Building barriers: images of women in Canada's architectural press, 1924-73 (Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada)


Abstract (Summary)

(f.36) See [Freda G. James], "How I Approach the Use of Colour," RAIC Journal vol. 24, no. 8 (August 1947), pp. 280-81; a brief biographical sketch of James is offered in the same issue, p. 285. For examples of James' design work, see "North York Public Library," RAIC Journal vol. 36, no. 12 (December 1959), pp. 412-17; and "The Imperial Oil Building," RAIC Journal vol. 34, no. 7 (July 1957), pp. 243-55. Her work also appeared in Canadian Homes and Gardens vol. 25, no. 5 (May 1948), pp. 32-33, 64; and Saturday Night, no. 51 (February 29, 1936), p. 9.


Full Text (10794 words)

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Ebba Nilsson always wanted to be an architect.(f.2) Growing up in Waterville, Quebec, she watched with interest as her father David Nilsson, a Swedish immigrant, worked as a carpenter on the town's Congregational Church, constructed cottages in nearby North Hatley, and built a number of barns in the Eastern Townships region. Upon graduation from the Waterville Model School, Ebba went off to Philadelphia to study architecture for three years, working as a mother's helper and tutoring young children to support her studies. When Ebba returned to Waterville in 1932, however, she began a long career in teaching, rather than architecture. She was ten years too early; it was not until 1942 that a woman first registered in Quebec as a professional architect.(f.3)

We know little about the emergence of women architects in Canada, relative to women architects in the United States and Britain, or of the contributions of non-registered women to the profession of architecture.(f.4) Those pioneering women who first registered in various provincial associations are relatively well documented and major Canadian buildings designed by women have been duly noted. But we know next to nothing about the hundreds of women like Ebba Nilsson who presumably obtained a considerable amount of knowledge and expertise in architecture but never practised. Their names and stories are absent from the historical record because their contributions to architecture were made entirely from outside the boundaries of professional organizations; they studied, worked, wrote, and thought about Canadian architecture, as it were, from the periphery.

This article is part of a larger, interdisciplinary investigation which is an attempt to understand the historical and contemporary situations of women architects in Canada since 1920. Drawing from the research methods of both architectural history and sociology, this collaborative, feminist approach, we believe, will result in a fuller understanding of gender as a category of analysis in the study of both environments and professions, allowing us to uncover the roles of women in the construction of our built environment and to understand why these roles are mitigated by the exit of so many Canadian women architects each year. By this process, we also hope to contribute to the growing scholarship defining feminist analyses of all architecture, regardless of the gender of its designer.(f.5)

Within this framework, this article explores how the major professional magazine in Canada, the Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada (RAIC), represented women in visual images (photographs, advertisements, drawings) from 1924 to 1973.(f.6) On behalf of the male-dominated profession which it represented for more than five decades,
images published in this influential journal acted as non-verbal statements of how the profession in Canada perceived women
during a period which saw tumultuous changes in the way architecture was practised, the development of Modernism in Canadian architecture, and the slow acceptance in this country of women as professional architects. The limited aims here are to show how images published in the journal served to reinforce the exclusivity of the architectural profession in three distinct ways.(f.7) The journal, through its various representations of women, marginalized their contribution to the design process by focusing on their association with housing and interiors; advertisements in the journal identified women users with particular spaces and specific building components, emphasizing their regulation of building details, rather than its overall production; finally, the journal subtly projected an image of the Modern architect in Canada which was quintessentially masculine.

Women on the Margins

Had Ebba Nilsson been either British or American, she may have continued her interests in building into architectural practice, rather than teaching in a girls' school. Indeed, women entered the architectural profession in Canada much later than their counterparts in both these countries. Whereas Louise Blanchard Bethune registered as a member of American Institute of Architects in 1888 and Ethel Charles became an architect as early as 1898 in England, it was not until 1925 that Esther Marjorie Hill was accepted as a member of the Alberta Association of Architects.(f.8)

Despite this late entry into the profession per se, Canadian women made vital contributions to the field, albeit from peripheral positions as sculptors, decorators, illustrators, journalists, critics, and housing experts. Architectural historian Gwendolyn Wright noted in her essay on American women architects how women in "adjunct" roles to the architectural profession were the "best known and most accepted" of the pioneering women in that country. She also explained how most of these women acted as experts on the social aspects of planning and as critics of housing during the Progressive era and the Depression of the 1930s in particular.(f.9)

