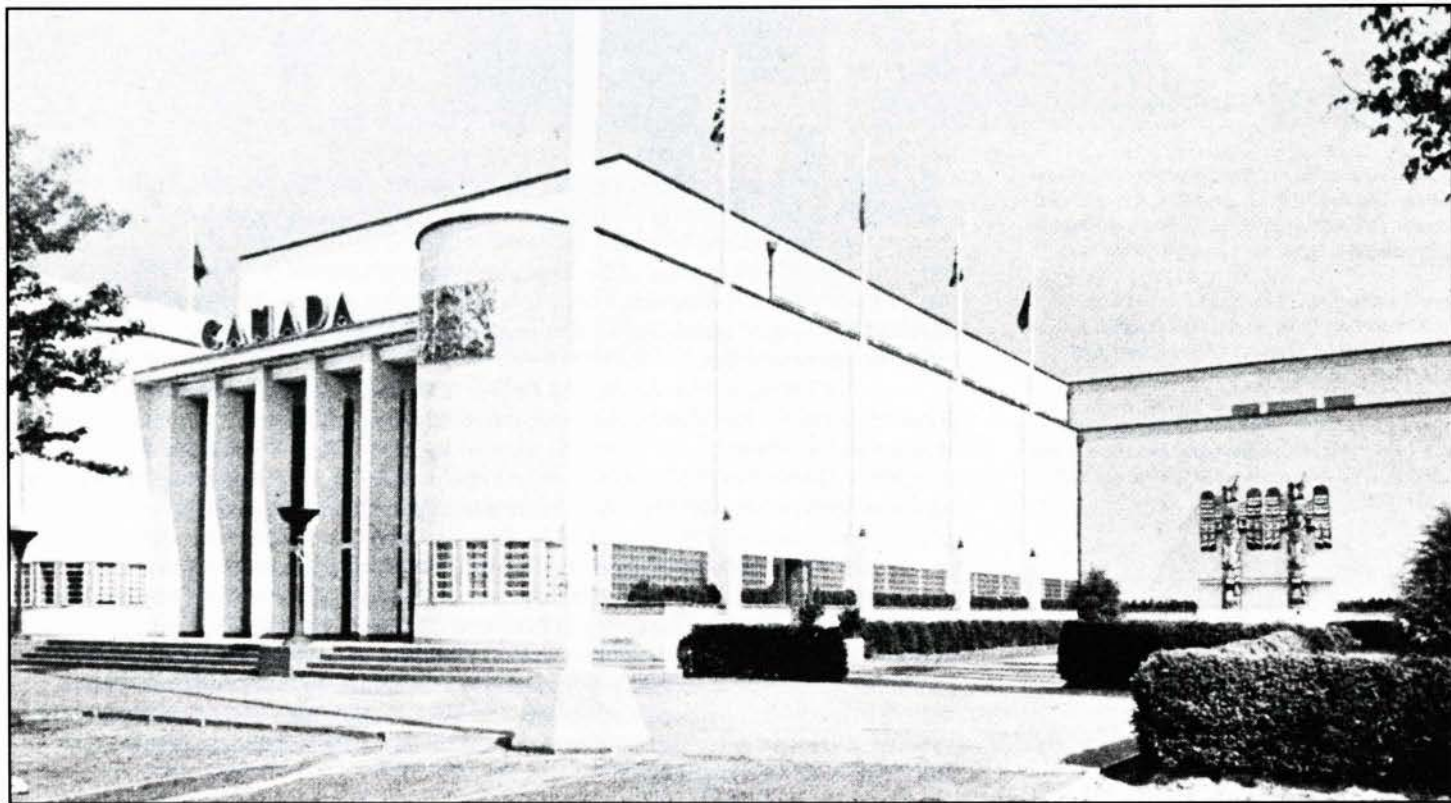


The Canadian Pavilion At The 1939 New York World's Fair



And The Development Of Modernism In Canada

The 1939 New York World's Fair is best remembered as a major display of Streamlined Moderne design. Yet interspersed among the oversized machine-like forms of the Streamlined Moderne buildings were mature examples of the Modern Movement. Amid this architectural spectacle, Canada's contribution to the fair passed unnoticed by all but the most diligent visitor. The Canadian Pavilion (*figure 1*) was neither a monument to the faltering Moderne, like Norman Bel Geddes' General Motors Building (*figure 2*), nor a prelude to the dominance of the International Style in North America, like Oscar Niemeyer and Lucio Costa's Brazilian Pavilion (*figure 3*). A number of influences were manifested in the design of the Canadian Pavilion; while the uncomplicated massing tentatively aspired to Modernism, the symmetrical front facade and cross-axial plan reflected more traditional design ideologies, and the cylindrical elements flanking the front entrance recalled the Moderne style. Although the Canadian Pavilion was not a highlight of the fair, it was representative of contemporary architectural directions in Canada.

