



TWENTY + CHANGE

NEXT GENERATION

EMERGING CANADIAN DESIGN PRACTICES

edited by
Heather Dubbeldam

Twenty + Change NEXT GENERATION is the fourth publication profiling emerging design practices from across Canada working in architecture, landscape architecture and urban design. Projects by thirteen Canadian design firms engage the public realm in meaningful ways, posit new models for collective living and urban infill, advance the role of sustainability and vernacular craft, and explore opportunities for speculative and self-initiated commissions. The book includes profiles of emerging firms, project descriptions, full-colour images and essays by noted architectural critics, educators and practitioners.

FEATURED PRACTICES

- Architects Luc Bouliane, Toronto
- Architecture Microclimat, Montreal
- Atelier Barda, Montreal
- Batay-Csorba Architects, Toronto
- Ja Architecture Studio, Toronto
- Marianne Amodio Architecture Studio, Vancouver
- Peter Sampson Architecture Studio, Winnipeg
- Polymétis, Toronto
- Quinlan Osborne Design, Montreal
- Scott & Scott Architects, Vancouver
- UUfie, Toronto
- Woodford/Sheppard Architecture, St. John's
- WORK/SHOP, Winnipeg

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Preface

Alex Bozikovic

As a design evolves, the rhythm of change is hard to predict: an idea can transform completely from one iteration to the next, or be whittled slowly towards its final state. Canada's architectural culture, in 2015, shows signs of doing both. As the curatorial committee for Twenty + Change: Next Generation examined more than 160 submissions for this exhibition, we observed two approaches to the 'change' that this exhibition embodies. Familiar forms and approaches are being refined by some of the country's emerging firms, while others pursue radical approaches to architecture and to practice.

The first group is reflecting upon the Canadian vernacular and the country's regional expressions of Modernism while achieving a high level of craft and an engagement with the realities of building. Its practitioners include Vancouver's Scott & Scott. Their home studio, which they constructed in part themselves, is an elegantly proportioned essay in wood, steel and leather. It speaks eloquently of the pleasure that architects take in building well—the resolution of details and assemblies, the poetic of materials. Their interior for the restaurant Bestie Currywurst also draws on this ethic, adding colour, flexibility and playfulness. A major element of this project is a grid of removable wooden pegs, serving both ornamental and functional roles. This suggests just how much architecture can be achieved with modest means. The work of the Winnipeg office WORK/SHOP takes a similar route; their Fiskaoist outdoor dining area plays on the collective memory of a fishing hut, a traditional archetype, and creates a meaningful architectural experience of space and light—all using just lumber.

Another Winnipeg firm, Peter Sampson Architecture Studio, is similarly successful at building on an archetype with the Gillam Town Centre Railway Avenue Housing project. The jury appreciated the interpretation of a vernacular gabled form, tied to local history but transforming it into a form that is uncanny and yet evinces a 'can-do' attitude. Elsewhere, the office achieves formal and material innovation with its Assiniboine Park washrooms. That design employs shipping containers, not for their fashionable aesthetic qualities but for their availability and economy; after wrapping them in an elegant cladding of glass and wood, the studio sets up a compelling tension between reflectivity and opacity, the rough and the smooth.

In Sheshatshiu, Labrador, the St. John's-based office of Woodford/Sheppard pursues a similar aim with their Innu Aiamieutshuap church, which attempts to synthesize Christian religious architecture with traditional Innu forms; their Salvation Army Citadel is an ambitious, ephemeral update of vernacular church forms filtered through Late Modernism. Meanwhile, the Montreal-based office Microclimat strives for a similarly nuanced relationship to history with its La Taule Athletic Training Centre in Waterloo, Quebec; the form is a shed of almost iconic purity, while the material palette and exposed structure show great refinement. This is a thoughtful and robust composition, informed by history but striving for something relevant to contemporary life.

The exhibition also includes another group of architects who are moving further from what is expected of a Canadian practice, in approach and in design. UUfie's design for the Ports 1961 store in Shanghai embodies this ambition. The building uses one architectural unit, the glass block, to achieve multiple aims: it creates a building which is a spectacular object on the street and also evokes the vitrine, the essential element of a high-end retail store. This is a move of great elegance, combining structure, façade and expression of the program into one gesture.

Toronto-based Michaela McLeod and Nicholas Croft fully exploit the creative freedom that a pavilion—in this case at the Winter Stations event—can provide. Their HotBox is a pure form in the landscape: an elegantly proportioned black box, made unexpectedly of rubber—which, once inside, reduces the viewer's experience to facing up towards the sky.

