

Peter Richardson and Douglas Richardson, photographs by John de Visser, *Canadian Churches: An Architectural History*. Buffalo, NY, Richmond Hill, ON, Firefly Books, 2007, 438 pp., 400 colour illust., \$85 Cdn., ISBN-13: 978-1554072392

Malcolm Thurlby

Volume 34, numéro 1, 2009

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1069506ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1069506ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

UAAC-AAUC (University Art Association of Canada | Association d'art des universités du Canada)

ISSN

0315-9906 (imprimé)

1918-4778 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce compte rendu

Thurlby, M. (2009). Compte rendu de [Peter Richardson and Douglas Richardson, photographs by John de Visser, *Canadian Churches: An Architectural History*. Buffalo, NY, Richmond Hill, ON, Firefly Books, 2007, 438 pp., 400 colour illust., \$85 Cdn., ISBN-13: 978-1554072392]. *RACAR : Revue d'art canadienne / Canadian Art Review*, 34(1), 102–104.
<https://doi.org/10.7202/1069506ar>

Iversen notes that the photograph “endowed with a punctum has a ‘blind field’” (120); this blind field exposes the viewer as an object, rather than subject, of the gaze. Thus for Iversen “the real value of *Camera Lucida* lies not in its excavating ‘the essential nature of photography,’” but rather in its success at conveying to a large audience “a particular idea of our fascination with the image that was formulated by Lacan in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*,” and elaborating a theory of the visual beyond pleasure (132–33).

Iversen’s lucid prose and cogent interpretations help to make *Beyond Pleasure*, a deeply theoretical text, surprisingly accessible. Nonetheless, the book will likely appeal most to readers familiar with psychoanalysis and already engaged with one or more of the titular theorists. Indeed, Iversen’s treatment of Lacan and Lacanian concepts is particularly illuminating, especially when one considers the relative opacity of Lacan’s own writings. Although Iversen surveys a vast array of material, *Beyond Pleasure* seems most at home amongst a rather specific group of theoretical writings on trauma, death, and the real—texts by *October* associates Rosalind Krauss, Hal Foster, and Mignon Nixon; Slavoj Žižek and his interlocutors; and Parveen Adams and Briony Fer, amongst others.

Some readers might ask for a more thorough treatment of Melanie Klein, for example her theory of the paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions. Iversen characterizes not only the former but also the latter in terms of retributory fears (109), which could obscure somewhat the essential transformation of the persecutory fears of the paranoid-schizoid position into the empathetic guilt and concern for the other of the depressive position. Nonetheless, *Beyond Pleasure* constitutes a *tour-de-force* of original research, visual analysis, and theory that will engross anyone interested in aesthetics beyond pleasure. My one quibble would be with the index, which is not as deep, broad, or accurate as merited by such a sophisticated text. In section five of “Beyond the Pleasure Principle,” Freud mentions in passing that it would be difficult to convince an adult to reread a text they had recently finished. I can think of no more appropriate recommendation of Margaret Iversen’s book than to disagree with Freud here, demurring that in the case of *Beyond Pleasure* one can finish the book and want nothing more than to immediately begin rereading it.

KATHRYN SIMPSON
Concordia University

Peter Richardson and Douglas Richardson, photographs by John de Visser, *Canadian Churches: An Architectural History*. Buffalo, NY, Richmond Hill, ON, Firefly Books, 2007, 438 pp., 400 colour illust., \$85 Cdn., ISBN-13: 978-1554072392.

The publisher announces that this book is “the first definitive guide to more than 250 of the most beautiful and significant churches across the country.” Definitive or not, there can be little doubt that this lavishly produced volume with its fine colour photographs will serve to raise interest in Canada’s rich and diverse, yet little-explored, heritage of religious architecture. The Richardsons tell us that “*Canadian Churches* is for anyone interested in architecture and how buildings respond to society’s needs.” They hope “to make the confusing variety of churches understandable to persons with little knowledge of churches or theology” (26). To cover all denominations of all dates across the entire country must have been a daunting task. They “made deliberate efforts to include famous churches alongside less well-known buildings” (15). “The challenge was always to limit the number of churches. Lists grew and shrank, grew and shrank again and eventually stabilized. Decisions were rethought. Yet many churches we hoped to include had to be left out because of lack of space, not lack of enthusiasm” (15). While there is always likely to be debate about the inclusion of certain buildings and the exclusion of others, the overall bal-

ance—temporally, geographically, and by denomination—is a satisfactory one.

The division of the book is straightforward. There is an introduction entitled “Churches,” in which the sections on Style and Design are succinct and informative; the latter provides a particularly useful list of questions that aid our interpretation of a church and the way it functioned. There follows Atlantic Canada, Quebec, Ontario, and the West and North, plus “Changes,” an overview of church buildings from the third-century house-church at Dura Europos, Syria, to the present day. Within the chapters material is organized chronologically, thematically, or geographically. Throughout the book extended captions to the illustrations provide much useful information.