BY ELSPETH COWELL



Figure 1 (previous page). *The Canadian Government Pavilion, New York World's Fair, 1939; W.F. Williams, architect. (Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada [JRAIC] 16, no. 8 [August 1939]: 191)*

Figure 2 (above left). *General Motors Building, New York World's Fair, 1939; Norman Bel Geddes, architect. (Donald Albrecht, Designing Dreams [New York: Harper & Row, 1986]: 23)*

Figure 3 (above right). *The Brazilian Pavilion, New York World's Fair, 1939; Oscar Niemeyer and Lucio Costa, architects. (The Architectural Review 86, no. 513 [August 1939]: 72)*

The design for the Canadian Pavilion was selected by a national architectural competition in 1938.¹ The competition itself characterized the ideological shift in Canadian architecture from a concern for nationalism to an attempt to strike a balance between tradition and Modernism. The president of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada anticipated that a competition would result in a truly “Canadian” pavilion for the fair. The winning entries illustrate that Canadian architects, in general, were beginning to experiment with modern architectural ideas.

W.F. Williams, E.I. Barott, and Ross & Macdonald won first, second, and third prizes respectively. Ross & Macdonald and Barott were well-known nationally, but even the architectural community must have been taken by surprise when a virtual unknown, W.F. Williams of Nelson, British Columbia, won the competition for the design of the pavilion. An Australian by birth, William Frederick Williams immigrated to the United States in 1927² and then to Canada in 1929. He worked for Cecil McDougall in Montréal until 1935, when he set up his own practice in Nelson. He continued to work there until his death in December 1947. Williams was primarily a designer of small institutional and commercial buildings and houses in the Kootenay region of British Columbia. He drew from a diverse range of stylistic influences, including Arts and Crafts, classicism, and the revivals. Modern ideas were also part of his palette, and were used interchangeably or in combination with traditional motifs. Williams’ success in the competition for the New York World’s Fair pavilion must have been a source of great pride for him as he struggled to maintain a Depression-era practice in the hinterland of British Columbia.

THE COMPETITION

The disastrous Canadian Pavilion at the 1937 Paris Exposition (**figure 4**) prompted the call for a competition for the design of the Canadian Pavilion in New York. Designed by the Canadian Government Exhibition Commission in London, England, the Paris Pavilion was the literal miniaturization of a concrete grain elevator tacked on to the side of the British Pavilion—clearly an inappropriate representation of Canada at a major international fair. A number of Canadian architects visited the Paris Exposition and voiced their disappointment in the Canadian contribution. Their displeasure prompted the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada to push for better representation of the profession at the 1939 New York World’s Fair. A competition open to all Canadian architects was perceived as the best way to procure an appropriate building to represent Canada.³

In late 1937, W.C. Sommerville, president of the RAIC, appealed to the Canadian government to hold a national architectural competition for the 1939 New York World’s Fair Canadian Pavilion. Sommerville emphasized in a letter to the federal Minister of Trade and Commerce the need for a competition among Canadian architects “in order that this building be truly representative of Canada, Canadian materials and Canadian Architecture.”⁴

The tone of Sommerville’s letter reflected his allegiance to the ideas of the Diet Kitchen School of Architecture. This school, founded in 1927 by Sommerville, John Lyle, and other Toronto architects, aimed to promote Canadian architecture and create a “Canadian Style.” The banks designed by John Lyle in the late 1920s, especially the Bank of Nova Scotia in Calgary, were the first concrete manifestations of the ideas of the Diet Kitchen School. The overall form of these banks, although simplified and flattened, remained tied to the principles of the Beaux-Arts classicism in which Lyle was trained. The program of ornamentation, how-

1 This article is adapted from “W.F. Williams (1904-1947): On the Edge of Modernism,” written under the supervision of Kelly Crossman at Carleton University.

2 He worked in Chicago and for Goodhue Associates in New York.

3 “Provincial Page: Ontario,” *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* 15, no. 1 (January 1938): 294-295, and “The 31st Annual Meeting of the RAIC: Public Relations,” *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* 15, no. 3 (March 1938): 85.

4 National Archives, RG 72, vol. 165, file 30831:0, W.L. Sommerville, president of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada, to W.D. Euler, Minister of Trade and Commerce, 23 November 1937.



Figure 4. The Canadian Government Pavilion, Paris Exposition, 1937; Canadian Government Exhibition Commission, architects. (*JRAIC* 14, no. 10 [October 1937]: 203)

ever, was distinctly Canadian in motif. Other architects took up the cause of creating a Canadian style of architecture through the use of Canadian motifs. Examples include the Concourse Building in Toronto (Baldwin and Greene, 1928) and the Toronto Stock Exchange (George and Moorhouse with S.H. Maw, 1936-37). The members of the Diet Kitchen School continued to advocate their ideals throughout the 1930s, and were active in directing the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada.

