay here's the problem, so can you help us with sculpture to make something that's really quite beautiful that will work, to do all the things that the client wants it to do, but is still beautiful. He ended up with a friend of his and we told them all about

the building and what the intentions were, they actually narrated this incredible story and made it out of steel and opportunistically fastened it to the to-code handrails and guardrails and made this incredible thing and it was cheaper than what we can to getting some metal guys in. It was really the fine arts community embracing the spirit of this and saying I'm going to do this and this and this. In return what they got, we gave them a set of guidelines and we didn't say we wanted it to look like this, now were going to collaborate and you tell us what you think this should do and we'll work together on it, so for them a really great opportunity. It was very interesting.

Then the government stopped the funding on this?

They stopped the funding, they gutted the housing provider's organization, and let the building fall apart physically.

Who inhabits the building now?

Just full of warehousing people now, there's barely any furniture now, because it's a really big problem in Toronto with lice so they got rid of the furniture a couple of years ago and just never brought it back. It is a big problem but there's ways to solve it. When you work on another project, and your client says I want you to do research on how to get rid of this and how to build things and so of course you can do it, you have to work at it, staff have to work at it and have to work with a difficult client group to establish levels of hygiene and a respectful way or it's a jail.

You should get a medal for that.

No one should get medals we should just make more housing like that is what we should do its better for everyone in our society it's an appropriate expression of our civic culture and as architects there's been lots of different projects that we've done that I've been really interesting but for the one thing at that point made me feel I understand all the really great things that architecture can do and also the things that architecture cant do. The things you need other things beside as architecture and that's a really good lesson to learn.

You were honest, civilized and true to the homeless, instead of treating them as parasites and building them a shelter to get them off the street, you treated them as human beings and asked them what they wanted and that was the success.

From our perspective we've always felt that good architecture should be available for anyone, so I wouldn't any less because the person is living on the street

than I would for anyone else. So was a total alignment of political and cultural perspectives with this client group because when they said talk to your clients we felt this is going to be a lot of fun. We were very lucky because we were totally young, and totally green and we just had all this great interest in architecture and fine arts and politics and building things and not being afraid to set up site, all the stuff we need and we had very little competition because no one else thought it was architecture, some people were like I'm not going to put in a proposal to do a shelter.

Did you make many friends from that day to this?

There were a couple of clients that we met at that time that we still work with. Those people don't live very long actually.

When you begin a project do you have a medium of choice that you feel helps you design, pencil, pen, computer etc?

I'm a pre-computer-aided drafting gal, I like pen or pencil.

Do you keep sketchbooks?

Yes.

Do you listen to music when you design?

I do.

What kind of music?

It really depends. One of the values of coming from a big family, is that I could be in the middle of a hurricane and tune it out, so lots of time to listen to the CBC, country, hip-hop, whatever.

What drives you?

If I could answer that Aaron I would be a happy woman. [laughter] I love what I do, I love it that I'm always learning, and I love it that I haven't been nearly all the kinds of things that I'd like to do as an architect and built all the kinds of things I'd like to build. I'm very ambitious that way and I love it that we've been able to make a practice where the work that we do is work that contributes to a better culture and community and civic life.

How would you describe your architecture?

I would say our architecture, the language is contemporary and it's very much concerned with the civic aspects as well as the individual aspects, both are

very important to us. So for me I don't really make a distinction between say architecture and art or whatever in terms of what we're doing in terms of the practice of it. If you just look at a project like the Riverside Gallery design that we did, it was so simple, it just was so difficult to do, but it seemed like that was the right thing to do there, and the crazy pod was the right thing to do, and maybe that's applied arts who knows? Maybe because my background is fine arts I just don't get hung up on where one applied arts begins and the other ends.

What inspires you to design?

Like any good project where you have a great client who's really got real, they may not know what they want architecturally, that's not necessary but they have a real personality and a real vision about something that they are willing to express and embark with you. A space that has great potential, a new space is different. Someone who is really engaging, and critical and allows you, and gives you the respect to engage with them.

Looking back at your career do you feel you've grown as an architect?

Yes, I feel very lucky.

Are you happy being an architect?

Yes, totally. I consider myself very lucky I had a number of interests as did my partner Dean and my partner Brock, it had to do with making a studio culture, that we could all do the kind of work we want to do, that we wanted to be surrounded by people that we worked with, who were not and just didn't think as themselves as just architects. Dave and Christie do public art, someone else was the photographer someone else the designed furniture. So there is always this huge knowledge base and huge set of information, you know it doesn't make us rich and it doesn't make a big but it makes us really interesting.

Do you have any hobbies?

Yeah I'm going to start an apiary with a friend, I've always wanted to have a apiary so I finally decided to do that. I've become very interested in urban agriculture, and I'd love to have some chickens. They used to knit up until recently and I'm just taking that up again and sowing. I think at some time I'll start drawing again not sketching architecture but drawing again.

So you would like fresh laid free range eggs every morning from your chickens?

I like the idea, since, about five years ago my partner and I built a house in the

city and it's got all green planted roofs and I've learnt a lot since then about what to plant to bring back say butterflies or bees or birds. But it's also made me do it made me realize and think about is that it's the first time I've thought about property in the city as being land that needs to be cultivated. I taught a studio in New Orleans last fall, the urban agriculture movement there is really interesting and has been going on there for a while so it's kind of renewed my interest in city building but thinking about city building not just as the buildings but as the land as working landscapes. Because of things like water shortages and all that climate change issues that we are being faced with, and it is requiring a very different architectural response that starts with the landscape. So in a way it's maybe starting to think about building in the city the way one conventionally talked about building in the country, that romantic indoor outdoor, and seeing the farm and the cows walking by and all that kind of stuff. Well that's what we to have need downtown. We really need to think about things differently and if plant your roofs then the whole proportions of your house changes, your parapets become a lot higher, all those sorts of things it's totally renewed my interest in form making again from a very specific perspective.

Would you like to see the future of down town Toronto more rural?

I think it's critical and I think it's absolutely the way we all have to start thinking about things. All our land has to be working landscapes, we can't use technology to take the place of responsible stewardship, and we can't waste anything. So we can't build things that rely on technology to keep them warm and cold necessarily. And you can't rely on storm water sewers to take away all the water on site. You've got to use that water on your site. All those sorts of things, some people are not going to want chickens I am not saying that's for everyone. I think everyone has to start developing some relationship to their property that talks about it being a cultivated land?

Do you think it could work in Toronto?

Totally, I live in Little Italy up until recently I was the only interloper in the Italian neighborhood I'd be the only one, then I'd be planting flowers in the front everyone else was planting farms. Everyone's backyard is a farm everyone's front yard is a farm, their galoshes is a summer kitchen they bottle all winter long. I had a neighbor who turned their garage into a butcher's. They killed a whole bunch of chickens and hung them upside down on their laundry line. [laughter] I think there's this thing when you come to Canada that's ethnic and that's I know that's a little extreme, that kind of sensibility that every thing is not about consuming it's about making as well as consuming certainly what we need to get to. My

grandfather was a first-generation they came from a two bit town in Lithuania that doesn't even exist since the war, that was an all Jewish town, maybe I don't know they had a couple of horses in the entire town. You were dirt poor if you lived with a grass roof and he wasn't that poor but he lived with a grass roof and here I am living in a house with a grass roof and if he ever thought he would turn over in his grave. Okay it's a new world it's all about not about being ethnic and not being poor and those things that you did intuitively that you associate with one kind of culture and one kind of wealth and in a way I think we all now have to start saying that, that's not like that anymore just like it's not relevant to me what is relevant is moving forward and what we will have to do.

Do you believe it is the answer?

I think we are dead in the water if we don't take it serious, I don't think it's all the things like computer operated louvers and things like that, I think it's building less, building smaller, building smarter and I don't think it's been that long and that is the scary thing, I grew up in a house that if it was cold in the house and we wanted to turn up the heat and my parents would say put on a sweater we won't turn up the heat, heating is expensive. Or you didn't buy a fridge every couple of years because you didn't like what it looked like, you kept the fridge until it broke down and you couldn't fix it anymore, because those appliances were expensive. So it's really in my generation, the previous generation grew up with a real understanding that resources were expensive, even talking of the phone was expense so you moderated that. It was not about fashion, it was driven by an understanding that these things cost. Then after the war there was this huge turnaround and resources became cheap and gas became cheap you could cool your house really inexpensively, and we could get materials really inexpensively and you could grow grass and use petroleum based fertilizers inexpensively. And that creates a whole other aesthetic that's the part I think if we could just knock it back, plant a tree don't put in air-conditioning plant a tree.

That is a honest solution, plant a tree.

It's very interesting from an architectural perspective with the advent of HVAC systems at first architects looked at that, that was liberating it freed us from having to think about orientation to use technology to override orientation. What hubris is that? It's so shortsighted, as architects they took away this huge piece of building material to make a specific place. So I think we just have to have a see it in school all the time, one of my first questions is the buildings facing south what are you going to do it's all glass what are you going to do? I think we have to get back almost those intuitive gestures, then it's not so hard.

Are there any architects that inspire you?

Well Scarpa has been one of my idols and I'm going to Venice for the first time in two weeks and I'm going to see all of his work and can hardly wait. His was as much about process as end result, I loved his drawings he'd have this drawing in the middle and all around was this big border of sketches, just stunning sketches and each drawing was so dense you could just fall into it. His buildings were just knock down beautiful. And I love Peter Zumthor's work, that's more craft-based which I'm very interested in and aligned with. I love the early Frank Gehry work. I thought that was just stunning. Tadao Ando's work, I love his work, and early Alvar Aalto's work. More his applied arts and some of his houses, libraries, I always looked at those. Corb, Corbusier.

Is there a building you wish you would've designed?

Ronchamp. So beautiful, so beautiful.

How do you deal with the stresses of being an architect?

Not well. [laughter] I stopped smoking but I run. I probably drink too much and I have a good sense of humor that's how I cope.

BARRY SAMPSON INTERVIEW

BARRY SAMPSON INTERVIEW.

DATE: 13TH NOVEMBER 2009.

TIME: 4PM.

LOCATION: 317 ADELAIDE STREET WEST, TORONTO.

Barry Sampson, thank you for taking this interview. Can you tell me where you were born?

I was born in Oshawa, Ontario.

Okay. What year were you born in?

1948.

Did you like your upbringing in Oshawa?

Did I like my upbringing in Oshawa?

As a childhood upbringing.

Yeah, well, like most children, I liked the city I was born in. In fact, I was a Montreal Canadian, because everyone in Oshawa hated Toronto. But, of course, as I became a teenager, I found Oshawa was not such a great place. So I left Oshawa to come to University in Toronto and never went back.

What was it about Oshawa that you started to rebel about?