The timing of professional women's impact on architecture in Canada differed significantly from that in the United States. But the phenomenon of the creation of seemingly complementary roles for women on the sidelines of the profession is remarkably similar. Rather than acting immediately in the more respected role as project designer in architecture, many Canadian women contributed to architectural projects and appeared in the RAIC Journal in adjunct roles, as specialized consultants to men. This is parallel to the special places created by and for women in the health professions, among others. The development of specialized, female-dominated health professions, for example, such as physical and occupational therapy, dietetics, and earlier, nursing, were constructed as complementary to the more central practice of therapeutic medicine.(f.10)

And like medicine, too, the earliest women pioneers in architecture were channelled into one or two specialized areas in their already-established professions. In medicine, women were encouraged to enter pediatrics, gynaecology, obstetrics, and fields in preventive medicine. Similarly, in architecture, women's expertise was seen as pertaining almost exclusively to children's and women's needs. The earliest Canadian women architects were encouraged to become special experts in the architectural subfields of housing, interiors and, later, historic preservation. These aspects of architectural practice were and are considered less prestigious than the design of public and commercial buildings, which tend to be larger, more visible, and more frequently published than housing projects. With the creation of specific "ghettos" for women within the profession, the perceived threat that they would replace men was diminished. The ghettos ensured that women's work remained wholly dependent on the work of their male colleagues.(f.11)

The association of women's architectural work exclusively with residential design and interiors is a complex issue, developing in large part from Victorian theories of sexual difference which claimed that because of the smallness of their brains, women were better at arranging or finishing work started by men, rather than inventing themselves. "Her intellect is not for invention or creation, but for sweet ordering, arrangement, and decision," claimed John Ruskin.(f.12)

The sexual division of space into interior/female and exterior/male is found across cultures long before the nineteenth century. As many scholars have noted, these notions are still reinforced today, as young girls are often given doll houses with which to play, while boys play with toys which emphasize their control over other types of institutions, natural landscapes, and/or public spaces.(f.13) These gender differences in the perception of architectural space are also clearly expressed in the Canadian women's popular press; in descriptions of their homes written by men and women, for example, men tend to focus on structure and mechanical systems, whereas many women authors write about gardens, decoration, interior arrangements, materials, and finishes.(f.14)

Many of these notions were given credence in the vast literature published during the final decades of the nineteenth century for women by women, offering expert advice on the arrangement of furniture and the choice of colours in household decoration, and underlining the gendered division of interiors and exteriors. This period also saw a resurgence of middle-class domestic architecture. Known throughout the English-speaking world as the Queen Anne Revival, this architectural style featured steeply pitched roofs, painted woodwork, and romantic elements such as porches and turrets; its finely crafted interiors were closely associated with Victorian women's seclusion in the home.(f.15)

If there is one subject more than another in which woman's talent is required, it is domestic architecture," asserted an author in Saturday Night in 1911.(f.16) The public perception of the relatively poor design of houses, indeed, was
frequently cited as the major reason favouring the acceptance of women architects. Women's interest in architectural details, particularly those concerning household labour or storage, for example, were often described as far superior to those of most male architects.(f.17)

The architectural house-decorator does for the inside of a house exactly what the architect does for the outside," was a typical explanation in women's advice literature of the late nineteenth century.(f.18) As early as 1876, women were employed as professional, independent interior decorators in England, with close links to feminist political struggles.(f.19) These "lady-decorators," as they were called, often worked closely with architects, designing furniture and interior finishes for houses, schools and colleges, as well as contributing to the development of innovative apartment buildings for single women. Their work was often likened to other areas of concern for which women's authority was already established, such as fashion and hair design. "Furniture is a kind of dress, dress is a kind of furniture," claimed Mary Eliza Haweis in The Art of Decoration in 1881, "which both mirror the mind of their owner."(f.20)

Women reformers were also active in America at this time. In 1869, home economist Catharine Beecher published her now-famous house plan by which she suggested that a rational kitchen located in the centre of the house would professionalize women's status in the home.(f.21) In the early years of this century, the education of young girls in "domestic science" or "home economics" witnessed this same association of women's power with the planning and decoration of houses. A typical course included instruction on sewing, cooking and cleaning, but also a considerable amount of material on house planning, furniture arrangements and interior finishes.(f.22)