Nevertheless, many Canadian architects in the 1930s were already acknowledging the shortcomings of traditional architectural ideas—including the Beaux-Arts classicism on which the Diet Kitchen’s ideas were founded—for solving contemporary design problems. But most architects were not ready to plunge headlong into Modernism. Consequently, modern ideas were simply incorporated into many architects’ repertoires to update old forms. Rather than promoting the search for a Canadian national style, the 1939 Canadian Pavilion competition ultimately typified this duality of old and new architectural ideas.

The final competition brief confirmed that nationalism was not everyone’s principal architectural concern. In spite of Sommerville stressing the need for a Canadian building, the competition brief did not focus on this issue. In fact, it made no reference to the Canadianism of the building, emphasizing instead the desire that the building be compatible with the overall image of the fair and its buildings. Under the heading “Style,” the brief stated:

The exhibition buildings are being developed in general on modern lines with simplicity of form and surface detail. While no restrictive conditions are imposed on the competitor, it is desirable that the successful design shall be in harmony with the general scheme.⁵

Either it was thought that the building stylistically would inevitably be Canadian, or this issue had lost its importance in the eyes of the government⁶ (and, perhaps, the RAIC), when the final brief was written.

The choice of assessors further reinforced this position. Ernest Cormier, who was in the process of designing the Supreme Court building in Ottawa, was appointed as the private sector architect on the jury. Cormier did not share the Diet Kitchen School’s interest in architectural nationalism. His buildings, which were influenced by both his training at the *École des Beaux-Arts* and by the Modern Movement, are excellent examples of the contemporary intermingling of traditional and modern architectural ideas in Canada. The other two assessors, J.G. Parmelee, Deputy Minister of Trade, and Charles Sutherland,⁷ Chief Architect of Public Works, were probably more sympathetic to the Canadian government’s interest in factors such as economic constraint than in the pavilion’s expression of the Canadian spirit. The winning entries are the final proof of the diminished importance of nationalistic ideas. Aside from the occasional totem pole and coat of arms, none of the winning entries could be considered distinctly Canadian.

While the competition brief implied that a modern as opposed to a traditional building would be desirable, the contemporary Canadian architectural scene suggests that the pavilion could not have been expected to be a truly modern building. At the time, the Interna-

5 National Archives, RG 72, vol. 165, file 30831:0, Department of Trade and Commerce competition for the Canadian Government Building, World’s Fair, New York, 1939 (Brief).

6 The government later returned to this idea in their publicity. They stressed that the pavilion was distinctly Canadian because a Canadian architect designed it, a Canadian firm built it with Canadian materials, and the exhibits were built by Canadians in Canada!

7 Charles D. Sutherland was the chief architect of Public Works between 1937 and 1947. His role in the design of contemporary Public Works buildings is unclear.