Several firms in the exhibition are attempting to bring creative design to commercially driven projects. Batay-Csorba Architects, with their Double Duplex project, propose to reinvent the standard house typology of Toronto by going below grade and turning two house lots into four generous two-level units. Architects Luc Bouliane, meanwhile, achieve some spatial innovation within a real built project with their Relmar Houses, cutting away floor space to create atriums which provide a complex and rich experience as well as increased natural light. In the same city, Ja Architecture Studio took on a speculative project with the Offset House, combining their vision for a plastic, formally complex architecture with the realities of the marketplace. The result is something highly unusual in the city of Toronto. Meanwhile, their project Twofold, a mixed-use building, combines adaptive reuse and a familiar Canadian formal trope—the screen of slats—with an angular façade capped in brass. This relatively modest building, which houses the firm's own office, speaks assuredly of a new formal language and of a young practice's entrepreneurial ambition.

It has been eight years since the first Twenty + Change—a relatively short period in the glacial timeline of architecture—and the three previous installments of the exhibition have revealed a crop of architectural studios that continue to grow and change. The jury is pleased to see this new group of emerging firms, who are adding their own local contributions to the project of city-building across the country, and to the evolving project of Canadian architecture.

We offer congratulations to all of the firms included in Twenty + Change: Next Generation.

Curatorial Committee

Manon Asselin is a partner of Atelier TAG in Montreal, a multiple winner of competitions for a number of significant cultural and public commissions in Quebec. The firm has received numerous awards for design excellence, including three Governor General's Medals in Architecture in eight years, Awards of Excellence from the OAQ, the Institute of Design Montreal Award in Architecture, and several Canadian Architect awards. In 2008, Atelier TAG was awarded the Professional Prix de Rome in Architecture. In parallel to her practice, Manon teaches at the University of Montreal's School of Architecture.

Alex Bozikovic is the architecture critic for *The Globe and Mail*, writing about architecture, urbanism and related subjects. He is a National Magazine Award winner, and his work has appeared in other publications such as *Azure*, *Frame*, *Architectural Record*, *Dwell* and *Spacing*. He has contributed to books including *Concrete Toronto*, and he wrote the blog *No Mean City* from 2010 to 2014. He was educated at the University of Toronto and the City University of New York.

Diogo Burnay is an associate professor and the director of the School of Architecture at Dalhousie University in Halifax. He is a founding partner with Cristina Veríssimo of CVDB Arquitectos, an award-winning architecture practice in Lisbon, Portugal, and lives and works in both Halifax and Lisbon. Diogo has taught at Hong Kong University, Faculdade de Arquitectura University of Lisbon, the University of Minnesota and the University of Texas-Arlington, and is a visiting critic at schools of architecture worldwide.

Javier Campos, principal of Campos Studio in Vancouver, formerly a founding partner of Campos Leckie Studio, works along the West Coast from Baja, California to Haida Gwaii and has received numerous awards for his work. In collaboration with artist Elspeth Pratt, he has completed several large public art projects. Javier has spoken internationally, taught at the Isthmus School of Architecture in Panamá, and participates as a thesis advisor and guest critic at the schools of architecture at the University of British Columbia and the University of Toronto.

Sasa Radulovic is a founding partner of 5468796 Architecture in Winnipeg. The firm's work has been published in over 100 books and publications, and received numerous awards including a Governor General's Medal in Architecture, an Architectural Review Emerging Architecture Award, and several RAIC Awards of Excellence and Canadian Architect Awards. In 2012, 5468796 Architecture won the competition to curate Canada's entry for the Venice Architecture Biennale, and in 2013 they won the Professional Prix de Rome for their "Table for 12" project. Sasa makes design advocacy an ongoing pursuit through critical practice, professorships at the Universities of Manitoba and Toronto, and numerous public engagements.

Introduction

Heather Dubbeldam

Twenty + Change is an ongoing exhibition and publication series dedicated to promoting emerging designers working in architecture, landscape architecture and urban design. As the fourth edition of the series, *Next Generation* presents the concerns and approaches of emerging practices in Canada in 2015 represented by 13 emerging practices from Vancouver to St. John's. In selecting the practices and projects for inclusion in *Next Generation*, the curatorial committee found many commonalities in the preoccupations and design sensibilities of this cohort of emerging Canadian firms, many of which are highlighted in the preface by Alex Bozikovic and the essay by Steve DiPasquale. These included a strong focus on contextualism and the relationship to site, as well as the exploration of material craft, concerns common to Canadian architectural practice. From a group of over 160 submissions, the committee sought out projects and firms that displayed a level of invention or a degree of risk-taking—ones that stood out as pushing boundaries in program, design and tectonic explorations, or that offer an alternative approach to the practice of architecture. Many emerging firms have developed a more fluid relationship between design and construction, taking on the role of designer and builder. Some are also taking on the role of client, developing their own commissions in order to experiment with new ideas and expand the norms of what is available to the public for purchase or consumption. Many of these firms have overcome considerable obstacles such as restrictive budgets, conventional preconceptions or challenging sites and climates. Young firms are often more nimble, able to take greater risks and push experimentation, thereby expanding the boundaries of traditional architectural practice. In forging a different path than many of their predecessors, this generation of designers is exploring the potential for architecture to transform society.