In Canada, the professionalization and feminization of interior decoration occurred later.(f.23) Career guidance literature published in Canada in 1920 asserts that "one or two firms are employing women as interior decorators with considerable success."(f.24) Four decades later, 40.3 percent of those classified as "interior decorators and window dressers" were women, compared to only 2.2 percent of architects.(f.25) Of the six Canadian art schools listed in 1920 for training in interiors, two were within established professional schools of architecture.(f.26) When Miss Juliana Dallaire of Moose Creek, Ontario, applied to McGill's School of Architecture in 1918, she indicated interest in studying "landscape gardening, perspective, inside decoration and work in white and ink." She was turned down, despite her "ladylike" interests.(f.27)

Interior decorating," one career counsellor began, "is a singularly appropriate career for women." The same author suggested that architecture held "a little prejudice amongst the male members of the profession against the invasion of their sphere by women."(f.28)

The RAIC Journal reflects this earlier development of the specialization of women in housing and interior design very clearly. In addition to the journal's focus on the residential work of women architects, its editorial policy also highlighted the work of women who were housing or interiors experts with or without professional credentials. Its biases were also evident by its omissions. There was no special mention in the journal, for example, of Esther Marjorie Hill's pioneering admission to the AAA in 1925.

Instead, the journal's editorial policy emphasized the association of women and the home. The first article written by a woman architectural graduate to appear in the RAIC Journal was on kitchens by Phyllis Willson Cook in December 1935. The article was transcribed from a radio broadcast sponsored by the Ontario Association of Architects.(f.29)

Following the literature written by home economists, Cook's advice asserted a rational, functional approach to kitchen design; she noted how the "scientific layout of its units" had resulted in a "smaller and more compact kitchen." Cook also advocated kitchens which were long and narrow.(f.30) The brief article was accompanied by Cook's graduation photo, presumably from the University of Toronto, from which she had graduated in 1935. It was the first photo of a woman graduate to appear in the journal; her architecture degree was noted under the image. Cook also held the distinction of being the first woman to win the annual student competition supported by the RAIC. Her winning scheme for "An Embassy in the Capital City of a Country in the Temperate Zone" had been published in March 1934.(f.31) Following graduation, she worked for two years in the Interior Decorating Department of Eaton's department store in Toronto; when she died at the age of 42 in 1954, she had designed seven houses.(f.32)

The RAIC Journal also noted women's growing role in housing reform without necessarily including their pictures. In January 1938, a notice appeared of Helen Spence's involvement in a "Report on Housing Conditions in Toronto." Renowned American housing reformer Catherine Bauer Wurster was the first woman guest lecturer at the annual meeting of the Ontario Association of Architects, noted by the journal in March 1943.(f.33) And as late as 1950, a photograph printed in the journal showed apron-clad women students learning to cook in a home economics room. Rather than highlight the roles of women in kitchen design, however, the illustration was one in a series intended to show the work of the architects of the Toronto high school in which it was set.(f.34)

Similarly, women's supposed aptitude for decoration and interiors is clearly mirrored in the journal. As early as 1935--nearly two decades before a building designed by a woman architect was featured--a photograph of the rather exotic interiors of a Toronto restaurant, Diana Sweets, appeared in the journal. A credit to interior decorator Minerva Elliot appeared under the names of the restaurant's architects, Marani, Lawson and Morris.(f.35) Freda G. James, a Toronto interior decorator, wrote a major article on the use of colour in the RAIC Journal and was noted several times as the interiors consultant on public and commercial buildings in the late 1950s.(f.36)
Advertisements in the journal also underlined women’s association with building interiors, both domestic and commercial in nature. For example, a typical ad for Glidden paint from 1957 (Fig. 1) featured a nearly full-page photo of the monumental Imperial Oil office building in Toronto designed by architects Mathers and Haldenby. The text below the photo boasts that Glidden paint was used for the "magnificent" and "important" Canadian building. A tiny photograph included with the text shows a team of four women; an accompanying caption explains that this "color studio" will "help architects to plan "effective interior color schemes." The not-so-subtle assumption of this and many other advertisements featuring women as interior consultants was that women’s aptitude in architecture involved only interiors, and that this kind of work was complementary, rather than fundamental, to the design process. “This service,” the text explained to its architect-readers, "is yours for the asking.”