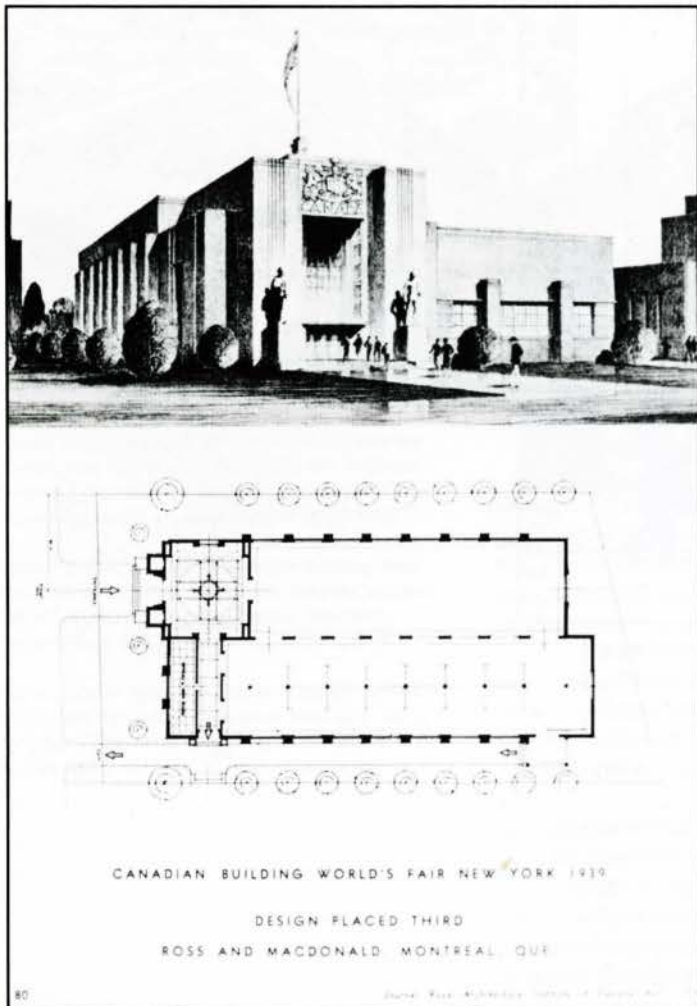
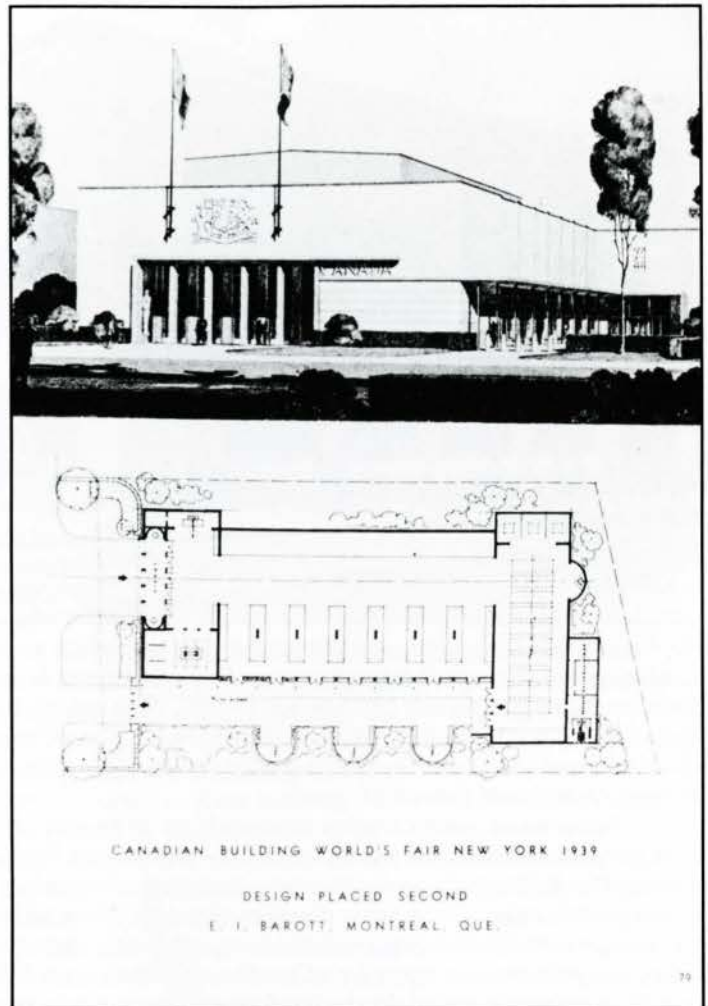


Figure 5 (left). Competition drawing for the Canadian Government Pavilion, New York World's Fair, 1938; Ross & Macdonald, architects. (JRAIC 15, no. 4 [April 1938]: 80)

Figure 6 (right). Competition drawing for the Canadian Government Pavilion, New York World's Fair, 1938; E.I. Barott, architect. (JRAIC 15, no. 4 [April 1938]: 79)



tional Style in its purest form existed primarily in a few houses, such as those of Robert Blatter, Marcel Parizeau, and Ernest I. Barott in Quebec, and in the housing competition entries of the period (the Dominion Housing Act competition and the T. Eaton competitions). Furthermore, the West Coast modern style did not begin to flourish until after 1940, when the B.C. Binning house was constructed in Vancouver.

Several other architectural trends indicate the tentative nature of interest in Modernism. Streamlined Moderne, alone or combined with more modern motifs, had already gained acceptance, especially for commercial buildings. For example, the Provincial Transport Company's Bus Terminal in Montréal (Shorey and Ritchie, 1938) combined curved forms, circular motifs, and a tower influenced by the Moderne with surprisingly sophisticated International Style horizontal strip windows and a restrained use of materials. The National Research Council buildings on Montreal Road in Ottawa (Gordon Hughes, begun 1938) also embodied this approach. A number of architects adopted Art Deco as an appropriate style for public buildings and skyscrapers. This direction was particularly common on the West Coast, a notable example being the Marine Building in Vancouver (McCarter and Nairne, 1930). Stripped (or simplified) classicism, which, like Art Deco, was derived from *Beaux-Arts* classicism, was popular among conservative clients since it was up-to-date but not radical in its modernism. One of the best examples of this trend is the Bank of Canada in Ottawa (Marini, Lawson, and Morris, 1938).