Atlantic Canada opens in the seventeenth century; the historical context is clearly presented and there is a well-conceived overview down to the present. The chapter on “British and American Colonial Traditions” opens with St. Paul’s, Halifax, 1750, the earliest surviving Anglican church in Canada. There is an excellent historical contextualization, an exemplary discussion of the English and American design sources, and a clear account of the subsequent additions to the original fabric. For other churches the reader is likewise informed of the essential history and a clear interpretation of the building and its use. Particular fine are the entries on St. George’s Round Church,

Halifax, 1800–01, Barrington Meeting House, 1765, and Grand Pre, Covenanters' Church, 1804–11.

In Labrador we are taken to the little-known Moravian Brethren at Nain. Sadly, St. James the Apostle Anglican church at Battle Harbour, 1852–57, is not included, but for that we now have Shane O'Dea and Peter Coffman, "William Grey: 'Missionary' of Gothic in Newfoundland," *Journal of the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada* 32, no. 1 (2007), 39–48.

Of the early churches in New Brunswick, Greenock Church, St. Andrews, 1824, and the contemporary "Old Stone Church" in Saint John take pride of place. The discussion of John Medley, Bishop of Fredericton, 1845–92, and his role in the construction of Christ Church Cathedral, Fredericton, 1845–53, and St. Anne's, Fredericton, 1846–47, is fundamental. We learn of the architect Frank Wills's careful reference to original Gothic exemplars as advocated by the Cambridge Camden (later Ecclesiological) Society, as well as the impact of "Ecclesiology" on the stained glass, floor tiles, furnishings, vessels, and vestments in Anglican churches. For St. Anne's we are given an especially interesting reference to St. Bede's, Masborough, near Rotherham, 1841–42, Matthew E. Hadfield architect, which was illustrated in Augustus Welby Pugin's influential book *The Present State of Ecclesiastical Architecture in England* (London, 1843).

In Newfoundland, the inclusion of the little-known Roman Catholic Church of the Most Holy Trinity, Trinity, 1833, is most welcome. The Basilica Cathedral of St. John the Baptist, St. John's, 1841–55, is seen as "freely treated Romanesque Revival" (81), with the design drawn "mainly on early Christian and Romanesque churches in Italy and Germany" (82); Sant'Ambrogio, Milan, is specifically cited with reference to Thomas Hope's *Historical Essays on Architecture* (1835). However, the Basilica is Romanesque only in so far as it uses round-headed arches. The Richardsons point out that the architect, Ole Jørgen Schmidt (1793–1848), was "a versatile Danish Lutheran and architect to the Danish government in Altona on the Elbe." Now a suburb of Hamburg, Altona was then the second-largest city in Denmark and traded actively with Newfoundland (81). Schmidt knew the architecture of Rome and Berlin, and the contemporary *Rundbogenstil* (round-arched style). Here we should refer to Heinrich Hübsch and his 1828 book entitled *In welchem Style wollen wir bauen?* (In what style should we build?). His answer was the *Rundbogenstil*. His unexecuted project for the Church of St. Stephen in Pforzheim, ca. 1827–28, has a triple entrance and windows above twin towers close to the Basilica; this was exhibited in the first *Rundbogenstil* exhibition in Munich in 1829 (Kathleen Curran, *The Romanesque Revival: Religion, Politics, and Transnational Exchange* [University Park, PA, 2003], 10, fig. 1). Details like emphasized quoins, alternating symmetrical ashlar for window jambs, and the arch mouldings

of the façade windows all belong to a classical Roman tradition rather than the Romanesque. And, with Rome in mind, is it possible that Schmidt's use of the colossal order in the transepts and first bay of the nave of the Basilica was inspired by the nave of St. John in Lateran, Rome? No such stylistic ambiguities are evident in the thoroughly English Gothic of the Anglican Cathedral in St. John's, 1847–1905, for which Peter Coffman, "St. John's Anglican Cathedral and the Beginnings of Ecclesiological Gothic in Newfoundland," *Journal of the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada* 31, no. 1 (2006), 3–22, should be added to the references.

The "Rational Gothic" of Edward Medley's New Brunswick churches is represented by St. Mary the Virgin, New Maryland, 1863–64, and Christ Church, St. Stephens, 1863–64, the latter complete with Clayton and Bell stained glass. "Cradle of the Waves" introduces the diverse churches of Prince Edward Island, including William Critchlow Harris's magnificent St. Mary's, Indian River, 1900–02. Even greater diversity is experienced in the churches of Québec, not least in the edifices of the 1950s and 60s. As ever, the Richardsons' presentation is clear and concise. "L'ancien régime" introduces the churches of Neuville and Île d'Orléans, while "Anglicanism triumphant" considers the English background to the Anglican cathedral in Québec City. In the same city, Saint-Jean Baptiste, 1881–84, is "closely identified" with La Trinité, Paris. It is true that there are similarities but the colossal columns of the interior surely belong to the tradition established in the province in the Montréal churches of Notre-Dame, 1823–29, and St. Patrick, 1843–47. For the choice of the Gothic style for Notre-Dame, Montréal, we should add Alan Gowans, "Sainte-Croix d'Orléans: A Major Monument Too Long Neglected," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, ser. 6, no. 112 (1988), 69–76. In St. Patrick's, Montréal, the Richardsons see "mixed Irish and French architectural features, some Romanesque and some Gothic" (150). This is difficult to comprehend; instead the interior elevation seems to recall Santa Maria sopra Minerva in Rome. Sainte-Brigide de Kildare, Montréal, 1877–80, is characterized as Romanesque, "the great Irish national style" (154). Yet the church looks nothing like the Hiberno-Romanesque that was so popular in Ireland at that time.