Even in the 1970s, advertisements in the RAIC Journal continued to show interior designers as female, while clients and architects were exclusively male. The manufacturers of construction systems, such as the movable partitions for office buildings made by Canadian Gypsum Ltd. and promoted in the journal in 1971, emphasized the ease and flexibility of their product. The ad (Fig. 2) shows two men and a woman studying the plan of an office building. The woman, wearing a red dress and sunglasses, is an interior designer; she carries a book of material swatches under her left arm while she points to the plan with her right hand. The man seated to her left holds a pencil; another man slightly behind him bites his lip in concentration. The men are making the decisions. The Ultrawall system which she is suggesting to them is comprised of prefabricated, lightweight panels which fit a 5-foot module already established by the building architect. In addition to promoting the product, the advertisement also included the line, "It's a pleasure to design interiors," suggesting, like other advertisements in the professional press, the fanciful and entertaining nature of interiors, relative to the more serious, business-like character of architecture.

Over its nearly 50 years of publication, the journal nearly always pictured women designers as helpers, in roles which finished or embellished work initiated by men, rather than in positions emphasizing their roles as designers of entire buildings, despite the fact that women were responsible for building design throughout this period. In addition to their appearance as housing experts or as specialists in interiors, women were also noted in the journal as adept in sculpture, as collaborators with their architect-husbands and, later, as teachers, assistant editors and critics. Images of women as students appeared most often, however, foreshadowing the significant numbers of women graduates who would face the question of professional registration in the years following the final issue of the RAIC Journal.

Women as Users

While women appeared relatively infrequently in the RAIC Journal in adjunct roles as housing reformers or interior designers, they appeared continually in the magazine as users of space. This is most often the case with advertisements for building components, but is also true of photographs which highlight the work of male architects, such as the image of the home-economics room in the Toronto high school mentioned above.

Patterns which recur throughout the entire run of the magazine suggest (not surprisingly, in light of women's limited appearance as designers) that while the building itself was produced by men, women regulated the details, or the technology in the case of domestic architecture. For example, an extraordinary number of advertisements which appeared in the RAIC Journal depict women or girls in bathrooms and kitchens. As the spaces in the house most often perceived as related to cleanliness and health, bathrooms and kitchens have become sites associated with both resistance to disease and the provision of food. "As the setting for physical sustenance and hygienic care, the kitchen and bathroom—and the product worlds they frame—are crucial to intimate bodily experience," explains Ellen Lupton, "helping to form an individual's sense of cleanliness and filth, taste and distaste, pleasure and shame, as well as his or her expectations about gender and the conduct of domestic duties.”

Images in the journal, however, do not emphasize women's roles as medical experts or providers for their families; rather, advertisements for bathroom plumbing fixtures which appear in the Canadian architectural press show women at leisure, usually in the process of undressing. An advertisement from the Standard Sanitary Manufacturing Company which appeared in the first issue of the journal and included the company's best wishes for the magazine's inauguration, in fact, featured a woman dressed in lingerie, bending to test the temperature of her bath water. As she bows to touch the water, she gently lifts her slip to reveal her high-heeled pumps.

That same year, Fairfacts Fixtures (Fig. 3), an American manufacturer, ran an ad with a young girl disrobing in front of the bathroom sink. The girl's back is the main focus of the image, although she looks towards her image in the mirror. The details of her reflection are obscured.

This overt association of women's bodies with household technology has also been noted by Ellen Lupton, who has shown how advertisements for telephones, washing machines, irons, toasters and even typewriters which appeared in various types of magazines included messages of romantic love and sexual gratification to prospective buyers. By including in the images only parts of women bodies—arms, legs, backs, torsos—women in advertising appeared as mere extensions of the machines they were promoting, rather than designers or controllers of that technology.

Perhaps the best example of this notion in the RAIC Journal is the advertisement for Crane’s "Futura" bathroom which appeared in May 1969, in which a detached lower arm of a woman installs a bathroom in a dollhouse-like model of a house. A young woman, seemingly oblivious to her exposure to us, is shown undressing in the tiny bathroom. The use of the dollhouse in the image reinforces women designers’ relationship to space as less serious (and more playful) than
perhaps a real house or an actual architectural model may have been in this case. (f.42)

These relatively negative images of women in the professional architectural press are in direct contrast to those produced in the same period in women's popular magazines. Canadian Homes & Gardens, for example, published numerous advertisements for building materials showing couples hovering over architectural models. These images (Fig. 4), which include women's heads (or whole bodies) rather than focusing on isolated body parts, imply that both men and women make rational decisions regarding the design of their houses. The inclusion of the entire miniaturized model, in contrast to the enlarged sectional dollhouse, also cast women's role as more dominant and more serious than images in the architectural press. In addition, the products advertised in these images—roofing materials, landscape features, and even household insurance—are pointed to women's participation in exterior, as well as interior, design.