In general, the Canadian architectural scene in the 1930s was dominated by traditional designs, especially for houses, and hybrid buildings which combined Modernism with more traditional ideologies. Examples of the latter tendency include the now-demolished William H. Wright (Globe and Mail) Building in Toronto (Mathers and Haldenby, 1937), Holt Renfrew in Montréal (Ross & Macdonald, 1937), and Bell Canada in Ottawa (E.I. Barott, 1937).⁸ In fact, all three winning designs in the World's Fair competition adhered to this approach, in various degrees.

8 The latter two buildings were designed by winners in the World's Fair competition.

THE ENTRIES

Since all the drawings were returned to their designers after the competition, the stylistic range of the entries is difficult to establish. The drawings for all 155 entries⁹ were displayed in Ottawa shortly after the competition. *The Ottawa Evening Citizen* made the following comments on the exhibit:

Most of the drawings showed a uniform type of building from the outside, at least, with simple and undecorated lines. ...There were a number of ultra-modern and even cubistic designs and undoubtedly the judges experienced great difficulty in choosing the most suitable among the competitors.¹⁰

The winning entries were also essentially “simple and undecorated.” They reflected an attempt on the part of their architects to find an appropriate balance between tradition and modernity for Canada’s representation at the fair.

Ross & Macdonald’s third prize design (figure 5) revealed the greatest influence of stripped classicism. The front facade was dominated by a large projecting portico flanked by overscaled fluted piers. The scale and articulation of this entranceway were thoroughly modern, yet obviously inspired by a classical, not modern, ideology. The mock colonnades constructed of pilasters (rather than columns) also illustrate the adaptation of traditional ideas to the requirements—esthetic or perhaps economic—of a modern building. The pavilion’s plan tied this entry most closely with the conventions of Beaux-Arts classicism. It was composed of clearly defined spaces and was based on a system of cross axes. More than the other two winning entries, this design seemed to impose an architectural character on its interior. The structured organization of the plan and the amount of space used for secondary functions, such as the entrance foyer, may have been viewed as inappropriate for a temporary exhibition hall. As the exhibits had not yet been designed, a flexible interior space was an especially important consideration in the pavilion.

Yet even this classically-inspired competition entry embodied modern ideas. The entrance facade incorporated three distinctly modern attributes: an asymmetrical composition, a horizontal arrangement of windows, and unadorned wall surfaces. In spite of these features, the overall effect of the building was a monumental, if simplified and small-scale, classicism. Consequently, this entry was probably perceived by the judges as being too traditional to be appropriate for Canada’s representation at the fair. It would not have fulfilled the government’s requirement that the building harmonize with the modern tendencies of the other fair buildings.

In contrast to Ross & Macdonald’s classically-inspired pavilion, the second prize entry by E.I. Barott (figure 6) came closest stylistically to the emerging International Style, although in the detailing more than form. The overall impression is of a single mass accentuated by the visually-heavy peaked penthouse (the purpose of which is unclear), not a volume defined by a skin stretched on a frame, as was more typical of the International Style. The building was articulated with applied decorative elements, rather than an assemblage of component parts all essential to the whole, like the Brazilian pavilion. The interior plan, while open, remained traditional in its dependency on axes and conventional linear walls for organization.

However, many of the building’s details illustrate clearer modern intentions than the other two winning entries. The asymmetrical composition of the facade was emphatically stressed by the slight recession of the entrance and the protrusion of the wall plane above and to the left of the entrance. The loggia, the most traditional element of the competition program, had been reduced to a series of discrete verticals. Furthermore, rather than a number of individually articulated openings in the traditional manner, the side elevation was composed of a single expanse of glazing which incorporated both the doors and windows.

The less forceful division of interior spaces in Barott’s entry compared to Ross & Macdonald’s was probably more in line with the intentions of the Canadian government for the exhibit space, but the exterior appearance was perhaps too subtle in its use of Modernism. It lacked the visual “punch” that was expected of a World’s Fair pavilion.

W.F. Williams’ entry (figure 7) likely won as a result of its simple form and superficial Modernism. It was neither shockingly modern nor overtly traditional. The overall massing had a modern simplicity with a minimum of fenestration. In the spirit of the fair, the design