Well, Oshawa was a GM town, fairly parochial, it's a small city, not a lot of culture there at the time. It's a lot bigger, now, than it was then, although it's a suburban city now. It's probably more that I was involved in a lot of things in Toronto, and it was a much more interesting place. So I left Oshawa behind, more than I actually felt anything against Oshawa, I think.

You grew out of it?

I grew out of it, I think is probably the way to put it.

GM stands for General Motors?

Yes. When I grew up in Oshawa, it was very much a company town. Most of the industry was related to General Motors, so if you weren't in General Motors, you worked for a company that made parts for General Motors, like bumpers, or lights, or whatever. There wasn't much else, as I recall that people did there, other than, you know, services, which were kind of supporting... Indeed, you were expected to drive a GM car in Oshawa.

Really. Did you drive one?

I., of course, when I lived in Oshawa, I was a teenager, so I couldn't afford a car. I had to have a motorcycle, and GM didn't make motorcycles, so I was allowed to ride a Japanese motorcycle.

What kind?

Well, I had various kinds. I had a couple of Suzuki's and a Honda. In fact, I worked in a motorcycle shop before I went to university.

Was motorbikes your first passion? In essence your freedom?

Yeah, motorbikes are more about freedom than passion, I think. In that I could go places and do things that I couldn't do on a bicycle. So they were more enabling. And then I got interested in working in a motorcycle shop, kind of fell into it, really. So, that was an interesting experience, of course.

What did your parents do?

My father was originally a pattern maker in General Motors, and then he took engineering courses, and became an engineer, and then became an executive in General Motors and then he died. So he died when I was eight. So I grew up with a single mother, two brothers.

What did your brothers do?

They both worked in General Motors. One ended up going to General Motors Diesel in London, and his company, General Motors Diesel, made military vehicles, as well as diesels. And so it was sold to General Dynamics, and he now works for General Dynamics. My younger brother worked for GM Data, the computer part of General Motors. And General Motors originally sold – no, General Motors originally purchased EDS, which was the company that Ross Perot – remember when Ross Perot ran for President? Well, Ross Perot started EDS, which was a computer systems company. So General Motors bought EDS folded GM Data into it, so my brother ended up working for EDS and then EDS was sold by General Motors to Hewlett Packard, so he now works for Hewlett Packard. So, they started out working for General Motors but don't any longer. My grandfather worked at General Motors. He was a machinist.

So it goes back two generations?

Yep. Well, three, counting my brothers.

And what did your mother do? Did she work for General Motors?

My mother met my father when she was working in the secretary pool, you

know, the... secretary pool was probably too grand. She worked at a typewriter at General Motors, met my father there. And then when he died, she became a clerk in a warehouse. So that's what she did until she retired.

Was there a certain moment in your childhood when you decided you wanted to become an architect?

Yeah, it was actually more, it was more an initial expression of nationalism than it was actually a choice of vocation. I had originally thought I would become an automobile designer. I was very interested in cars. I suppose that was probably my passion at the time. And I realized that I had to go either to the US to study automobile design, or I had to go to Italy. Those were the two centres at the time. So, it would either be going to Detroit, or Flint, or to Italy. And I decided that I wanted to stay in Canada. So, I asked myself what sort of comparable creative activity might be that involved design and mathematics and decided that architecture seemed like a good idea. So, then I started to look into that. And my mother knew an architect that had a friend - one of my mother's good friends was a friend of an architect – who happened to be the editor of Canadian Architect at the time – James Murray – and so I was packed off to have a chat with James Murray. And at the time, I didn't even know what sort of grand man he was. At the time I thought he was just an architect. And of course he said a few things, drew the usual three circles of, you know, contractor, architect, client. And I started then to look at buildings and draw buildings and all that sort of thing.

Can you remember one specific sentence that James Murray said that sold you to architecture?

No. I remember him talking about the complexities of architecture rising out of the intersection of these three triangles; not simply a matter of the architect's will, but these other two contingent triangles that affect what one can do. So, no, there were no inspirational aphorisms that I took away from it.

Do you still use the three circles, do you teach that to the interns here?

No, I never repeated what he said to the interns in here.

So where did you go to get educated then?

I went to the University of Toronto in 1967; I graduated in 1972. And then I briefly went to the International Institute of Design in summer session, which was an extension of the AA, in 1973. And then I studied French for a bit at the Sorbonne in 1979.

So why did you choose Toronto? Was Toronto at that stage a more prestigious school of architecture?

Well, if you wanted to be an architect, there weren't a lot of choices in Canada. There were new schools sort of being created at the time. Waterloo was brand new; I think it was probably created in '66 or '65, I can't remember now. But I do recall them recruiting at U of T, now that I think about it, so I suspect it was probably in '67 that Waterloo was founded. Carleton started, I think, maybe a year later. McGill was the other place that one went to. In the west there was a school at Manitoba. No one heard anything about it, and the idea of living in the prairies was, of course, not an eastern young man's thing. And UBC was, you know, over the mountains. So, really, it was either Toronto or McGill at the time that I was thinking about architecture. A couple of years later Waterloo probably would have been more significant as an option. Again, I think probably Dal Tech, which was then the Nova Scotia Institute of Technology. I know it existed, but it wasn't really on the horizon. So, it was really McGill or Toronto that one went to. And I got in.

And you got in straight away?

Yeah.

Very Good.

Had to be interviewed.

Was it the same system as it is nowadays?

In terms of applications?

Yes

No, no, it was probably more similar to what Waterloo does, which I understand still does interviews. U of T's not allowed to do interviews. So, you had a portfolio, and you went, and there was a panel that interviewed you, and they asked you, you know, questions, and they looked at your portfolio, and of course your grades were significant. And then, you, eventually, you got the letter before you wrote your final exams. Which made it very difficult to focus on writing one's final exams. 'Cause you're in already.

That's true, it would be difficult. So, could you tell me about your first building, Barry?

Ah, yes. I remember it very well. I started working with George Baird and a group of other people in '72, when I graduated. And I didn't really consider myself

suited to normal practice, or normal offices – I was a bit of a crank and critic at the time. So, the first project that I ended up working with in the office was a back porch, and for quite a number of years that's essentially what, what the practice did, was back porches and competitions. So, it was for a very well-known – now, well well-known recently, although he died recently – editor. He was a, he was an editor, one of the best editors of film in Canada, so he was very well-known in the film world. Not so well-known, of course, elsewhere. He was gay, which, at the time, was somewhat unusual as a kind of open, social fact, and he wanted to create on the back of his house on Farnham Avenue a kind of sun porch that he described as being like New Orleans. And so we were excited about that, because that sounded like it involved a lot of steel and glass. So, we developed this, George and I developed this three-storey construction, and I was very interested in steel at the time, and so it was a very elementary structure with a certain number of exuberant mechanical devices. 'Cause I, I was also very interested in La Maison de Verre by Chareau, so it had a three-storey cantilevered steel stair that projected out, and a curved door that was hinged that I had to build myself, and then a sliding, sloped door. The stair was so controversial that the building department that my engineer had to go in and explain the calculations for it. So, it was a very small project, but it was very, it was done with, with passion and diligence. And I also drew a lot at the time, so, you know, I did a proper axonometric of it, which was exhibited in a number of shows. It actually led to my first experience. Another thing, that was – it was not the first building I ever worked on, it was the first building that I was, I was largely responsible for authoring the collaboration with George. It led to my first construction experience of significance, because the, the stair was essentially like a bridge on its end, so it had these cantilevered, curved landings out from the, the kind of truss that was made by the handrail. So the handrail was formed the, the truss was required for the main stem of the thing, which was one of the reasons that the engineers at the city were having difficulty with because the handrail came down and supported the treads like the small stair in la Maison de Verre. But, anyway, during construction the chaps who were building it had a lot of difficulty turning the angles, and when the material was delivered on site, it was clearly deficient. And so, in discussion with the contractor, we discussed what was to be done about it, and the conclusion came was that they didn't have the competence to execute the stair, and so that was the first time that I saw, and participated in, the firing of a sub-trade, and the hiring of a new sub-trade. And the new sub-trade was, were, very capable people. And I remember the name C.B. Wrought Iron. I don't think they're in business, at least we certainly haven't seen anything of them for decades, but they were a very fine firm at the time and did an excellent job of executing of this – somewhat -

difficult construction. That was my first.

What was the editor called?

The editor of the Canadian Architect?

No, the film editor.

Oh, um, uh, dear – I'm at the age where, where names fly out of my head. Don – I'll remember it – it'll take me a little while to remember it. Very, very, very fine fellow, very nice man, extremely nice man. Very tolerant of our, you know, some of the crazy things we were doing.

Is it still in existence?

I don't know. It was for quite a long time. He's been dead I think for about ten years, I think.

Can you remember the location?

Farnham Avenue. In the '60's, I think. The name on the drawing was the number at Farnham Avenue, but I can't remember the number now.

Did he like it?

He did. He was very appreciative of it.

Is there any specific parts that he liked?

I think he liked the, because, because he was part of the creative world of film, I think he liked the fact that it wasn't, that it was an interpretation of his mandate, as opposed to a reproduction of New Orleans. And I have to say that his house was full of, you know, brocaded, heavy brocaded curtains and the like, so there was definitely not, it was definitely not an extension of the interior core. I think he liked the, the sort of passion with which this little project was undertaken, and the fact that it was, it was a surprise; it transformed his backyard.

Sounds lovely, so it does.

Very small.

Very small? How big was it?

It was three stories, but, you know, I think it was about, oh, heavens, ten or twelve feet deep and the width of the house. Plus the stair down to the garden. When I say "back porches," I mean that's what we did for, for years. In fact, we did an exhibition of our back porches. Because we just - Toronto's always been an

extremely conservative city about architects, and George was an academic and, you know, some of the rest of us who were working with him were kind of anti-establishment people. And so I think we were thought to be - Well, I do remember someone saying that the work was too intellectual. And that's all you had to say in Toronto to be sterilized. Indeed, indeed, we did a church, which was the first building I worked on, and it was a church that burned down, so it was brick front portion of it, and then we made an extension at the back, which we made out of concrete block in the Dutch mode, which we thought was a very fine building and we would go off to interviews and some people would say, hmm, concrete block, must have had a very low budget. And we'd go, no, no, no, that's what we wanted to build it out of. Truth to materials and all that, and they'd say, well, thank you very much. And of course we wouldn't see that job until we eventually learned that that was not the part of the project to show.

You specialized in back porches, did you get many jobs? Were you busy?

Yeah, we were busy enough. The truth of the matter is I didn't make any money. I never really made much money. I didn't even try to do my internship for quite a number of years, because I didn't think much of the architectural profession. I thought a lot of architecture, but I didn't think much of architects who were practicing at the time. I did, I took time off to do a research project, which was funded by the Canada Council of Don McKay, and then I also did a year in France where I did research. So I, until I came back from France, I worked at a diversity of projects, but none that were large that I can remember. And so I think I lived pretty much hand to mouth. I had a very good relationship, and I think when I was poorish, she would keep me afloat.