For the purposes of this exhibition and publication series an 'emerging' firm is defined as one that has been practicing independently for less than 10 years, recognizing the long chrysalis phase of architecture, particularly in North America. It is worth mentioning that the majority of practices featured in *Next Generation* are less than five years old (more than half of them have only been in existence for two or three years). The firms included in this edition, with a few exceptions, collectively represent the youngest firms in the four iterations of Twenty + Change. Many of them have completed only one or two built commissions, or in some cases, the projects presented herein are their first built works. Other practices that have been around for six or eight years might equally be considered in their 'early days', as they refine their process, knowledge and craft. As a forum for celebrating young design talent in Canada, Twenty + Change also recognizes the courage it takes to launch an independent architectural practice. It is difficult to establish any business, especially one that is as fraught with the complexities and challenges that architecture presents.

Twenty + Change seeks to document and disseminate the thoughtful and innovative design work of emerging Canadian practices, recognizing design excellence, formal and tectonic innovation, and new models of practice. The national dialogue that it creates reflects current priorities in the profession and encourages discourse on contemporary architecture within the profession and with the public at large. Having been involved with this organization since 2007, first as a participant, then as a director, I have followed with interest the evolution of the emerging practices that were featured in past iterations of Twenty + Change. Many of the principals came from well-established Canadian practices, advancing the ‘family tree’ and language of Canadian design. A number of these firms have risen in prominence, grown their practices and are taking on larger commissions. Several have since received widespread attention for their work and are helping to redefine Canadian architecture. This forum offers an opportunity to both discover, and help promote, the newest and brightest design practices from across the country—the next generation of architects who may represent the prominent Canadian practices of the future.

Next Generation

Steve DiPasquale

In the coarsest anthropological terms, ‘generation’ is a convenient abstraction that helps us make sense of the various strata on the common kinship diagram—it denotes but one short stop in a litany of names tracing the family line. At its most fecund, however, the term sets off a complex narrative of just who these people are and why, of what ideologies, inventions, icons have shaped their particular perspectives. Understood in the latter sense, the ‘next generation’ show themselves most meaningfully not as the predictable genetic outcome of a pair-bond, but in their capacity to imagine opportunities for change that their forbears might overlook.

Like its predecessors, this edition of *Twenty + Change* presents a cross-section of contemporary Canadian design, asking this time that it be considered according to genealogical precepts. It is a collection of work that is as diverse in scale, typology and agenda as it is in the makeup of its authors—as such, it resists easy synopsis. But if there is anything that might unite the figures in this edition, it is the palpable drive to—if not make things completely anew—formulate new questions that cast the familiar in a deliberately strange light.

The designers of this generation find themselves, for instance, looking for ways to adapt to the pressing realities of urbanization amidst what French economist Thomas Piketty tells us is the new spectre of patrimonial capitalism. As the political lobby group Generation Squeeze succinctly puts it, younger Canadians are “studying and working more—to have less.” A contingent of architects featured here have thus responded with projects that simply attempt to make more from less, to extract untapped spatial resources from existing sites. In Vancouver, Marianne Armodio Architecture Studio renovates a former seniors’ residence, recasting a 150-square-foot bedroom as an apartment, and 10,150 square feet of shared amenities as a house; elsewhere in the city, they recalibrate the square footage of a single-family home to accommodate the lives of three sets of adults in the same family. Luc Bouliane, Batay-Csorba Architects and Ja Architecture Studio reshuffle standard Toronto lots to yield new forms—and new forms of inhabitation. And Peter Sampson Architecture Studio harvests decommissioned shipping containers—the spent shells of global logistics—to resolve a budget shortfall that had grounded previous attempts to furnish a Winnipeg park with washroom facilities. These designers demonstrate for us an admirable architectural prudence within a regrettable—though hopefully not irreversible—economic climate.

Others in the collection remind us that architecture projects might also serve as sites of progressive political aims. We should count it as progress, for example, that the design process of Railway Avenue Housing included consultation with First Nations stakeholders, and that similar procedures are becoming commonplace in projects across the country. It must also be recognized that this is the generation who have managed to turn the eco-politics of food into everyday practice, evident in Atelier Barda’s choice to dramatize our shrinking biodiversity. Their installation, at once grave and ironic, mobilizes

delight as a means to sanctify disappearing vegetable varieties, and provoke lingering questions about our complacency in the face of species extinction.