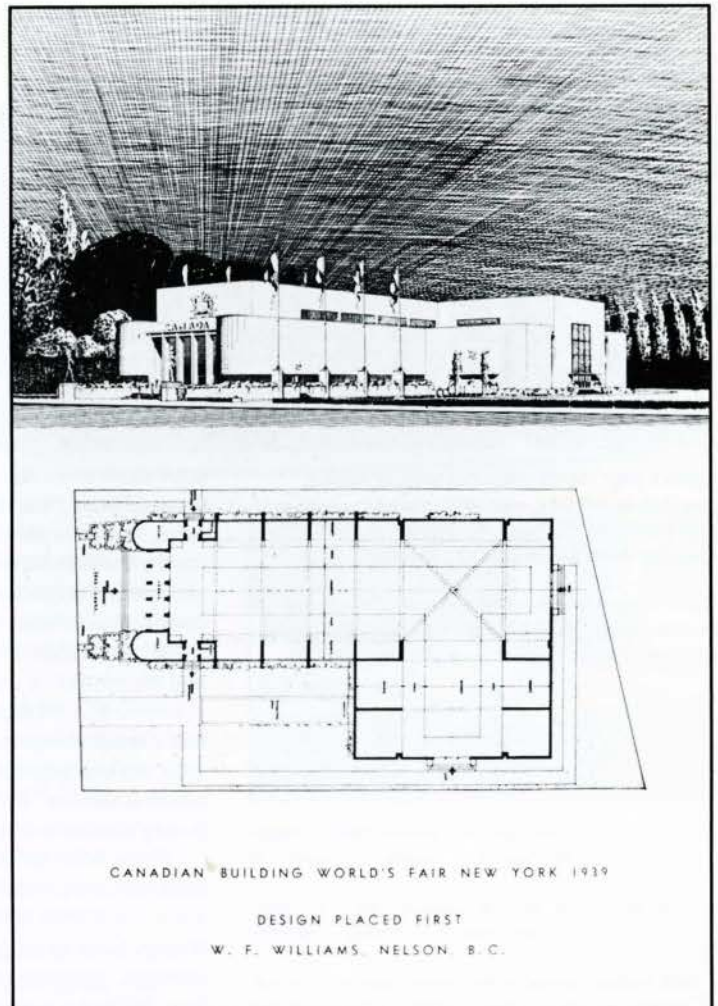


Figure 7. Competition drawing for the Canadian Government Pavilion, New York World’s Fair, 1938; W.F. Williams, architect. (JRAIC 15, no. 4 [April 1938]: 78)

9 Other entrants included Nobbs & Hyde, William Sommerville, and John Lyle.

10 “B.C. Architect is Winner of Government Pavilion Competition,” *The Ottawa Evening Citizen*, 30 March 1938, 5.



Figure 8 (left). The Canadian Government Pavilion, New York World's Fair, 1939; W.F. Williams, architect. (J.G. Parmelee, "Canada's Participation in the World's Fair," *Canadian Geographic* 19 [July 1939]: 84)



Figure 9 (right). Interior of the Canadian Government Pavilion, New York World's Fair, 1939; James Crockart, designer. (*JRAIC* 16, no. 8 [August 1939]: 192)

drew more from the ideas of the Streamlined Moderne than from the International Style. By arranging the glass block windows like air vents, emphasizing the horizontal fluidity of the surfaces, and incorporating cylindrical forms on the front facade, Williams alluded to the machine aesthetic, which was associated with the Streamlined Moderne style. This machine-like quality, combined with the building's starkness and geometric purity of forms, gave the design a visual impact that obviously appealed to the judges. They may even have seen a vague correlation with the pure shapes of the Perisphere and the Trylon, the theme pavilion and the symbol of the New York World's Fair.

But Williams did not break completely with traditional design principles: his design had a symmetrical entrance facade and a cross-axial plan. Consequently, Williams apparently achieved the appropriate balance between Modernism and tradition for Canada's representation at the fair. The main facade also exemplified this balance: it combined a reasonably imposing classically-inspired loggia with huge modernistic cylinders.

Williams' building also appears to have met the government's requirements for an economical and flexible design. The simplicity of the fenestration and exterior surfaces imply a lower cost than the more complex features and surface renderings of the two other winning entries. Even more than Barott's plan, the arrangement of interior space was undefined, and therefore adaptable to the needs of the undetermined exhibits. Williams' competition design, then, fulfilled the implicit architectural requirement for a strikingly modern, but not Modern, building, while at the same time meeting the government's cost-conscious, practical constraints.

THE CANADIAN PAVILION

The clear expression of the forms evident in Williams' competition perspective was lost in the execution of the Canadian Pavilion (figure 8).¹¹ The competition drawing gave the illusion of a building much larger and more monumental than its actual dimensions. This illusion probably contributed to its success in the competition. The unadorned planes all appeared much smaller in built form. The use of standard details such as dark-coloured roof flashing and standard casement windows with red frames destroyed some of the clarity of the building's composition. Furthermore, the Moderne aspects—the overscaled cylinders, the glass blocks, the pylons flanking the side entrances—were not incorporated convincingly into the building's overall form.

