

dential school system and invited survivors and visitors to engage in the task of building an inclusive history.

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Smart Address: Art Deco, Style Moderne and Their Contemporaries in Toronto. THE MARKET GALLERY AND THE TORONTO ARCHITECTURAL CONSERVANCY. Mounted at the Market Gallery, St. Lawrence Market, Toronto. 26 October 2013 to 25 January 2014. Curated by ALEC KEEFER.

A city's architecture is an important record of its history and cultural heritage, a record that Toronto has the unfortunate reputation of failing to preserve.¹ This lack of respect for Toronto's architectural past was an underlying friction in the exhibition *Smart Address: Art Deco, Style Moderne and Their Contemporaries in Toronto*. Mounted at the Market Gallery in partnership with the Toronto Architectural Conservancy (TAC), *Smart Address* used archival records to explore important Art Deco and Style Moderne buildings from the years between the First and Second World Wars. The Market Gallery, which presents exhibitions highlighting the city's history and culture, is situated on the second floor of the St. Lawrence Market, a historic building in its own right, being the site of Toronto's original City Hall.

At the start of the exhibition a didactic panel explained the rationale for its expansive scope, according to Alec Keefer, past president of TAC and guest curator. The choice of content was guided not only by the time period and architectural style, but also by the buildings' inclusion in *Journal*, Royal Architectural Institute of Canada, *Construction*, and *Engineering and Contract Review*, periodicals from which many images and captions were drawn. The exhibition also featured the work of four noteworthy architects of the era: H.H. Kent, J.J. Woolnough, L. Baldwin, and G. Greene, and highlighted new building materials and influential technological advances of the period.

The exhibition comprised over 130 framed photographs, several copies of architectural drawings, and a few primary source materials, including archi-

1 For example, journalist and architecture critic Christopher Hume recently expressed the concern that Toronto values new development over preserving architectural treasures. See Christopher Hume, "Celebrated Toronto Art Deco Tower Victim of Growth: Hume," *Toronto Star*, 14 June 2013, http://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2013/06/14/celebrated_toronto_art_deco_tower_victim_of_growth_hume.html.

tektural renderings, newspaper clippings, letters, and ephemera. The primary source materials accompanying the photographs were largely contained within six vitrines. They had been drawn from an impressive array of chiefly local repositories, including the Archives of Ontario, the Canadian National Exhibition Archives, the City of Toronto Archives, the City of Toronto Museum Services, the Toronto Public Library, the University of Toronto Archives, and Library and Archives Canada. The source institutions and their records were clearly cited, thus emphasizing the richness of these institutions' holdings, facilitating further research, and aiding archival outreach.

Toronto's architecture is often characterized as bland and conservative, which has allowed the city to stand in for other locations in many feature films that have been shot in its streets and neighbourhoods. A city such as New York, with its instantly recognizable, gargoyle-decorated landmarks, is more known for quintessential examples of Art Deco and Style Moderne architecture. Toronto's shortage of landmarks from this period may be in part the result of the city's lack of respect for its architectural heritage, an attitude that Keefer clearly criticizes in this exhibition. The TAC is a committed advocate of preserving Toronto's buildings of distinction, and while the exhibition celebrated the city's architecture, it also condemned its destruction. The captions beneath photographs of more than twenty buildings indicated their unfortunate fate: demolition. One particularly arresting example was the stately, detail-rich Toronto Star Building by Chapman & Oxley, Architects, which was demolished except for a few fragments reused in other structures. It was reassuring to note, however, that the number of buildings identified in the captions as listed or designated heritage properties was almost equal to the number of buildings identified as demolished.

Beyond heightening viewers' awareness of the relative temporality of Toronto's architectural heritage, the exhibition successfully evoked a period of architecture with wide popular appeal. The photographs of which the exhibition was chiefly composed were not only visually interesting but also easily accessible to the diverse mix of citizens and tourists that this St. Lawrence Market gallery typically attracts. Photography has long been recognized as a powerful medium for the documentation of buildings, not only for architects and city planners but also for researchers of history and heritage.² When buildings cannot be saved, photographic records aid in preserving changeable built environments in our collective memory. In this case, the materials conveyed the richness of the archival record of these remarkable buildings, even if the physical structures are no longer standing.