So you stuck through it all these years.

Indeed, I remember, I remember a recruiter calling me up and said they'd heard about me and, you know, offering me a position in a proper, in a proper firm. And I remember thinking how long it would take before I would be fired. And so I decided, no, I didn't think I would do that. I wasn't really suited to that kind of thing. I liked projects that were interesting that one could do from, you know – at least, what I thought at the time was a critical position - and, you know, I had grand ideas of making some contribution to society. All has proved more difficult that I ever imagined.

Is that still kind of your inner goal to this day?

It is, it is. This firm has never really been driven by a business model. We're very good at losing money, we're not so good at making money, but we do make

enough to keep going. We're very project oriented. We actually started – now that I think about it – most of the work that was significant that we were doing at the time, was not architecture work, it was urban design work. So, there were a number of very significant projects that I worked on that George was the leader of that made significant contributions. So, Toronto's first development guidelines, called On Building Downtown, was a document that – we weren't the only firm involved – but George was clearly the intellectual leader, the creator of much of the document, though he didn't get as much credit for it as he ought to have done. I worked a bit on that. I worked more on another, 'cause I was working, I ended up doing a number of the building projects. I worked on another project, which was called Built Form Analysis. Bruce Kuwabara and I did most of the work on that project. And that was basically an analysis of different modes of calculating the density controls and what that would mean for a built form. And I remember the city planners being kind of startled by the results. And I was quite, not so much surprised, but interested in the fact that it proved, that of course, zoning was a very poor way to determine built form in the city. We worked on another project a little later called, Greening Downtown, and I'm not sure exactly when that was done subsequently. But it was those kinds of projects that were probably more significant than some of the building projects that we were doing. Yeah, how we got around to that is we were interested in politics. I was particularly interested in politics, and some of the things I shared with George who has an interest in politics and cultural criticism, and, as a result of that, we started, we were interested in urban design, but also in public space, so a certain line of work in this firm has been the development of public space. The first one that we did was Cloud Gardens, which we won. Well, it's not the first competition, it's the first one we won. We did kind of celebrated losing entry, which was for Trinity Square Park. In fact, we did many celebrated losing entries. Our submission to the Edmonton City Hall competition, which was the first thing I did when I came back from France and joined the firm to become a partner, we broke the rules of competition, which were to demolish the 1960's original city hall, which was inspired by one of Le Corbusier's sort of wing-shaped office building, so this building was inspired by that, and it was related to a shift in the grid of the downtown. And so we thought it was quite...in a relatively new city like Edmonton, it was not the right thing to do to knock down its first city hall, so we decided to keep it. We built the whole project around that. And we were not even given an honourable mention, but the project was very, very widely published as a result of, again, its critical position.

So, do you like breaking the rules?

Do I like breaking the rules? I wouldn't describe myself as a natural rule breaker. I tend to want to know why things are the way they are, and, if I don't think they ought to be that way, then I would certainly feel the obligation to advance alternatives. So, in that respect, I'm more interested in ideas, and so, it seemed to me, and to the others on the team, that the basic premise of the competition was wrong, and that one of the purposes of the competition ought to be to explore the possibility of, you know, retaining this building. And I'd say that's indicative of the practice. We didn't really spend a lot of time asking ourselves whether that was going to eliminate the possibility of us winning this competition; we just assume that we could win. In subsequent competitions probably better behaved than that one. Trinity Square Park, we decided that Taddle Creek had been a very important part of the history part of the underground of Toronto, and so we grandly excavated much of the park to reveal Taddle Creek, which then, of course, caused a tizzy on that jury about whether or not the thing would be safe. And, so, in that case, I understand, we came close to winning, but the scheme was controversial enough that we lost. But we did win the next one, which was called, at the time, Bay Adelaide Park; it's not called Cloud Gardens park. But that competition we did win, and that really began the process of us being – the construction of that began the process of us being seen as kind of serious architects. We won a Governor General's Award, and, as a result of that, because we had done a winter garden – we did push the rules in that competition as well. The Niagara Parks Commission hired us to do the Butterfly Conservatory, which is the largest butterfly conservatory in North America, and that began, really, our interest in bioclimatic design sustainability. Before the trend really came to Toronto.

I'm curious you said you didn't like to fit in, you didn't like the 9 to 5 stereotypical office?

Well, 9 to 5 are your words. It's not, it wasn't really 9 to 5, it's that, when I was younger, I was an odd combination of a loner and a person who was very critical of conservative society. I don't wear a ring. I took it off at some point because some architect did some stupid thing that enraged me. It was more that I didn't like, I didn't like the unfairness of society, I didn't like the establishment, I didn't like the elites – I didn't think that they were, I didn't think that they were, they provided leadership in terms of design culture, I didn't think that they were sufficiently concerned with the lot of the poor. So, it was, it was more that I thought I would end up fighting with people about issues. And I was more interested in pursuing ideas. Ideas, ideas particularly that could make a contribution to society, that was

really what I was kind of.

So, is that what drives you?

It does, it does. Yeah. And I don't want to present myself as being, you know, more radical than I am. I would say that, if anything, because of my background, I'm probably innately conservative, but I'm driven by, I've always made decisions on the basis of principles. And, so, if I have to do something which is not conservative, out of principle then I would tend to do that, rather than do something which is, you know, more the thing that you would normally do.

How would you describe yourself into simple words?

Well, I'm definitely not a realist.

Well, I get the sense that you're, how could I describe it, your pushing away superficiality.

Try to.

You're getting, you're just getting to the truths in life.

I think, I think it's the Monty Python question of, you know, what is the meaning of life? And, you know, for some people the meaning of life is the acquisition of things, for some people the meaning of life is the accolades of their peers, for some people it's the accolades of, you know, the crowd. I haven't been sufficiently attracted to any of those things for it to be a driver. I would say that, if I had a problem, really, it was because I was a perfectionist. Now that I'm old I'm incapable of doing anything which I could even think of as possibly being perfect. So, in that respect, I suppose there's a bit of an advantage to growing old.

So, do you have a meaning of life?

Do I have a meaning of life?

Yeah, like in the movie Monty Python?

Well, I think it's like in the movie, I don't think there's an answer to the question, although I do enjoy the question. Probably the meaning of life is to do one's best, and that probably sounds simpler than it is. First of all, you have to know what it is you're trying to do best.

I like that. That's good.

And that means, you know, the best for other people, the best that you can do creatively, the best that you can do in a small situation and a big situation.

Architecture has proven to, you know, not withstanding the fact that I thought I was going to be car designer, and I still, you know, I still buy car magazines as a sort of weekend pornography, even though I don't even like most of them, and generally think of them as a societal problem, but I've enjoyed architecture to the extent that it still amazes me. And I think it's largely because it's, it contributes to society, depending on the work one does, of course, in a number of ways. Like little ways, just, you know, from around the corner and there's just a wonderful kind of light and space and experience to making projects that do good things, like, for example, the school that we did. It's a high-performance green school, and, you know, I've been tracking it and the school board thinks there's tangible evidence that the children are performing better in school and the teachers certainly like the school very much, and the principal's extremely enthusiastic about it. And so it's at that level it's very satisfying.

What kind of car do you drive? Or should I ask that?

I drive a beaten up Volvo V40, which is the smallest Volvo they make, and it's a little sport wagon. And I like it a lot.

It's a nice car.

Yeah. It's got a little turbo engine. It's, you know, if we look at the Jaguar station wagon, you realize it has exactly the same back end. And so it's got pretty good proportions and handles very nicely. It's pretty good on gas. Very responsible car to drive and you can treat it like a contractor's car, you know, you can fold the seats down and you can get your chop saw in it and all the other shit that, you know, architects carry about.

So, would you have a best building?

A best building. That's one of the questions that I thought, I found the most difficult in your series, because I'm never really happy with any of my buildings. There was a trio. I would say that the school that I've done – Thomas L. Wells School – is probably the most realized project in terms of its mission and its execution. It was built under difficult circumstances. The project – which is up there – the Erindale Hall at the University of Toronto, Mississauga – is a very fine building, won a Governor General's Award, and I think has created an exemplary kind of public space that I don't think has been seen in Canada before. And then the Butterfly Conservatory was technologically extremely challenging and I think opened my eyes to aspects of architecture that I really wasn't fully capable of addressing at the time. And, so, in that respect it's a somewhat immature project, but it's extremely well executed and it's performed astonishingly well. And so

there are three projects that I am particularly fond of. The school is the most recent and won an American Institutes of Architects Honour Award the year before last. It was the only Canadian project, and certainly the only school, the only project that - actually, there was a social housing project in that awards the jury was clearly interested in issues of society, I think that's one of the reasons they were attracted to the school, which might otherwise be seen as, I don't know, less glamorous than something like, you know, the war museum.

Is this the school that you were talking about, that the students are starting to perform better?

Yes, that's right. Yeah. And it was designed - the mandate of it was to be the first of a new generation of high-performance green schools to be built by the Toronto District School Board. It hadn't been building green schools until this school. So it was a model school. And it was expected to have a high level of environmental performance, as well as to be part of the high-performance school movement, which is focused on not only environmental performance but the quality of the environment that it presents for its students to learn and teachers to teach.

Could you discuss it further?

It has a very strong emphasis on day lighting because we did research and found that students in daylight environments perform about 20% better than students in artificially lit environments, which is probably the norm in Canada after the energy crisis because the reaction of Canada to energy conservation has been basically to make small windows and small windows mean artificial light most of the time. So it has a very strong emphasis on that. The material is very different than other schools in that we were interested in using the thermal mass of the building, so we decided early on that it would be a concrete building, concrete masonry rather than, rather than steel construction, which is more typical in schools, because, you know, open-web steel joists and deck because it's very economical. We also decided that we'd use displacement ventilation - and I think it's one of the early uses of displacement ventilation in Toronto region, certainly the first school to use it. And we integrated that with the system of construction. So we used hollow core slabs for both erectability and economy. But we used the hollow cores as return air rather than supply air. And the reason we did that is that people typically use, have used, hollow core slabs for supply air in conventional overhead mechanical ventilation systems. We wanted to ventilate the rooms from the bottom and pull them out the top and so, in our case, the cores we used for the return air - which also has the advantage of one having to be less concerned about the cleanliness of the hollow cores 'cause it's going back to the

filter rather than being coming from the filter. And you do get some benefits in so far as you can, in the summer, to the extent that the slabs are absorbing heat, then that heat is pulled out of it from the return air screen. And in the winter, because we have a heat reclamation system, then any heat which is being pulled off by the ventilation system can be reclaimed, so it's a, it was a new system, it was one that we developed entirely with our engineers, and it's produced exemplary environmental quality in the school.