The interior of the pavilion (figure 9) was dominated by the exhibits, which consisted largely of representational sculptures and paintings, photographs, and dioramas depicting Canadian life and landscapes. Williams contributed little to the interior arrangement and finishes of the pavilion. James Crockart, an industrial designer from Montréal, was hired by the government to design the exhibit spaces. At his suggestion, the chief architectural feature of the interior—a mezzanine accessible by two curving staircases—was eliminated during construction. Consequently, the interior was essentially an open, high-ceilinged hall divided into exhibition spaces of equal size, each devoted to a specific area or aspect of Canada. The extra wall space which resulted when the mezzanine was eliminated was adorned with a six-foot-deep pictorial frieze painted by Canadian artist Edwin Holgate.

Criticism of the pavilion was levelled primarily against the poor quality of the exhibits and the location of the building, which was thought to be in a "back alley" of the fair. According to the critics, there was a total lack of coherence between the design of the exhibits and the design of the building, as well as between the different exhibits organized by the various factions of the government.¹² The exhibit, in attempting to convey all aspects of

11 Williams did not supervise the construction of the pavilion. Instead, Ian Morrison, who worked with Williams in Nelson, went to New York as the site architect.

12 Especially in Humphrey Carver, "Canada at the Fair," *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* 16, no. 8 (August 1939): 193.



Canadian life, lacked a central feature to lure visitors. It focused on attracting American tourists to Canada, rather than on Canada's potential as a modern country. While other countries pondered the ideal futures for their countries, Canada conveyed itself as an unchanging natural wonderland. The critics contended that exhibits were out-dated and confused. Several suggested that the Canadian government had simply failed to understand the importance of the fair to Canada's international image, and therefore had not spent enough money on the pavilion.¹³

The popular press said very little about the architecture of the pavilion. The *Ottawa Journal* stated simply that "Canada has a fine large high-roofed building, with a small but attractive lawn and a pool on the outside."¹⁴ The few published stylistic comments were often vague and contradictory. *The Montreal Gazette* stated on one occasion that it was "a building of conservative design,"¹⁵ but on another that it was "of modern design."¹⁶

Critics of the pavilion in the architectural press, while obviously dissatisfied with Canada's representation, were reluctant to blame the architect. They too complained about the poor location and the commercialism of the exhibits. Humphrey Carver's "Canada at the Fair" is typical:

The architect who designed the building must be excluded from criticism; it is true that the Pavilion has not fulfilled the early promise of the Competition drawings (amidst the expanse and gaiety of the Fair its facade appears a little solemn and small in scale) but, on account of the very poor site selected, the exhibits within are of greater importance than the building itself.¹⁷

In spite of a clear effort to avoid criticizing the building directly, Carver's article has a distinct overtone of envy toward those countries which had expressed more mature architectural abilities than Canada:

We can do no more than bow to Brazil which has contributed one of the most distinguished pieces of architecture in the Fair and which deserved a better site. Nor can we pay proper tribute to that consistent quality of freshness and good taste which has enabled the Scandinavian countries to carry off the architectural honours at this as at every other World's Fair of recent years.¹⁸

W.F. WILLIAMS, THE PAVILION, AND MODERNISM IN CANADA

In light of Humphrey Carver's comments, it is tempting to condemn the 1939 Canadian Pavilion as an uninspired and therefore unsuccessful attempt at modern design when, in fact, it can serve as an important lesson in the development of modern architecture in Canada. It was a time when Canadian architects were not yet ready to abruptly discard traditional ideas. It was a time of transition, when modern notions were being merged with traditional ideas.

The Canadian Pavilion played the same pivotal role in Williams' career, coming at the mid-point of his architectural development. After establishing his practice in Nelson in 1935, he produced a series of buildings based on sparse classical forms with limited ornamentation, such as the Masonic Temple (1937-38) and Tadanac Hall (1938), both in Trail, B.C. (figures 10, 11). These buildings displayed three key attributes of this phase of Williams' career: large, unadorned surfaces, symmetrical and proportional placement of parts, and graphic ornamentation (in emblems and cornices, for instance). While the Canadian Pavilion included Moderne features,¹⁹ the design approach was quite similar to the Masonic Temple and Tadanac Hall. It had more in common with the conservative, classically-inspired buildings at the fair such as the United States Federal Pavilion (Howard L. Cheney) (figure 12)



Figure 10 (left). Masonic Temple, Trail, B.C., 1937-38; W.F. Williams, architect. (E. Cowell, 1992)

Figure 11 (right). Tadanac Hall, Trail, B.C., 1938; W.F. Williams, architect. (E. Cowell, 1992)

Figure 12 (above). United States Federal Pavilion, New York World's Fair, 1939; Howard L. Cheney, architect. (The Architectural Forum 7, no. 6 [June 1939]: 402)

13 L.S.B. Shapiro, "Lights and Shadows of Manhattan," *The Montreal Gazette*, 11 July 1939, 2, and I.N.S., "Canadian Pavilion Opens But Job Not Yet Finished," *The Ottawa Journal*, 15 May 1939.

