

## ERIC ROSS ARTHUR: AN INTRODUCTION

> HAROLD KALMAN AND  
RHODRI WINDSOR LISCOMBE,  
GUEST EDITORS

In our separate researches into the history of Canadian architecture, we have frequently encountered the architectural educator, editor, historian, and practitioner extraordinaire, Eric Ross Arthur. He taught in the School of Architecture at the University of Toronto between 1924 and 1962, edited the influential *Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada* between 1936 and 1966, wrote several well-read books, effectively advocated for conservation, and maintained a small but distinguished architectural practice. Although many aspects of Arthur's work may be familiar to architectural historians, his overall achievements and legacy have scarcely been investigated.

The course of Arthur's career followed a number of turns. His early work reflected his education at the University of Liverpool's celebrated School of Architecture, as well as his training at the side of two distinguished classical stylists, Sir Charles Reilly and Sir Edwin Lutyens. Upon his arrival in Toronto, Arthur investigated and restored historic buildings, while teaching the design principles of the *École des Beaux-Arts*. Within a dozen years he abruptly changed direction. He enthusiastically embraced the theory and practice of the Modern Movement, inviting a veritable who's who of modern architects to lecture to his students. Ever the effective communicator, Arthur used a variety of media to promote modernist design in Canada and to link the Canadian design professions with the international discourse. He kept up with current trends in architecture and design to the end, spreading them in his writings until his death in 1982.

One of the particular advantages of Canadian scholarship in architecture and the built environment is its tradition of cooperative inquiry and collaborative dissemination. This special issue of the *Journal of the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada* is a case in point. Several scholars examine the ideas and the production of Eric Arthur from a variety of viewpoints, albeit with lacunae, overlaps, and minor contradictions. Stephen Otto discusses Arthur's use of photography in the documentation of historic buildings. Rhodri Windsor Liscombe observes the impact of the First World War on the culture and conditions of Arthur's practice. Harold Kalman looks at Arthur's turn to modernism around

the year 1936 and shows its broad impact. Michelangelo Sabatino relates aspects of Arthur's architecture to traditions of small, vernacular building. Angela Carr writes about the spread of Arthur's legacy by his educating two generations of students, and separately she provides an annotated list of a selection of Arthur's extensive writings. Collectively the contributions provide a clear indication of the richness of Arthur's accomplishments and pave a path for ongoing discussion and analysis.

We may note that this issue of the *JSSAC* may be the last to appear in print. As the issue goes to press, ongoing discussions are determining whether the *Journal* will migrate solely to an on-line platform. It is perhaps fitting that this debate should occur in the context of Eric Arthur, since the master was so adept at exploiting the range of media that were available to him.



FIG. 1. ERIC ARTHUR AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO, 1969. | PHOTOGRAPH BY BORIS SPREMO, TORONTO STAR PHOTO ARCHIVE, BALDWIN COLLECTION, TORONTO REFERENCE LIBRARY, TSPA\_0029754F.