What was average room heights for the displacement?

Well, that's the, of course that's the other advantage that we were able to able to eliminate suspended ceilings from most of the room. My recollection is that it's about eleven feet, twelve feet.

Okay. That's a good space.

Yeah, Really nice.

Sometimes a lot of classrooms are claustrophobic.

Yes, well that's the other, you do get this nice, tall space and the hollow core is the finish for most of it, so we have an unusual, sort of canted ceiling right at the wall where the, above the windows, which is part of our light reflection system. And that's where we have the extractors, which then go up into the cores, and then we have drop ceilings at the back where the ducts come into the room and then drop into built-ins, which are where kids take off their coats and so forth. And so the supply air vents are there. So it's, it's an inverted system and it's one that we actually had to mock up. And the suppliers of the air grilles, are kind of specializing for displacement air ventilation systems. Trox I think was the company, in Atlanta. So we went down and mocked up the classroom to make sure it would behave. So, essentially the air is injected into the room at the back, away from the wall. We have in-floor radiation, hot water radiation, underneath the floor, and then the air comes across the floor and rises and then it's pulled out of the top of the windows. So, one of the issues is whether or not we would experience any drafts at the windows. But it's actually worked extremely well.

Were all the floors radiant heated?

Yes, except for the gym; the gym is not a radiant floor system, because it's a large, it's got a wood floor, and it's a large space with more rapid air changes. But we've used it everywhere else.

Was it you personally, who thought of this?

Yeah, it's kind of a funny story. It's really what architects end up doing. There was a company that's called TermoDeck, and they really patented a system which uses the cores for air supply and they have a whole set of boots and so forth. And, at the time that they showed us the system, was an overhead air system, which I thought was wrong, and we had to choose between that and other options. When I spoke to the engineers about these, they would get to the point of recommending an option, but there would always be an, there would always be some proviso that would lead to an unclear situation. So, at the end of the day, we, as architects, had to make the decision, and so we, we worked with another colleague of mine at the University, who's involved in building science, teaching building science and together we concluded that this was the right way to go. But of course it was, it was not, it hadn't been done before. As a result of my experience with the Butterfly Conservatory, I knew that if we were rigorous about the technical analysis, and we were deliberate about the decisions that needed to be made all away along to make the integrated system, that it would work, but the truth of the matter is it was my call.

Can you tell me a bit more about the Butterfly Conservatory?

Sure.

I'd like to know about it?

Yeah, it was the first project where I didn't really sleep, because we, the client, one of the clients had indicated to us that they wanted it to be like a Victorian greenhouse. And we don't do historicist work, so we tried to think what that might mean. Like my first project that I was mentioning, so we concluded what that meant was a curved roof form, so we had to figure out how to make this big glass house with an interesting curved roof form. And we were very interested in two things related to the experience of the Butterfly Conservatory. One was that the house, when you're in the house, in the landscape, it would have a constantly changing apparent size, which meant we wanted to manipulate the perspective of it, and we did so by changing its plan with, at the same time as we changed its height. And we wanted to have an interior landscape that was topographically exciting, and most of these kinds of facilities make an effort to change the ground plane, but it's usually pretty wimpy, so we decided that we wanted to create something that was a bit closer to a mountain. And we had done that at Bay Adelaide, so we were extremely good at working out ramps. The cloud gardens greenhouse actually goes through a whole floor with a ramp which is arranged like a paper clip, because the plan area is so small. We also

knew that, with large crowds of people, we needed a lot of pathways anyway, and so we needed a long inefficient path as opposed to a short and efficient path. So, that led to us developing this very complex, three-dimensional roof form, and at the time it was before, there were, it was really, computer modeling was quite early, and the computer models were really kind of glorified two-dimensional systems, and so they weren't very capable. There was talk of people who were using automobile programs, and there was one modeler who found that, Yolles, who happened to be experienced with this. And so we had a lot of, so we started out using more conventional models that architects were using, and we couldn't get the, the roof, basically the, if you think of the glass system as being cellular, we could not get the cells to close without warping a pane of the glass. Because we've done greenhouses, we know it's quite, and this is something we did at Bay, at cloud gardens, is we changed the form of the roof by simply warping the glass. You take a diamond and you shift the corners, and in, with single pane glass, it's not a problem, it'll just twist. But with thermal pane glass, which is hardened safety glass and laminated glass, it is not possible to do that unless you form the glass that way, which was most certainly not affordable. So, we had to close all of the roof form and all of the cells making up the roof without any of the cells being warped. And we could not, in the conventional architectural software close a key number of the cells, so it was clear that every time you looked at the cell, it was not flat plane. So we then found this other modeler, who could work using automobile software, and we eventually were able to do that. And, of course, we were drawing the whole project by hand. We had a wonderful guy, in terms of experience in drawing capability by hand, who – Frank – who was person who had worked with Ron Thom, and who was recommended to me by a friend, Ian MacDonald. And so he, and, you know, the rest of the team, they drew this whole thing by hand. So we worked using a computer model, but the building was all drawn by hand. So there was actually a drawing, it's a little bit like a, sort of, fold out that you get from those, you know, architecture models, of this three-dimensional roof fold out, so that every pane could be identified. And the other, the other issue, of course, is making a roof that appears not to be regular, but has the maximum amount of repetition possible. So I didn't sleep during a period that we were unable to close these things. I didn't sleep for a number of days, wondering whether or not we were just trying to do something that we just didn't have the capability or the experience to do. It was the biggest project we'd ever done. It was a fast-track project, we did it in two years from being designed to end construction. And, as I said, it was the most northerly butterfly in North America, and none of the other butterfly conservatories that we visited actually worked technically. So we were trying to do a successful, technologically integrated building that we had

never done before. We were doing the biggest building we'd ever done before. We were doing it faster than most architects do it. We were doing it where most of the precedents didn't really work. And we were doing it for a facility which was the most northerly, and thus issues of condensation and so forth were not tested. And even questions of whether the butterflies would fly – because the butterflies respond to light – were all issues that were on the table. So, in many respects, it was terrifying. Of course we were also trying to do something that was, from our point of view, interesting in terms of design.

How big was the building in square footage?

The building was about 50,000 square feet in total. The butterfly conservatory itself is 13,000 square feet, as I recall. My memory for numbers, now, is not great. So the house is about 13,000 square feet. Typically, in the States, butterfly conservatories would be around, a large one would probably be 9,000, 6,000, between 6,000 and 9,000 square feet. So, the breakdown of it, as I recall, is about, the house is around 13,000; the back of house facilities are about 30,000 and the remainder is front of house support. So we have all greenhouse system at the back, which is producing caterpillars that then become pupae, then become butterflies. And producing plants, both for the Niagara Parks gardens, but also for the house, because you constantly have to be replenishing nectar plants that the butterflies consume.

What year was this?

God, I can't remember now, it's probably about eleven, twelve years ago. We thought, when we were doing the analysis of it, we thought that there would be, it would attract a lot of people, and we estimated that it would attract as many as 350,000 people. The Niagara Parks Commission didn't think it would attract that many, although they were hoping it would, and in its first year of operation, it attracted 500,000 people. And I think at that time the ROM was getting about 40,000 people per year. So, this facility was putting through it, you know, half a million people in the first few years of operation.

Is it still in operation today?

Oh, yes, it's still in operation, and it still has a significant attendance. But, it's less as a result of the whole change in tourism patterns post 9-11. So, like everything else in Niagara Falls, it has less visitation than it did prior to 9-11.

How does terrorism affect butterflies?

Well, what happened was the, what happened was the Americans made it more difficult to cross the border. So, it's more of a hassle to cross the border, so that

discouraged some people. And then the rising Canadian dollar has then created a, you know, subsequent reinforcement of that. So, it's not as cheap to come to Canada as it used to be. So Niagara Falls is not doing as well as a tourism centre as it used to be. Indeed, that's true of Toronto as well.

How did you deal with condensation and ventilating it?

Well, it actually has quite a brilliant system. We, first of all, we knew that one of the reasons the other houses failed was that they used skylight systems, and typically the reason they used them is the double-glazed systems, whereas the greenhouse industry uses a single-glaze system, so the mullions aren't really designed to carry the loads that, you know, skylight systems are. But skylight systems are dry systems, so they don't have the capacity to carry the condensation that the greenhouse systems do. So we looked at that. So what we did was we hybridized skylight, standard skylight systems by adding pieces to it, basically drip elements, drip channels to it. And then to inhibit condensation, we organized the radiation system, which is typical of the greenhouses, we located them at regular intervals up the face of the house, so that, as the air was cooling, and was about to hit its dew point, it would hit one of these things and it would rise further, and so that also helped stack ventilation in the house. And, as a result, we thought that it was likely that in the middle of winter, on a very cold day, we would get rain in the house. And, as a result, there's been, there have been no reported condensation issues. So, it's doing two things. One is that the way that the heating system is working is inhibiting condensation up the glass and the extent to which there's condensation occurring. Then we've got a condensation control system built into the, into the glazing. So we've basically worked all that out.

Do you have a collector for all the drips?

Yes, down along the bottom there's a collector. And we have a double-wall system, as well, which is where the collection, basically the collectors at the double-wall system. So that's another thing that's helped, we have an air curtain all the way around the building. So basically we're ejecting air as a curtain at the bottom of the wall and then it gets reheated as it's going up. That's basically the principal greenhouse technology, You have low vents and you have high vents and you allow them and they're motor driven, they're all controlled by the computers, so they're constantly, they're constantly modifying the environment. And then we use the misting system both as for evaporative cooling and for, for to keep the humidity levels up when it's dry. The vent systems we use from the standard greenhouse technology and then modified them to work with these skylight systems, which were typically the vents are small, so we gang them together and

use the normal driers that are used in greenhouse systems.

Sound's impressive.

It was impressive, it is impressive, it's an impressive building. And it's impressive to think that an office of relatively young people and relatively inexperienced people through just, you know, straight up research and analysis and error can execute the first time around something that would work so well.

So for the two years were you just walking on egg shells the whole time?

Yeah. Yeah, it was, yeah, that's right.

So after completion, was it like a feeling of revelation?

Yeah. Well, then we knew, then we knew that we were capable of doing pretty well anything, and it was really just a matter of the getting work, which, of course, has proven to be more difficult than I ever imagined.

Was that was your moment of revelation of being an architect?

Yeah, I think that's the project, the reason that project is – I'm so fond of that project – is that it really was the beginning of, it's the, the, it's the close of the whole back porch chapter and it's the opening of the architecture chapter, and it opens with a key knowledge of bio-chromatic, the principles of bio-chromatic design in which we're, you know, well known and talked about in Europe but generally not in North America. And so it really was a short walk from there to the whole larger issue of sustainable design, which we've been certainly very active in and are well known for.