This theme of women's bodies functioning as extensions of household technology is also evident in advertisements in the RAIC Journal for heating, ventilating and air conditioning equipment; the assumption here is always that women "warm" the building. (f.43) "Miss Johnson, like all human beings, is warm-blooded," stated the advertisement for Lennox Direct Multizone System air conditioning which appeared in 1968 (Fig. 5). "Her thermostat is set at 98.6 degrees. She burns food. And generates heat. Lots of it," the text explained. "What a way to heat your building!" exclaimed the large, bold headline of the advertisement which showed a fashionable, bookish (she peeks out over her dark-rimmed glasses and holds a book) and, according to the text, unmarried woman, being coolly observed by two male colleagues (they are both removing their glasses presumably to get a better look).

Another persistent theme featuring women in the journal's advertising were images intended to sell locks and doors. The gender assumptions made by designers of advertisements for door hardware are more ambiguous than those concerning both plumbing and heating equipment; perhaps the persistent inclusion of women was intended to symbolize women's roles as "guardians" of the domestic threshold. Their juxtaposition with doors and door hardware could also be read as an explicit reference to women's purity and chastity; the thresholds depicted in the journal serve to contain women in spaces controlled by men.

The supposed danger in showing women "crossing" this domestic threshold into the public world of men is well represented by the image which appeared in January 1962 (Fig. 6). A woman sits at the centre of the scene, seated on a white stool like those typically found in architectural drafting rooms. She is surrounded by four interior doors, shown in various stages of closure; five male construction workers stand around her. Her relationship to the product is differentiated from theirs by her seated position and also by her clothing. She wears a fashionable suit, white hat, gloves, shoes, and pearls, while they wear the clothing and hardhats of construction workers. She holds a roll of drawings, presumably construction documents, and points to a door, seemingly advising two of the construction workers. The setting of the advertisement is ambiguous, although it seems to be a wood-frame house in the process of construction.

The point of the advertisement is clarified by the text. "Function" and "beauty" are united in Sargent's newest line of locks; like the interior designer (or architect?) who specifies them, the locks are fashionable. (f.44) In other words, the woman designer is valued for her innate sense of beauty and fashion, rather than for her intellect or capacity to reason.

Other building products shown in images including women imply soft and quiet qualities, like carpets, flooring, and acoustic tiles. In these advertisements, in particular, women are often shown as models calling attention to the products, similar to the roles played by women currently on television game shows. The assumption is, of course, that the beauty of the model will call attention to the beauty or effectiveness of the product. (f.45) These products, like those specified by interior decorators, are often finishes and veneers to buildings, rather than structural components of the architecture. They serve to soften or even to mute the unpredictable behaviour of users, perhaps like the women who "show" them. The women are usually dressed scantily and bear no obvious relationship to the use of the product. Men, at the same time, are shown fully dressed endorsing more essential, structural building parts, such as the ad for concrete blocks featured in April 1969 (Fig. 7).

Advertisements in the journal feature very few women at work; those shown are almost exclusively nurses or secretaries and these women are, not surprisingly, almost always shown with plumbing, locks, or the "muffling" materials: acoustical tiles, flooring, and carpets. The images of nurses usually referred to issues of safety and health; these sometimes, like the ad for Corbin locks shown in January 1968, included smoke detectors. (f.46) Because nurses and secretaries were understood (and depicted) as extremely busy people, these advertisements also often stressed the products' ease of operation. (f.47)

Finally, women were depicted throughout the journal quite explicitly as sex objects. Some advertisements, like that for Metalsmiths chairs published in April 1969, went so far as to offer sexual gratification to male users. The ad compared the chair's polished steel frame to a diamond engagement ring and suggested that the chair induced a woman walking by to sit on the man's lap and to touch his nose. Other images emphasized women's function as a scale object or measuring stick. This sexist image of women was particularly blatant during the late 1960s when Canadian architects (and the entire construction industry) reluctantly faced total conversion to the metric system of measurement. An article discussing the advantages and disadvantages of the metric system was illustrated by a photo of Britain's "Miss Metric," a bikini-clad woman whose bust, waist, and hip measurements were cited in both inches and millimetres (Fig. 8). The image not only suggested Miss Metric was an object to be measured and consumed, but also implied that her "perfect" proportions were a useful standard for the construction industry.
The Manly Architect