14 I.N.S., "Canadian Pavilion Opens But Job Not Yet Finished," *Ottawa Journal*, 15 May 1939.

15 Shapiro, 2.

16 "Canada's Policies Emphasized in N.Y.," *The Montreal Gazette*, 25 April 1939.

17 Carver, 184.

18 Carver, 193.

19 The Canadian Pavilion is the one of the few buildings in which Williams made extensive use of Moderne features. He must have viewed Moderne allusions as being appropriate to this building as a result of its function and context.



Figure 13 (left). The Consolidated Mining and Smelting Company Cafeteria, Trail, B.C., 1941; W.F. Williams, architect. (Anthony Cowell, 1993)



Figure 14 (right). The MacKay & Stretton Store, Nelson B.C., 1947; W.F. Williams, architect. (Anthony Cowell, 1993)

than with the monumental Moderne pavilions of American Industry. But Williams' incorporation of Moderne features indicated a willingness to experiment with modern ideas.

In Williams' later buildings, the classical overtones were stripped away in favour of modern compositions and ornamentation. In his design for the Consolidated Mining and Smelting Company Cafeteria (1941) he had clearly shifted to emphasizing the modern aspects of his buildings (figure 13). Instead of imposing a classical balance, he created a horizontal emphasis through the application of horizontal strips and a slight asymmetry. The horizontality was contrasted, as opposed to balanced, by the strong verticality of the stair tower. Although Williams' buildings were increasingly modern, his allegiances were not entirely in line with the ideals of the International Style. He continued to ornament his buildings with Art Deco and Moderne-inspired features: on the Consolidated Cafeteria, for example, he used horizontal strips, geometrically-shaped glass in the front doors, rounded splays at the entranceway, a glass block window, and a crowned tower. The Consolidated Cafeteria began the second, and unfortunately foreshortened, phase of Williams' career. His post-war buildings utilized essentially modern forms and leaned increasingly toward the International Style. The MacKay & Stretton Store (1947) in Nelson B.C. (figure 14), for example, had no ornamentation, and solid wall surfaces on the front facade were minimized in favour of extensive glazing. Although the facade is almost square, a horizontal emphasis was established by a deep projecting cornice, the arrangement of the window mullions, and the absence of piers.

This formal evolution of Williams' work was dependent on contemporary architectural conditions and his personal background. Although little is known about W.F. Williams' education (He had a Diploma in Architecture from Melbourne University), it is reasonable to assume that it included a strong grounding in classical design. His subsequent employment with Cecil McDougall²⁰ and Ashley and Newman²¹ and his early public buildings all suggest that his personal design philosophy was built on a classical ideology. Furthermore, his employment with Goodhue Associates and with Cecil McDougall, as well as the current architectural trends, were consistent with Williams adopting a simplified classical style.

Thus, he was linked to the evolutionary approach to Modernism expressed by many American (and Canadian) architects in the late 1920s and the 1930s. These architects aspired to a Modernism based on a gradual simplification of traditional forms, as opposed to a Modernism based on a radical philosophical break from tradition, as preached by the European Modernists.

Yet, by 1930, architects in Canada were inevitably being exposed to modern architecture through the architectural press and through travel on this continent and in Europe.²² Many, like Williams, chose to add modern elements and forms to their vocabulary of classical architecture. This trend did not require an ideological shift of approach, as modern architectural ideas were adopted solely on a formal level. The ideological underpinnings would not be fully introduced into Canadian architecture until the next generation of architects, who were educated in a modern manner.

While Williams and other architects in the pre-Second World War period were neither coherent or dogmatic in their use of modern architecture, they played an important role in the overall development of Modernism in Canada. Their hesitantly modern buildings contributed to a gradual change in the sensibilities of Canadians toward architectural expression, thereby paving the way for true Modernism in the post-war period. The 1939 Canadian Pavilion is emblematic of this evolution.

20 The three principal public buildings designed while Williams was working in McDougall's office were the Anglo-American Trust Co. building (1932) at the corner of Notre Dame and St-François Xavier streets, the Jewish General Hospital (1932), and the administration building for the Protestant Board of School Commissioners [now Peterson Hall, McGill University] (1933), all in Montréal.

21 Williams worked for Ashley and Newman in London, England, for a year-and-a-half, around 1930. In general, the firm's buildings were classically inspired; the Masonic Peace Memorial near Covent Garden (1927-1933) is their best-known work.

22 Williams toured Europe in 1930 and perhaps again later. Interview with D.P. Fairbanks, 23 March 1993. (Fairbanks worked for the firm with Ilsa Williams, W.F. Williams' wife, who continued the practice after her husband died of a brain hemorrhage.)

Elspeth Cowell, an architectural historian, is currently cataloguing prints and drawings for the Centre Canadien d'Architecture/Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montréal.