That's excellent.

One of the things we discovered, by the way, is because we had advocated as a client that we use natural rock rather than the usual concrete painted up like stagerware. And we had two reasons for that. One was the, one of the missions of the project was environmental; it was meant to teach, you know, young people about the delicacy of the environment, and butterflies are kind of, they are the equivalent of the canary in the coal mine, and they're very, very sensitive to environmental pollutants – they just die.

Really? I didn't know that.

Yes, they're extremely sensitive. Like, we had to make sure there were no automobiles near the opening vents, 'cause the carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, would cause them to die. They're extremely sensitive to pesticides. There was a

famous case of a butterfly conservatory that opened on camera in the US and they had not, the plants had not been properly segregated from other plants and kept under a regime of no pesticides for a year, and so there were residual pesticides on the leaves, and so all during the official opening on camera, butterflies were dying – falling. They're extremely sensitive. So that was one of the mandates. So we argued that we ought to be using natural materials. The other argument we made was that we were expecting large numbers of people and that painted concrete would wear, whereas this material would get natural growth moss and so forth on it. And what we didn't know then was – we kind of had an idea – but was the whole principle of thermal mass, and we have so much rock in this project it has a huge amount of thermal mass; this thing gets heated up by the sun during the day and then it radiates it at night, and so we found that there is much less heated water going through the valves than we had anticipated, so that's one of the things that's contributed to the building performing better than we had anticipated. And it's one of the reasons that we're, we're knowledgeable about and very committed to the use of thermal mass for the school that I mentioned.

That really interesting. I didn't know that butterflies were that sensitive?

They are.

You rarely see butterflies these days.

Well, that's probably cause they're sensitive. [Laughter] Well, the other thing about them is they, each butterfly's caterpillar eats a certain food, and so, once that plant is gone from the environment, that butterfly is gone.

What's the butterfly's life span?

It depends on the butterfly. Some are as short as a week, some are, you know, several weeks long. The Monarch's have to be long enough to get themselves to Mexico and that's not a quick flight.

So, what inspires you whenever you start a project? Is there a certain type of inspiration, is it the project itself, is it the truth that you want to reveal within the project?

Sure, sure. Well it's the question you start with is the project. The philosophy we have here is that every project should be based on an idea; that's really what drives the project. Once you establish a clear idea, then the question of authorship disappears and everybody's involved in the execution, the development. Really, it's the revolution, and execution of that idea. So the real challenge at the beginning of the project is to find the driving idea of the project, which is usually,

you know, a combination of aspirations on the part of the, or it's to be found – that's not what creates an architectural idea, 'cause it shouldn't be confused with other, non-architectural ideas – it's driven by aspirations of the client. We, we are very interested in issues of site and response to site. So, it is a matter of, in a certain sense, finding what the idea is that's appropriate to the conjunction of circumstances that give rise to the project.

Could you relate that to your two best buildings?

Yeah. The idea of the Butterfly Conservatory was to create a three-dimensional terrain that would be a surprising experience. And so I could go through a whole, elaborate discussion on how you are compressed to a kind of crib-like space, you get a view up in the house, and you don't enter on the axis, you go to the side and you make your way up, and it's constantly changing so that it's more like an architectural promenade than it is a, you know, a figural system. Thomas L. Wells is a combination of the desire to optimize the relationship of the building to the sun. So, in that respect, it's a bit like a sunflower, and to create a little society in which we would use, you know, three-dimensionality to make children aware of where they were in the building and what was happening and to enjoy being above things or looking up to things. It's actual, so interestingly enough it's plan configuration is not actually driven by the idea. We did three different schemes for it. All of which were based on the principle of optimal solar orientation and this idea of the school like a little town. And each of them had advantages and disadvantages. And the one that I favoured was actually not the one that the committee favoured. Although we had designed all three of them, the committee favoured the one that was executed because it had a number of advantages, one of which was related to the simplicity of security and because it has courtyards. And, so, that's an example where the idea was, the idea, the architectonic idea of the project is actually distinct from its diagram. Which was also a bit of a revelation.

Then the one in Mississauga?

The one in Mississauga, it was driven by, in the brief it said that attached to the building was to be a cover for the what's called the five-minute walk. And we were familiar with Mississauga, because we had done another residence there before, and so we thought that this idea of an urbane connection through the forest, which could be pretty terrifying and nasty and cold in the winter, should be, you know, the central driver of the project. And, in addition to that, it was going through a sensitive forested area, which had a swamp on one side and a mature forest on the other. And there was a linear area of disturbed soil where there'd been some temporary buildings made. And so the whole idea was to raise

the building over the walkway rather than put the walkway beside it – put all the collective facilities of the building along the walkway to animate it, make it safer, and then to put the residences above it. And so that lead to a parti, where there's a linear building, which is ostensibly single loaded. And then, in order to get the, you know, the numbers, in order to get the thing to work and to work efficiently, then there are tower buildings off the single-loaded side that then create kind of open courts to the sensitive sort of swamp area – swamp is not the right word, wetland, the wetland area. So that lead to a kind of hybrid arrangement where we had pods on the west side that were tower-like, and then gaps between them where the corridor to the linear building would open out to the landscape into these courtyards. And then this continuous bent-bar building on the east side that looks down on the area of the five-minute walk with the colonnade, the open part of the five-minute walk with the colonnade underneath it.

What is the five-minute walk?

The five-minute walk got its name because the University of Toronto, Mississauga, had an original building – it had two buildings, I believe one of which was a temporary building, which was the original building, and then there was a newer building which, as it turns out, it was designed by Ray Moryama at, I guess, the middle of his career. And the couldn't bring themselves to tear down the temporary building, so it always was used. And in between them was this forest. And so students would inevitably end up with classes in these two buildings, and it was about a five-minute walk through the forest.

Okay.

So, in the winter, you know, at 4:30 when it's dark...

A scary five-minutes.

It was a scary five-minute, it was a long five minutes.

You're very thorough with the way you think things through, so you are.

I wish that was true!

The way you're presenting it, just what you were telling me, you're very, very thorough and honest with what has to be done.

Well, one of my other goals, I have to say, is I've always wanted to do original work. And that's also not as easy as it sounds. So the idea is to try and find ideas that will take us past our apriori visions. I mean, we always, we have to use existing technologies and systems and even our own existing, you know, memories of

things. But the idea is to try and find ideas that will take us to another place and make a contribution to architecture. And in that respect I would say our visions have been much greater than our accomplishments to date, although, you know, we're working on a project now that might be the one. We'll see. We've done a nice little project in St. Louis, which I didn't mention, which is very original and has some very interesting visual effects, from a program that's largely – just make an open space.

Do you want to discuss it?

Sure, sure. Just very quickly. It was a competition for this open space that was like Bay-Adelaide, it was a space that was created by clearing out half of a block to create a new square, in this case, in front of the historic post office building. And the one requirement of the competition, other than making a square that would face this post office, was that it had to contain a large figural work. And the work, it's about the size of a car, about the size, it's a little bit smaller than my car. And it was called the Torso di Ikaros; it was by a European sculptor who's well known – Mitoraj – and it's a very handsome and quite accomplished figural work, and it's a hollow bronze work, a portion of a torso. Ikaros, of course, is Icarus, the son of Dedalos, so we started to research the myth of Dedalos and Icarus and decided that, because the site was flat, it had a huge wall on the back side of it, where all the exits to the American Theatre, which is an historic theatre lead out, very, very nasty kind of thing that was the background to this park, that we needed to create a big wall at the back of the park. It was the same problem we had at Bay-Adelaide, it was exactly the same problem, which often happens when you do these things where you clear half a site, you end up with a, with the side walls of buildings, left-over buildings. So we decided that we would create this spiral that would go from a dense forested thing, which would have a labyrinth of benches for people to sit in it, to an elevated platform, from which you would look down at the torso fallen. So, we based, it's the only narrative project that we've ever really done, so we based the whole development and design on the narrative of fleeing from the labyrinth into the air. And so the idea was to take people into the air. And so it has an impression of elevated elements, all of which have a programmatic role in the squares. So there's a series of, there's a thing which we call the, there's the plaza itself, and then there's the thing which we call the Island Of Thorns, which is hawthorns on it and provides other shades, but also it's ramping, you go up to get to a platform, and we called that the Theatre Plateau because it has at the end of it sort of palladium, pavilionated end of the theatre that we wanted to reveal while masking the rest of it. And it terraces down, provides a kind of seating area for events in the square. And then there's a long ramp, which we called the, the

Dedalus Rise, which gets you up to a platform above the Torso where there's, we had a large waterfall. And we wanted that to accentuate the verticality of the space and to elevate people's eye level upward to make more spectacular where you kind of come out of this platform and you're now a storey above the – I guess a storey and a half – above the plaza and the sculpture. So we, we made a flat wall, which could be used as a screen, out of perforated steel, and behind it made an undulating wall with a very, with a compound curve, so that it's flat at the bottom, and as it goes up it creates these very large billows. And part of that was just simple structure. This is, it gave us an "A" frame, so the vertical wall supported by the diagonals of this billowing wall. The billow comes in, connects as a brace, and billows away from it, which then creates these, these kind of curvilinear segments of the sky. And there's a bench for seating, and so the flat wall with this perforated steel actually just provides a big sunshade. And then it wraps around and forms the background for this waterfall, which then drops from that down a storey and a half. And the billowing wall's very beautiful. It's very unusual because unlike a sort of Libeskind project, you often don't see it, it depends on how the lighting is until you go in it. So, it, it's a surprise. When the sun is shining on the perforated wall, you see it in behind, it's like a veil. When there isn't sun, you don't see it. You see the bottom, portions of the bottom of it so that's it's quite a spectacular space. And then the cantilevered landing is a very, very beautiful concrete, concrete kind of piece that we worked out with Blackwell Bullock, and I'm quite proud of that as well. So, it's a project which is restrained in terms of what the public sees, but it's very, it's very considered and enjoyable as a, as a kind of experience activated by movement.

So beautiful. Unfortunately, I can't really go to America to film it.

Well, the trees are small too. Wait a couple of years.

Can I ask you one last question?

One last.

It's quarter to six.

Yes.

Cause you're very honest with your answers there's no bullshit the way most architects talk. I want to talk about just basically; do you think architects are underpaid for what they go through?

Absolutely.

Yes?