Perhaps the most influential image affecting women published in the RAIC Journal was the continuous suggestion that architects were powerful, virile and masculine. While women appeared as adjuncts to the profession and as regulators or extensions of technology, men were shown, at least until 1971, as completely controlling the design process. (f.48) In the magazine, they were the authoritative administrators, the designers of large-scale government, industrial, commercial and residential complexes, and the orchestrators of work done by others. While women were specialists, whose expertise was "for the asking," men were generalists, directing projects from the initial meeting with prospective clients, through design development and construction. (f.49)

Reinforcing this image of the architect as a secure and competent male is the frequency with which wives of male architects appeared in the journal. Many photographs of couples were shot at architectural conferences, many showing them enjoying social activities; more forceful, perhaps, was an image of a male architect at the site of an architectural project accompanied by his supportive, interested wife. (f.50)

Two significant articles appeared in the journal on the nature of the profession; both articles were written by women and provide evidence of the divergent views on women's roles within the profession. Catherine Chard's essay, "What is an Architect?" which appeared in 1942, accorded no place to women in Canadian architecture. (f.51) Largely a historical survey of the profession, Chard blamed nineteenth-century architects for allowing the field to degenerate to "a weak and sentimental aestheticism." In calling for a more collective design process, however, Chard may have assumed a more inclusive definition of the profession. (f.52)

Jennifer Joynes explored women's contributions more directly in her 1959 article entitled "Women in the Architectural Profession." (f.53) Her article was the first to present statistics on the shockingly minimal progress women had made in the profession in Canada by the late 1950s. Joynes blamed the centrality of marriage in society for the scarcity of women architects; she also attempted to dispel the myths that a woman could not undertake site supervision or that her talents should be directed exclusively towards domestic projects. The article concluded with Joynes' commentary on the various accomplishments of several Canadian women architects.

Joynes' assumption that the limiting factor for women's entrance into architecture was based on their personal attitudes shaped by family and social considerations is an interesting one. Her focus on the individual's failure to overcome psychological barriers minimized the constraints found within the profession, despite the fact that several references to these external barriers appeared throughout the run of the RAIC Journal. Two such references are particularly note-worthy, since they indicate that these problems were acknowledged by institutions within the profession: in 1941, the establishment of a diploma course in Interior Decoration at the University of Manitoba was justified as "recognizing the limited field in the profession of architecture open to women" (f.56); and in 1964, it was reported that one of the discussions at an upcoming Congress of the International Union of Architects would involve "the problems encountered by women architects in various countries." (f.57)

Despite Joynes' optimistic and limited interpretation of the barriers that women faced in becoming architects, her article was advanced insofar as it raised, for the first time in the RAIC Journal the conflicts faced by women between professional and family obligations. It was not until 1970 that these issues were mentioned again, this time in a notice for the Third International Conference of Women Engineers and Scientists, which announced that a main topic for discussion would be women's professional and family duties. (f.58)

The RAIC Journal did not ignore completely the work of Canadian women architects; the magazine was, however, extremely selective in which women architects' work it published and the type of project illustrated in the influential magazine. The women architects who received the fullest coverage by far were Mary Imrie and Jean Wallbridge, Architects, of Edmonton. (f.59) The RAIC Journal covered the extensive travels of these prolific women, who designed houses, schools and other public buildings between their trips to eastern and western Europe, the Middle East, South America and Asia.

Perhaps Imrie's position on the journal's editorial board from 1949 to 1960 led to the publication of at least two of the firm's projects. Despite the fact that they designed a variety of building types, the projects by the firm published in the journal were exclusively housing. (f.60) Imrie herself commented on the assumption made by clients that women architects might excel in domestic design. "People will get us to do their houses, be thrilled with them and go to larger male firms for their warehouses or office buildings." (f.61)

The journal's portrayal of Imrie and Wallbridge was of two fiercely independent women, who travelled the globe and "reported" on architectural and planning issues to the Canadian architectural community. They wrote five major articles for the journal in ten years on their observations of architecture and practice in other lands, from 1948 to 1958. (f.62) A
Although women's presence in the architectural profession in Canada has been increasing steadily since the 1920s, and in general, however, it seemed to be women's lack of "manly" qualities which barred them from full acceptance to the profession in Canada, rather than any inability, lack of experience, or lack of desire to become architects. Architectural historian Andrew Saint, in his book The Image of the Architect, does not mention women's involvement in the profession; for him, the small numbers of women who have dared to enter the profession have had negligible influence. He stresses, indeed, how the public conception of the architect as a gentleman was central to the profession during the interwar years. (f.79) The visual images published in the RAIC Journal imply similar biases in Canada.