For Ontario we find many familiar buildings plus some hidden gems like Edmund Burke's Baptist Chapel at Walkerton, 1883/89, Madill Wesleyan Methodist Church near Huntsville, 1872–73, and St. Paul's Presbyterian in Winchester by G.F. Stalker of Ottawa, 1895. St. George's Anglican Cathedral in Kingston is included but not its Roman Catholic rival in the city—see "Joseph Connolly in the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Kingston, Ontario," *Journal of the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada* 30 (2005), 25–38. Discussion of Ralph Adams Cram's St. Mary's, Walkerton, 1903–04, should be sup-

plemented by Cameron Macdonell, “‘If you want to, you can cure me.’ Duplicity and the Edwardian Tradition,” *Journal of the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada* 31, (2006), 23–36. On matters of style some questions remain unresolved such as the choice of Romanesque for St. Thomas at Shanty Bay, 1838–41, or for Frank Darling’s High Anglican Church of St. Mary Magdalen, Toronto, 1888. “Byzantium in Ontario” presents St. Anne’s, Toronto, 1907–08, with its famous Group of Seven paintings, in the context of the anti-elitist views of the rector, Canon Lawrence Skey. For this we should also recommend Peter Coffman, “St. Anne’s Anglican Church and its Patron,” *Journal for the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada* 30, no. 1 (2005), 17–26. For an earlier expression of Low, as opposed to High Anglican, church design, there is Candace Iron, “Why such an odd plan? Milton Earl Beebe’s St. Thomas Anglican Church, St. Catharines, Ontario,” *Journal of the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada* 31, (2006), 11–22. My only quibble with specific comparisons concerns Arthur Holmes’s façade of Holy Name, Toronto, 1915, in relation to James Gibbs’s St. Mary-le-Strand, London; the façade of Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome, seems to be a better candidate.

“Fur Post to Pacific Rim” takes us from Manitoba to British Columbia with such treasures as Old St. James, Winnipeg, 1853; St. Nicholas, Lumsden Rural Municipality, Saskatchewan, 1900; and St. Stephen’s, Saanich, British Columbia, 1862. Holy Cross, Skookumchuck, British Columbia, 1895–1906, is sadly only illustrated with a drawing of the façade—see <http://www3.telus.net/public/a3a01408/HC.html>, which includes a restoration appeal. The Richardsons are keenly aware of problems associated with saving our church heritage, as in the discussion of Vancouver Anglican Cathedral and St. Stephen’s-in-the-Fields, Toronto. Reference should also be made to Lucie K. Morisset, Luc Noppen, and Thomas Coomans, *Quel avenir pour quelles églises: What future for which churches* (Montreal, 2006).

In “Changes” one wonders about some specific choices like Bosra Cathedral, 488–512, or the early medieval Gallarus Oratory in Ireland. What is their relevance for Canadian churches? There is an illustration of the interior of St. Peter’s,

Rome, and yet nothing of the Saint Jacques (Mary Queen of the World), Montreal, which is a copy of St. Peter’s. Moreover we miss precise medieval references that were so important for the Gothic Revival of Augustus Welby Pugin (1812–52) and the Ecclesiologists.

“Notes and Sources” refers mainly to books plus the *Journal of Canadian Art History* and the *Journal of the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada* but rarely with reference to specific articles and websites. Endnotes are not designated with traditional superscript numbers, yet pages 399 to 409 provide references to pages and give select sources.

There is a glossary of architectural terms and a four-page bibliography. References go back to Early Christian and Byzantine. For medieval there is nothing specifically on Gothic; for the nineteenth century Pugin’s *True Principles* and *Apology* are included but not *Contrasts*, nor Michael Port’s *Six Hundred New Churches: The Church Building Commission 1818–1865*, revised edition (Reading, 2006).

It would have been helpful to include provincial lists of significant churches not mentioned in the text along with maps. With this in mind, reference may be made to some websites: for Quebec see: <http://www.lieuxdeculte.qc.ca/>; on Manitoba heritage buildings see: <http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/hrb/prov/index.html> and <http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/hrb/mun/index.html>; and for Saskatchewan see: <http://www.sasksettlement.com/display.php?cat=Religion&subcat=Churches%20and%20Congregations> and <http://www.cyr.gov.sk.ca/heritage-property-search>.

For Lamont County, Alberta, there is a self-guided driving tour of churches, which may be downloaded from <http://www.countylamont.ab.ca/>.

In spite of these reservations, *Canadian Churches* is essential for anyone interested in ecclesiastical architecture in Canada. It is a pity that the publisher did not allow the authors the freedom to include more references and a more complete bibliography, which would have been so useful for teachers and for stimulating research in church architecture in Canada.

MALCOLM THURLBY
York University