Yes. It's one of the great mysteries of life that architecture is not only undervalued, but it's increasingly undervalued. I mean we, we, you know, we get the same RFP's as the guys who provide toilet paper to City Hall. You know, it's the same, it's the same purchasing, billow boiler plate. We get nasty contracts, we're poorly paid for the amount of work that really needs to go into a project. The cultural significance of work to, you know, society I think is not really appreciated. And I don't mean that as a kind of personal bitch. It's, it's, I just find it shocking that something that's supposed to last 50 to a hundred years would be treated as if it was, you know, the design of consumer bags or. I did a shop once – we don't do very much retail work – but I did a shop, and I was surprised to discover that the guy who designed the logo and the bags for the store was paid more than we were to design the store. And that's because, from a branding perspective, he or she or they represented greater value than the architecture.

It's a kind of a twisted world, isn't it?

Yeah. But if you think about it, public relations people are paid way, way, way more than architects. And whenever people – one of the issues with architecture is that people see the architects' fees as coming out of the buildings – the more they have to pay the architect, the less money they have to do the building. And the problem is, really, that people don't want to pay enough for buildings in the first place.

So you're just kind of stuck in a rut.

Yeah, it's a rut that's getting deeper. And then you get certain architects, you know, cutting their fees because they can. So we're just in this, you know, spiral. I have, on a number of occasions, wondered whether we were no longer feasible.

Throughout your career?

Oh, yeah, on a number of occasions, and recently. Last year was a very bad year, and, you know, I wasn't sure that, that the way that we worked was feasible any longer, and now we're busy, and we think we're not coming out of it. But, but you never know. And we, we put into a project as much time as it requires to execute it properly. And, so, if, if we have to compete with other people, and reduce our fees, then we're, we're just, we have to, like everyone else we have to get more efficient. But on the other hand there's a certain amount of contingency involved in the open-ended nature of design. And you have to have fees that can deal with that problem.

Was it always like that? Even going back to James Murray's time?

That's probably what's telling, why – this is the thing, I was a bad student. That's why he was telling me to try it. He was saying kid these other two, these other two circles are more important than your circle.

Do you think it's always going to be like that?

I thought, I thought with the great, you know, fan fair for Gehry and I guess Libeskind, some of Gehry's more interesting than Libeskind, but I thought it might be changing. But what's happened now is it's like the major leagues and the minor leagues, where you have a few star architects that can command huge fees and are asked to design projects for a thousand dollars a square foot. And then you have, you know, the rest of us tolling in the minor leagues where you're expected to get a low fee and to do a major cultural work for, you know, \$200 a square foot, or less if it's a school. Oh, and add LEED. Oh, and by the way, add all the other consultants that used to not be standard services. So, now we want you to do LEED certification as part of the – like, why are you charging an extra fee for that? And you, and you, you know, you should include the art and landscaper and the civil engineering, and all the rest of it.

What if as a collective thought throughout North America, architects raise the fees 100% - 200%?

That would be interesting. I think just having a fee schedule in Ontario would be good. You know they have a fee schedule in Alberta?

Really?

Free bootin' capitalist Alberta, they have a fee schedule. So if you submit a fee below the fee schedule, then the client has to ask themselves whether they're going to get a culpable service. So it's not that you don't get a competitive fee, but, but, you know, if the fee schedule says it should be 8 per cent, and you're submitting a fee of 6 per cent, then the client knows that that's two per cent below the fee schedule. In Ontario there is no fee schedule, so, if you submit a fee of 6 per cent, and someone else submits a fee of two per cent, then there is no comparison, other than, you know, the pack, where the pack ends up being.

So, is that an excuse if you're building falls down in Alberta, you can argue that your below the fee schedule?

I don't know if it's as simple as that, but it means that the, the profession says what the fees for a certain, you know, size of project should be expected to be.

Why in Alberta does this happen, and not here in Ontario?

Don't know. Well, I know why it didn't, I know why the fee schedule was eliminated in Ontario; the, Mike Harris was a terrible, terrible political disaster in this province. His government determined that having a fee schedule was restrain of trade. It was a sort of monopoly practice, so, once again, it took, for some reason or other, architects are not like lawyers were not a profession, we're a trade, I guess. Not that I mind being considered to be a trade, his government determined that there should not be a fee schedule, and apparently the OAA agreed to that.

Who's on the board of the OAA?

The council is elected yearly and there's a, there's a professional administration. It's, I think it has to be said that while they agreed to it, they also understood that they didn't have a lot of clout. And that's where there's a problem. The undervaluing of a profession also means the profession doesn't have a lot of leverage. After all, most politicians are lawyers – they have leverage. Very few politicians are architects. Which wouldn't matter if we were all thought of as making contributions like Bernini. Imagine what tourist trade in Italy would be like without Bernini.

How do you make money in this profession?

Well, I'm not the right person to ask. I would say, one thing I do know, is a lot of repetition, which is one of the reasons that firms like ours do not perform well, and can't perform well, because the kind of projects we do are not repeated. So, if you repeat a project a lot and you can, and you don't vary it, then you follow the, you know, industrial model, which is to try and get the product down to a, you know, minimum number of components. And with this predictable production, time line is possible and then you can both lower fees and have more predictable profits.

Is it the same in Europe? As regards to European architects?

My guess is they're better paid.

They're better paid?

My guess.

If you look at the North American landscape everything is very cookie cutter?

Yes.

Everything looks the same.

Right.

Is that due to, architects selling themselves?

Well, the truth of the matter is the North American landscape is much less designed by architects than the European one is. A lot of things are not done by architects. I mean, the cookie cutter suburbs hardly had architects involved with them. They do the libraries, you know, the major institutional buildings. But even then they're generally not top tier. If you think of, you know, the baseball metaphor, you've got the major leagues, then you have the minor leagues, then you go, triple A and double A, single A, then there's the something or other league – you know, on and on it goes. So triple A is not very well paid compared to the major leagues. That's where the big money is. Even there there's a huge spread between the, you know, routine players and the star players.

So has that always upset you, being an architect and the fact that you're not getting financially rewarded the way that should have with all the blood, sweat and tears that you've gone through?

I try not to think about it very much. It's upsetting, but to be frank, I'm more upset by the treatment of people who are poorer than I am about, I mean, I'm, I can hardly complain about the money and pay, or the privileges that I have. I think there are other issues to deal with before I start, you know, crying about my own situation. I mean, the way that poverty has risen in this country is embarrassing. The lack of action on climate change in this country is, I think, a total scandal – I can't believe that the, that this issue has just completely dropped of the political, you know, landscape. It's just disappeared as an issue. Canada is kind of losing its way in a way in which the economy is being restructured back towards a commodity-dependent economy I think is foolhardy.

Not being raised in this country, I can only describe it as an outdoors country, everyone lives for their cottage and to reconnect with the landscape and nature regardless of place. What is it that has slowly clouded Canada? Is it materialism? Americanism? Globalization?

Well, globalization has caused restructuring of the economy. I call it failure of the elites, and, you know, that's one of the premises of John Raulston Saul's recent book, A Fair Country, which is just a rant against the failure of elites to deal with issues that are pertinent to Canada and to have the imagination and boldness to actually find a route to do things, which could be described as, you know, a Canadian possibility as opposed to imitation of something else.

JACK DIAMOND INTERVIEW

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DATE: 18TH DECEMBER 2009.

TIME: 10AM.

LOCATION: 384 ADELAIDE ST. WEST. TORONTO.

Thank you Jack for taking this interview, Where were you born Jack?

I was born on a huge metropolis everyone's heard of it's called Piet Retief on the borders of Swaziland, in South Africa.

What made you immigrate to Canada?

Well mostly, well to Canada in particular I was recruited by the University of Toronto, but immigrated from South Africa was really for political reasons, I didn't want to live in at that stage a fascist, racist state.

What year was that in?

I immigrated in 1962.

Can you elaborate more of the political state of the country?

It's obvious we had a racist government that tried to maintain the privileges and domination of the whites over the black.

We're your parents born in Africa?

Neither of my parents were born there, though my mother by accident she was born in Glasgow where her parents came from and she was born in one of those trips back from Africa, but in those days by ship didn't go for a weekend, and my father came from Lithuania.

How did your parents meet?

They met in South Africa.

Do you have any siblings?

I do have a sister who lives in New York.

What does she do?

She is a logopaedician; it's a speech therapist.

What each were you when you came to Canada?

I was 30 when I came to Canada.

Were you already educated as an architect by then?

Well briefly. I did my bachelor of architecture degree in Cape Town, at the University of Cape Town. I did a political science degree, politics philosophy economics at Oxford and then I did a masters of architecture degree at the University of Pennsylvania with Louis Kahn. Then the University of Toronto recruited me, and I came here to start a postgraduate program in architecture.

So you skipped across the world quite nicely, South Africa to England...

Back to South Africa and then to the United States.

What influenced you to become an architect?

I have no idea, I never had a choice, it wasn't something that I chose it was what I am.

So you are born to do it?

I grew from infancy like most children, but it was about buildings, I don't know, I knew, it wasn't a decision.

Was there one moment that you could...

No.

Not one moment, you just knew from the beginning.

That's where my interest was... Making place.

Making place?

Well children make place all the time, they playhouse but I continued. [Laughter] I never grew up you see. [laughter]

You're still a bit of a Peter Pan?

Well I make house still, I still make place, but children derive a huge satisfaction, I mean it's very protective it's very enclosing, it's secure, there are all kinds of reasons that children make house, it's in the way play acting like an adult, but I think there's something much deeper than that, and I think there is a very deep atavistic base to security of making house and making place to your satisfaction. So I just continued.

You've made a beautiful career out of it.

Well as I said I didn't have any alternative to it. I always thought it very odd as a matter of fact that people could choose to be a doctor or a lawyer. I would look

and think to them, a cat doesn't make a choice about being a cat, or a dog a dog. I mean what are you? And I realized I was very lucky that most people don't have that decision made for them in a sense.

If you had an alternative ego, what would you choose to be?

I suppose a political career of shaping things in a different way, shaping society, we shape society in small fragments. Sometimes in larger ones. Most plan and sometimes some city planning, and we shape society in a particular way and politically if you are adept and good you can shape society a larger sense. So it's really in a sense the ethical aspect of architecture, the social dimension of making life better. So there are various ways of doing that, doctors do it in a particular way, and lawmakers make it another way, so I think that generally a societal consideration that social dimension which elevates architecture from building.

Is that how you would describe your architecture?