There is yet another kind of politics at play in this edition, one that invokes both senses of ‘generation’ outlined above: the politics of place. Projects that are decidedly—even fiercely—local in their scope of concern and material practice affirm their position within a long genealogy of architectural inquiry, but nevertheless search for new protocols rather than adhere only to those inherited. Scott & Scott Architects, in the refurbishment of their home studio, find meaning in working with local wood from log to lumber, but when using a 19th-century recipe for a beeswax floor finish, have no reservations about swapping out the traditional solvent for Canadian whisky. And in a small restaurant in Vancouver’s Chinatown, the pair also executes one of the most successful experiments in contemporary grassroots economies: the architects first design a system from utility-grade lumber that enables owners to literally build and update the space themselves, and then resolve to outfit it with light fixtures and stools crafted by local designers. Finally, WORK/SHOP and Quinlan Osborne parse the logics of vernacular forms to make spaces of their own device. This group of architects, as Osborne reflects of his own relationship to the craft traditions he learned from his father, possesses the agility to “oscillate between old and new, between the understood and the unknown.” There is, in their mental maps of their own practices, a kind of kinship diagram that allows them to proceed with intent.

This publication ought to be conceived in the same fashion—as a record that might help us understand our relation to the past and the future of design. This book, like the kinship diagram, is something to return to periodically, to see who and what yielded more offspring, to see which experiments turned out to be generative. We should hope that the work reaches any interested, but especially that it inspires the architects in every generation, those in whom the quest for private autonomy and public good happen to converge.

Twenty + Change: Next Generation Projects

Architects Luc Bouliane

Toronto, Ontario

Established in 2010, Architects Luc Bouliane is a full-service design studio located in Toronto specializing in academic buildings, commercial interiors and custom residences. Founder Luc Bouliane, born and raised in Northern Ontario on the rocky shores of Lake Superior, often looks to ideas of geology and nature to conceptualize his work. Before founding his own practice, he worked with Teeple Architects, where he gained essential insights into the art and technical challenges of co-ordinating a unique vision with a specific architectural response.

The studio team's combined experience as architects, interior designers, and project managers has broadened the office's ability to complete a multitude of projects. Whether creating a building from the ground up or reimagining an existing environment, the studio's strength is in innovative spatial concepts and material solutions.

Architects Luc Bouliane believes that in a complex urban ecology, the buildings that comprise our living cities, neighbourhoods and campuses are always interrelated. Each new structure is an organism that must communicate with its surroundings, advance a sense of place and purpose, and integrate sustainable building solutions while simultaneously projecting a unique character and beauty. The practice is committed to exploring the cultural understanding of space, community and context as expressed in the built environment.







1



2

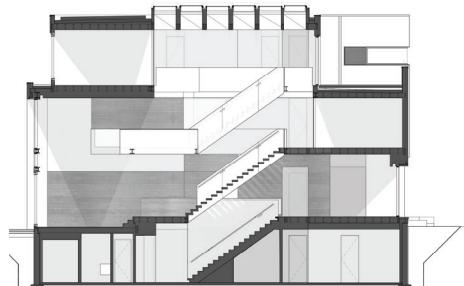
The Relmar House(s)

Toronto, Ontario

Just to the east of the Cedarvale Ravine in Toronto, two semi-detached dwellings have been inserted into a narrow lot formerly occupied by a single-family home. The Relmar Houses are two halves of a complex organism, responding to two different sets of priorities. One of the dwellings is an articulated space designed to meet the nuanced requirements of a couple's dream retirement home. The other, intended for sale on completion of construction, supports the developer's strategic financial plan and is a fusion of spatial complexity and economic simplicity.

From the exterior, the project as a whole possesses an air of weight and dignity. Its brick and concrete exterior is divided in two by a vein of natural Algonquin stone; these strong, earthy materials give way to interior spaces of lightness and illumination. Access to daylight is limited by large buildings on each side, so windows had to be positioned tactically in response to the density of the development and its close proximity to site boundaries.

The cranked angles of the building are designed to capture as much natural light and ventilation as possible. A 20-foot skylight installed over an open atrium is angled at 21 degrees for maximum exposure to sunlight. The interior stairs below are shifted off the wall to allow more light penetration into the three-storey atrium space, and to reflect sunlight off the limestone-clad wall. The southern wall of the west-facing balcony is angled to allow better exposure to late-day sun. Bright tiles and glazed screens create interior environments that are both detailed and radiant.



3

- 1 The exterior stone massing of the southwest corner
- 2 Private, fully landscaped rear courtyards
- 3 East-west section through atrium looking south
- 4 Floating office, pulled away from atrium wall
- 5 Light-reflecting glass and limestone in the atrium
- 6 Main stair and bridge opening to atrium above
- 7 Rear elevation opening to yard and green roofs