2 Phyllis Lambert, "Photographic Documentation and Buildings: Relationships Past and Present," *Archivaria* 5 (Winter 1977–78): 60.



“The Toronto Star Building: Chapman & Oxley, Architects,” *Royal Architectural Institute of Canada Journal* 6, no. 4 (April 1929): 147. Photographer unknown. From: Toronto Public Library. Scan courtesy of The Market Gallery.

The biographical sketches of the four architects, presented alongside examples of their work, enriched the story outlined by the buildings, demonstrating how these men helped shape Toronto's culture and history. Statistics about buildings erected by year, including their types and dollar values, added further context. This information readily conveyed a period of enormous growth in construction in the city, sharply curtailed by the catastrophic effects of the 1929 stock market crash.³ Though the technological innovations mentioned – electricity and the internal combustion engine – certainly did affect the city's streets and buildings, the attention paid to them in the exhibition felt superfluous and took visitors outside of the central focus.

The decision to provide context to the photographs primarily through descriptions derived from the pages of various architectural journals was an efficient strategy, because writing original label copy for each of the buildings featured would have been an enormous undertaking. As a result, however, some questions went unanswered. Perhaps focusing on fewer buildings would have allowed for greater context through deeper description. For instance, further information regarding the fate of featured structures would have created a more compelling narrative. If the building was demolished, what stands in its place today? If the building is still standing, is it serving its original purpose or has it been retrofitted for a new use? For example, one of the buildings included in the exhibition, the former industrial Tip Top Tailors factory, now houses loft condominiums.

A map, whether physical or virtual, would have been a useful companion to the exhibition, placing the buildings within the larger continuum of Toronto's architectural history. Additional initiatives could have extended the exhibition past its run and outside the walls of the gallery.⁴ For example, either a walking tour encompassing both preserved buildings and the sites of those demolished, or an online map linking historical and recent photographs with locations would have served to connect the past with the present, encouraging viewers to go out and appreciate the existing architecture of the city.

The exhibition was clearly framed within the TAC's mandate to preserve Toronto's architectural heritage, and as a result it tended to romanticize the city's past. While the destruction of a heritage building can easily ignite feelings of outrage and sadness, the exhibition risked oversimplifying this issue. The reasons for demolition can be complex, including obsolescence, the use of inferior building materials, neglect, or the prohibitive costs of renovating a

3 Charis Cotter, *Toronto Between the Wars: Life in the City 1919–1939* (Richmond Hill, ON: Firefly Books, 2004), 12.

4 A catalogue titled *Smart Address: Art Deco, Style Moderne and Their Contemporaries in Toronto* (142 pp., 65 black-and-white illustrations), published by the Toronto Architectural Conservancy after the close of the exhibition, is available for purchase at the Market Gallery.

building to meet modern standards.⁵ The transformation of a city's architectural landscape over time is inevitable.

These few contentions aside, the archival materials featured in this exhibition succeeded in instilling in viewers a sense of a glorious period in the architectural history of Toronto. Terry Cook reasoned that in the study of architecture, "the monuments of the architect's work may not be the actual building, but the archival documents that give evidence of the building's plan, design, construction, use, and subsequent alteration and possible demolition."⁶ Preserving built heritage in its physical form is not always possible, but when buildings are demolished or greatly altered, archival records such as photographs, architectural drawings, and renderings play a role in helping us envision the buildings as they were originally imagined. The Art Deco and Style Moderne buildings remaining from this era add depth and texture to the architectural makeup of modern-day Toronto, while those lost to the skyline live on in the records preserved in the various collections and archives from which the exhibition materials were drawn.

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- 5 William Dendy, *Lost Toronto: Images of the City's Past* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1993), xiv.
- 6 Terry Cook, "Building an Archives: Appraisal Theory for Architectural Records," *American Archivist* 59, no. 2 (Spring 1996): 137.