Yes I would say so, I think that there is indeed to all of our work a social dimension. There ought to be. The mistake many critics make about architecture, is that they deal with it as an art form, and that's superficial, literally superficial it deals with surface and shape, that's what superficial means. But architecture is inhabited it is there for a purpose even if the purpose it's sometimes symbolic the fact is there is a purpose. So architecture is multi dimensional, and one of those powerful components is a social component. The contextual issue, you got to put it in the rain so it's got to be weather proof. You got to deal with climate, you got to deal with context, you got to deal with costs, the political considerations in terms of codes and acceptability. It's a multi dimensional question. It's easy to solve one of them, that's why you get the so-called iconic buildings, they're doing one thing only they're making a big show, there's some novel shape. But they don't resolve, necessarily resolve the function, the shape is not a consequence of the technology and the building it is an imposition like an art form. So I have said often that ideologues and amateurs are very similar, they come with a preconceived notion. There is very little creativity in an amateur and an ideologue. The amateur says, "Ohh I saw this house in Switzerland and it's got a lovely pitched roof and I liked the look of that can I have one in Santa Fe?" Well you know that the pitched roof came from throwing off the snow and it developed a character because of its context and technology. So does Adobe housing and, to put in Adobe house and Switzerland or a Swiss house in Santa Fe obviously is inappropriate. Both have come from context and technology, making a virtue of the necessity of the materials in the circumstance. So that's an amateur who says I like that, I want this, I want one of those. And ideologue comes to some shape that he's done, or

her and they do it again and again and again regardless of context. So in that respect they are not creative, by the public and the non-discerning public it looks wildly creative because of its crazy novel shape, but that's not creative. Creativity is a question of resolving a series of complex and very frequently conflicting demands. I'll give you an example, you can tell me if it's interesting. The City Hall in Jerusalem. A square in urban design terms is well defined by the buildings that surrounded it. There's an enclosure to that, but in Jerusalem you have this terrible division between the Arab and Jewish sides of it. But it's a civic building and requires access by all citizens of the city. So how do you make a square that is permeable and accessible from all sides and yet architecturally a defined space and enclosed? So that's the kind of interesting problem to resolve. You can easily make a wonderful square by inclosing it, but you haven't solved the political issue, by access by all its citizens. So that's an example of what I'm talking about it. So if you came with a preconceived idea, you wouldn't be addressing the subtleties of the circumstance. Napoleon won his battles by walking the battlefield, figuring out the ground. Creativity comes from no preconception. Of looking at all of the inputs not just one, and then with judgment deciding which of the important ones to give emphasis. These will change by circumstance, that's the essence of creativity, then you make it more than the sum of its parts.

That's very interesting, how would you reflect Daniel Libeskind, Frank Gehry?

One trick ponies.

One trick ponies?

The differences between them is that Frank Gehry is very talented, extremely talented and he makes beguiling and wonderful artifacts, I can say that for all other architects. The problem for me with Gehry as much as I admire his tectonic capabilities - they are wonderful and fairly frequently they do resolve the function not always but they do - you can't make a school of architecture from that. There are no principles about his work that I think are transferable, so anyone who tries will be a second class Gehry. Whereas a great school of architecture is based upon a series of principles that can be elaborated and developed by others. It is an important distinction.

Could you list a good school of architecture?

If you take any school, take the neo-classicists of the palladian era, they took classical architecture and they had many manifestations. Or you take Georgian architecture in Ireland were you come from, wonderful manifestations of the

Georgian architecture which essentially was a beautifully shaped window with carefully adjusted mullions in a brick or masonry wall and the delicacy of that could be repeated many times for many functions, and done better or worse, but it could be done better by a sensitive architect. Palladio did it extremely well, there are lesser ones Sansovino and all the other ones that did it, then it develops from that kind of early neoclassicism of the early renaissance through to high renaissance to baroque then beyond, so high baroque. But it's all dealing with the same language, but hugely different interpretations. I'm not sure you can deal with the Gehry language as a language, it's a poetic expression of one individual, not transferable.

Looking at contemporary architecture today, you're very obviously classically trained and versed, how would you express modern building today?

What Mies Van Der Rohe was to kick apart the principle and his type - he introduced a new dimension a new spatial dimension if you can say that - until a point except for Baroque incidentally. Let me start again I'm not sure if that's correct, let me clarify that. The classical room has walls, has a threshold, has a door, has windows and you know where the definition of that room is. The Barcelona pavilion by contrast is the opposite, it's a series of planar intersections with no corners and where pieces don't meet, so there is a continuity of that, it's not an enclosed or defined space there is a throughput of the space, absolutely different. Now in that respect Baroque architecture, extreme baroque architecture is a same because the moldings and the decoration, you did not know where the wall ended and the ceiling began, or where it stretched into the garden were the building stopped and the landscape took over, so in that respect baroque architecture in some respects and the tenants of modernism are similar, a different language, but it's very similar principle. What Louis Kahn changed and totally was to reintroduce the room, the redefinition of space. What we have is a legacy are both transparency in the continuity of space and what Gideon called the interpenetration of space where he cites Picasso's heads were you see it in many directions at once, the kind of fourth dimension of time. So our palette in architecture now is both transparency and continuity as well as enclosure and definition. It has expanded our palette of spacial materials, the trick now is to use them appropriately and give them dramatic enhancement, to celebrate them. You wouldn't want unless you have like Phillip Johnson 40 acres around a glass box, you can't have bedroom that way because people want privacy. So normally you would use say for example bedrooms that's that were enclosed, unless you had an entirely private estate, or you could face one way that no one could look into. Whereas a living room might very well be the opposite, using a simple example

to show that a building could have both appropriately distributed. So you could expand that to public buildings, the example of the opera house we designed with the enclosure of the hall is complete because you're focusing on performance you move into a different world, you want to exclude sound from the outside. But the public areas are a celebration they are an occasion where people see each other and parade. So there are two contrasts there, and they're used not for some preconceived whimsy but they come out of the relationship of the public areas to the street, people's view of the city, people seeing the activity and then the high contrast of the enclosure beyond that. So that's an example.

Can you tell me about your first building?

My first building was in Durban in South Africa and highly influenced by its British fore bearers, one had some quite good colonial architecture, but again very circumscribed rather derivative. And I did a restaurant in a park with a thin concrete barrel faulted shell on posts and below that just glass, taking account of the subtropical environment, the delicacy of this white shell in the park, that rather changed the attitude of architecture in the town.

So was it a positive or negative reaction?

Ohh no it certainly changed and shook things up and they mean it had another view. I was personally doing the mural on one of the panels of walls and I was doing the plaster work, I was in workman's clothes. All the architects in town would sneak by to take a look, didn't realize I was there, so I could see that it had an effect [Laughter].

Is it still standing?

It is but I believe that it's now sadly because of the difficult situations that South Africa finds itself in, the park is now sort of squatters camp. It's no longer the elegant little restaurants sitting in the pristine park. But I hope it's being used well now by those who seek shelter.

Do you have any documentation of it?

I've got pictures of it yes.

What year was this in?

About 1960 I guess.

So what age would you have been?

I'm not gonna deal with that...[Laughter]

What did you learn from that experience of your first building?

I'm not sure that I learned a lot, it was a confirmation that you think through a design problem and you have fun with it.

Did you have fun with it?

Ohhh yeah.

What was the mural you were making?

It was an abstract. [reaches for pen and paper and starts to draw the first building and the placement of the abstraction]

Do you miss your home?

Yes where one grows up, it imprints on one very strongly, but this is my home, Toronto.

Have you been back to visit?

Yeah I couldn't go back for a while, I was invited to give the annual Sophia Gray lecture in 1999.

Can you tell me about your best building Jack?

Well I don't think there is a best there are buildings that you think have succeeded more than others are gave one satisfaction when they succeed more than others. There are several that give me pleasure. The foreign ministry of Jerusalem, the house in the Caribbean, the opera house, the Washington DC Shakespeare theatre. There are a series.

Would you care to comment on one of them in a little more detail?

In fact all of them resolve a series of opposing problems. Perhaps the most complex one was the foreign ministry in Jerusalem, which had to be extremely secure and yet be open accessible and represent a democratic country. It had to be a background building because it's one of those which defined the national precinct in yet because it's the foreign ministry building had to have more emphasis and had to be more equal than the others. Using traditional materials because its mandated to use the local stone and yet to deal with it in a contemporary way. It's a series of component parts that go together in an overall composition, it's not an easy unity of simple modular repetition. It's made up of, one, two, three, four or five different parts, so I think the relationship and the dynamics of them are to me satisfying I wouldn't move them by a millimeter. Then the detailing worked out well, so that's a building which gives me satisfaction. The opera house gives

me a huge satisfaction. I know that for me the ultimate success is both to have critical and popular acclaim. It's very gratifying when I go to the opera, there's not been a performance which I haven't attended yet when somebody doesn't come up to me and thank me and say we love being here, that sort of thing, so that's very satisfying.

The opera house is located?

In Toronto, the Four Seasons Center.

Would you recommend a show that I should go to?

Whatever's on, I think right now it's The Nutcracker. [laughter]

How long did the opera house take to design as that is a very complex building?

It is about as complex a building as you can get. I know that the contractors who are very very experience contractors who build right across Canada, said it was the most complex building they have ever built. How long I think from beginning to end probably from the time we began, it's difficult to say because there was all kinds of delays for funding and all kinds of stuff like that. But I would say if you took only the times we worked on it and the period of construction probably close to five years beginning to end.

Is there any favorite stories you could reflect on about the opera house?

Well there are some things I think are interesting for me anyway, the whole of the major structure of the house is on rubber pads so the auditorium, the fly tower, and a stage are a separate structure from everything around it, so no noise. You know noise, sound travels in two ways, one is airborne sound that's the way you hear me, and the other one is structural born sound [knocking on the wooden table top] you put your ear to a railway line, or you hear somebody walking on the floor above you, on a concrete floor. So airborne sound is contained or ameliorated by mass. Structure born sound is stopped a discontinuity, so we have to have both if you want to totally quiet room. And so the rubber box below and on the vertical sides, this whole shell inside, inside the shell was separated by these rubber blocks, and the rubber blocks are made up of a series of steel plates and thick rubber intestacies. And we calculated when the building was loaded, the deflection if you get the steel piece and rubber between it [starts drawing the deflection diagram] the deflection would be about eleven millimeters. But the building doesn't go up evenly and as we built the fly tower which is pretty heavy the deflection turned out to be about fourteen millimeters, but when the rest of

the building was built the building went back to eleven millimeters so we knew that the building was floating free.

That's amazing that never heard of that, what kind of rubber was that, was it specially manufactured?

Yes it's a very tough rubber, so there are several layers. I would guess about fifty to sixty centimeters in each direction, quite large and then massive beams sit on them, that give them mass and rigidity, this provides to discontinuity. So inside the house when the light and sound locks are closed you cannot hear anything that's audible from the outside, nothing.

Do these blocks just sit or do they run the whole length of the walls?

No they're intimate and connected by beams.

So what was the connection details of the walls to the floor and ceilings?

Well as a matter of fact the rear wall has a cantilevered piece, and the next slab is separated with a gap like a control joint, like a normal control joint. So that's one story about the opera house. The other stories are that the expectations were very low for the local guy doing the house because of all these other star architects that we're doing the other buildings. Now it's considered to be one of the best opera houses in the world and some of the others don't work. They certainly went over budget, ours didn't.

The contractors?

They were a very good construction company who do great buildings across Canada. PCL very very capable construction company.

What was your choice of materiality within the opera house?

In the hall itself to make that a cohesive room that has presence but is not overpowering because the real effort is not the building but the performance on stage. So I used a monochrome, a monochromatic, one material necessity for the whole, plaster, stucco and wood paneling and wood chairs and so on. So you get a sense of enclosure and completeness. By contrast the exterior is low ion glass, structural glass and great panels with as little interference with the view as possible. And then to create the bulk of the building, again fairly neutral but breaking up the bulk I used a black brick. Because there's a certain I think elegance to black, a black brick and a highly crystalline glass form.

It sounds beautiful, so applying the rules you talked about it as respects to the architect's palette of materials is endless.

Yes it is but in that case using a masonry monolithic form for enclosed components, those that required privacy or separation and a total transparency of low ion structural glass in contrast.

Was there any fears when designing and building it?

No, the big challenge was and always is and what one ought to be responsible about it is the question of money, where to allocate the budget. [coughs, excuses himself from the room to clear throat] Sorry about that, but that's better now my voice is a little better. Where were we?

We were talking about the funding.

Yes when I think back whenever I was at architecture school it was a point of honor not to know about money. Stupid. You have to allocate, what it forces you to do is to rank an importance to where you spend it in each project. Of course I could spend it all on the surface and have the pyrotechnics a crazy shape, and not have a good hall or acoustics, but hello, it's an opera house. Acoustics, audience comfort, sidelines, back-of house, it's a factory. Industry talks about just in time delivery, they talk about days in just in time delivery, an opera house seconds. So making that work, keeping the operational costs low, those are the priorities, and we had a limited budget and I stuck to it. And I'm proud of the fact that I have no apologies for being responsible about money and schedule. We win the design prizes but we do it while holding to budget and schedules, that's the secret of professional success.

Continuing with finance the business side of architecture is not taught within schools.

I couldn't agree with you more, it's ridiculous, nobody tells you how to run a practice, how to deal with the business side, and it's a very expensive lesson you learn in practice. This firm, my firm, is the only architecture firm in Canada that this year will be the third time we've been chosen as one of the 50 best managed companies in the country. Not architectural firms, any company in the country, we're the only architecture firm that has ever been included, and now it's our third time. I'm proud of that, and part of it is not simply the bottom line, making money which everybody wants to have good reward. It's how you manage it, so in this office for example some parts of our management on Fridays, every Friday throughout my career, we have beer and popcorn in the conference room everybody comes, and we review a project for criticism, we invite criticism, we

want to know what people think in the office, where they think we could do better, what we've done badly, what we've done well. So those discussions have several benefits, most of the juniors in the office see me in an coat and tie and think I'm a front office guy, on Friday meetings they see we're very serious about architecture and the discourses are at a very interesting level. When we're in a pinch and somebody has to be brought onto a team they know about the project, and it gives juniors a sense that they can actually shape things if they make an intelligent suggestion it's adopted, so it's a very important thing. So that's one of the things about management that there's an engagement of the office about what are most important issue is and that's architecture, design, producing good buildings. One of the other ways to do that is that everyone in this office makes soup twice a year. We have a soup kitchen, including me, because we have about 160 people, so that's enough working days if everyone does two soups a year. There's a soup schedule, and 29 languages spoken in the office, so the recipes are fascinating and we're going to produce a Diamond and Schmidt soup book. So we have got a tureen and people get together and there's a method and my controller said to me you're going to have these high price guys making soup and I said absolutely. Its a way people get together, if it's important, it's the informal contact as much as the scheduled formal aspects of work that are productive.

It sounds like you've created a really nice community.

That's the best thing we've done, that congenial serious architects that are having fun.

Are there any favorite soups that you would care to mention?

There are some wonderful ones, I had a wonderful won ton soup by clearly a Chinese member of the firm, I've had wonderful thick Italian stew, you name it we've had them. [laughter]

If you're cooking soup what would you make?

I like to make a very heavy vegetable soup, that has a chicken stock with vegetables basically.

If I was working here I'd make an Irish stew.

Yes that would be wonderful, wonderful, come and make it.

Are there any other secrets to your success? You obviously create a very amazing community within the office, as regards to financial how do you manage?

One of the things too I'm quite proud of is I've changed the structure of the office as it has grown and each size requires a different organizational form. Of course they started off with one room in the university on my own, when I had to do everything, make coffee for the client, do the books, da da da. And I resisted being a big office, I didn't want a big office, but as it's grown we wanted to retain the sense of a office. So I went from a single practitioner to having employees, to having associates, to having a partnership and then as we've really grown I've changed the partnership to an incorporated company. There are 14 owners of this company now, 14 people who have shares in the company, the senior people who are the principles who have shares and the associates are expected to do more than their casework, their project work, they are expected to contribute to an office wide function. So the management meetings is like having a cabinet, you have a minister of transportation, and you have a minister of so fourth. Here we've got people who manage the IT system, the library and so on, the protocols of the office, the construction documents, and what we do is that when somebody thinks that we are not doing as well as we should or are not absolutely firing at the edge of our range, they will then set up a committee around the person and they'll do the research, look into the problem, present a white paper once a month to the management meeting, and say here's what we're doing, this is what we should be doing, here's how we're going to get there, and we discuss it or adopt or not. So we're continually looking at our operation and all of its aspects, taking advantage of the size of this office, we are now 165 or something like that, we can be fought off as a benefit, but I think having a big office is a problem in some respects, there are huge advantages you can have a full time researcher of full time librarian, we've got a small division, I shouldn't say division, a group who do the business development and produce all the proposals, but what we don't do, is to specialize in the aspects of architecture with one exception. We build a small team at the core of every project, and it's usually Don Schmidt or myself who is on the teams and another principle who becomes a project architect or manager and a third person, an associate, and these three form the core and take the project through from beginning to end, so there is total coordination and continuity. Many firms lack that, I don't like the American system where there's a design division and a production division, we have one team that takes its through, it expands and contracts around that core. One exception is that we have construction administrators now, who only do construction inspection and that's their job of administrating the contracts. We can't, we have so much

work and so many contracts that it is important to have pros who really are more outside the office than in. So that's one aspect of that. But the small core team means that the people who are at the designs side and we bring in the contract administrators at the beginning to show them what the objectives are so through construction documentation and construction, it is informed by the principles that are worked out at the design period. The fact that we've got 14 owners who own shares in a company and their share holding gives them their percentage of the profits. Then we are, I hope, I think we are generous about the bonuses for everybody else if it's a good year, and touch wood there's been some good years. So that everybody gets a bonus if the office is doing well.

It's a very well oiled machine.

It is. It's a wonderful machine. People know and the commitment of people is huge. There is never never a night or a weekend when people are not here. So, what's the secret of success? Woody Allen said 90% of success is showing up, and we show up, and we work. It's a very hardworking office, there's no royal road, I think that all of the other components of commitment to architecture of utilizing your human capital to its best advantage so that people really make the contribution that they're capable of from the junior to the senior, and seeing that they are making that contribution, and valuing it, and allowing criticism and giving reward, of course those are the elements of success.

You do not speak of personal hierarchy within the office.

Well there is a hierarchy, because there are principles there are owners there are associates and the rest.

Personal hierarchy?

In terms of the work, the content, no, no, absolutely not.

Everybody's equal?

Absolutely, if you have a good idea, or a good criticism, pat them on the back.

I am curious as to what drives you, what inspires you, what gets you out of bed in the morning to excel?

I don't know what drives me, when I talk about psychological reasons for things, my daughter says keep your day job [laughter] I don't know self analysis is boring for everyone else. I think I'm lucky I have a bit of energy.

It's a very tough question to answer thank you. Whenever you design do you have any rituals do you listen to music?

I do, very much so, it's interesting I remember once reading that Georges Simenon that prolific detective writer, French detective writer, who writes books with extraordinary simplicity of language, in fact if you're ever perturbed and in a state, to read his book it's extraordinary calming and methodical the simplicity of life of his detective. He produced an enormously prolific production of books and apparently it would only take him weeks rather than months to produce it. But he would lock himself into a room and he would sharpen all his pencils and he would put all his papers in a row and get everything absolutely ordered. I find I do exactly the same thing, because when your mind is not organized and the ideas are floating around and you've not resolved the design issue then I need to organize my externalities. I like to have my books in order, my shoes in a row, my watches in a row, I mean everything organized, and I listen to music, for me it's absolutely transporting. I'm sure that I can levitate on the great music, I feel I'm not touching the ground. But once the problem is resolved and you've got the solution and I'm drawing it, I don't care about mess, because internally I'm organized. I've noticed this in myself, it doesn't bother me that my office is in a mess, my study is in a mess, it's that you've got the thing worked out and drawn and making a lovely drawing is deeply satisfying. I love drafting, so I draw a lot, and I'm having a book of my paintings published next year. Then it's an interesting shift from internal disorganization and an external order, to an internal order to an external don't care. But is music inspiring? Absolutely, absolutely.

Any favorites?

Oh sure, I like all the way from Carissimi and Monteverdi, through to obviously Handel, Mozart, Bach, without question, and some of the moderns like. The great inspirations really are Handel and Bach, great choral music. I don't know how to describe it you sort of swell, I feel, I swell, my chest gets bigger, I don't know. [laughter]

Do you have any hobbies?

I paint and draw.

Have you ever seen Eb Zeidlers drawings?

No I haven't.

When I interviewed him he brought out his sketchbook, it was labled 210. Your probably familiar that the averages persons sketchbook contains scribbles and writing, well each one of Eb's pages was exquisite, beautiful drawings, beautiful hand writing, no a blemish on the page. I was shocked at how each page was pristine and he had a stack of 200 plus books throughout his career. I can't claim that at all. [laughter]

So your book is coming out next year?

Yes it is.

How many paintings will be included in it?

Ohh about 70 or 80, something like that.

Have you had gallery showings?

I've had three. I don't sell them, so I don't get to many galleries that are interested. [laughter]

You don't sell them at all, are they all in a room at home?

Yes, not all but one room is pretty well my paintings. I've given a few away, not too many and I always regret it afterwards. [laughter] In fact the joke is I gave a very good one to my wife before we were married, and the only way to get it back was to marry her. [laughter] It is a joke, it is just a joke.

How long have you been married?

50 years.

Congratulations, and you have a daughter, you mentioned her.

I have a son and daughter and she did architectural conservation, but she hasn't practiced, she got two energetic children and my son is a lawyer. I've got some paintings here actually, come on up quickly and i'll show you. [Jack Gives me a tour of the office and shows me some of his delightful paintings that he has on display, he is a very talented artist.