Conclusion

Although women's presence in the architectural profession in Canada has been increasing steadily since the 1920s, and
dramatically since 1980 (see Table 1), the obstacles preventing women's total acceptance, at least until 1973, continued to thrive. The RAIC Journal is admittedly no absolute reflection of reality: it was, nonetheless, a major arena through which the architectural profession in Canada developed its self-image as the century progressed. This paper has focused on the visual images printed in issues of the journal; its own internal administration, however, is equally powerful evidence for the marginalization of women's roles within architectural journalism. The RAIC Journal hired its first woman assistant editor in 1962; many of the articles which highlighted women's contributions to architecture were found in a special section on "Allied Arts," edited by "sculptor, writer and art educator" Anita Aarons.(f.80)

Images in the RAIC Journal served as real barriers to women architects in Canada. These barriers were often unwritten and unspoken. Whereas the official policy and regulations of the RAIC as an organization may have seemed relatively open to women, for example, images in the journal show clearly the kind of systematic prejudices in the schools, the profession and the construction industry in Canada throughout the period.

Ebba Nilsson retired from teaching after 28 years. She died in 1988. Her photograph (and her unrealized architectural projects) were never published in the RAIC Journal.

Footnotes:

(f.1) This research is part of a larger interdisciplinary project based at the McGill Centre for Research on Women and funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. I am especially grateful to the other members of the research team, Tania Martin, Dahlya Smolash, Peta Tancred, and particularly Linda Cohen, whose identification and analysis of the images was central to this study. A version of this paper which will appear in French as "Les representations des femmes dans la revue de l'Institut Royal Architectural du Canada, 1924-73," in Recherches feministes, vol. 7, no. 2, deals with additional issues specific to Quebec. The staffs and committees of the Ordre des Architectes du Quebec (OAQ), the Ontario Association of Architects (OAA), the Architectural Institute of British Columbia (AIBC), and the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada (RAIC) offered us generous assistance. I would also like to acknowledge the previous research of Mary Clark, Robert Hill and Blanche Lemco van Ginkel, the assistance of David Theodore and the insights of Peter Gossage.

(f.2) These details of Ebba Nilsson's life are drawn from Histoire de Waterville/The History of Waterville (Waterville: The Townships Sun, c. 1976), p. 50. I am grateful to Linda Ouellet of the Corporation Municipale de la Ville de Waterville for additional information on Ebba Nilsson.

(f.3) Quebec's first woman architect was Pauline Roy Rouillard, recorded in the registrar's ledger at the OAQ; see Katia Tremblay, "Accession des femmes a l'enseignement superieure et origines d'une pratique architecturale feminine," Les Batissesuses de la Cite (Montreal: ACFAS, 1993) and her Master's thesis, "Les origines d'une pratique architecturale feminine au Quebec: Henriette Barrot Che@nevert et Pauline Roy Rouillard, deux pionniere," Universite Laval 1993. Blanche Lemco van Ginkel has speculated that the relatively late acceptance of women architects in Quebec (and earlier acceptance in the west) is directly related to the province's later enfranchisement of women. See Blanche Lemco van Ginkel, "Slowly and Surely (But Somewhat Painfully) More or Less the History of Women in Architecture in Canada," Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada Bulletin vol. 17, no. 1 (March 1992), pp. 10-11.


(f.6) The RAIC was founded in 1907; earlier provincial associations include Ontario (1889) and Quebec (1890). The journal was launched in January 1924 as the major publication of the RAIC. Its title changed to Architecture Canada in July 1966. The final issue published was in July 1973. The journal is hereafter referred to as the RAIC Journal.

(f.8) On Hill's career, see van Ginkel, The Canadian Architect vol. 16, and Contreras et al., pp. 18-20. Although Hill was the first registered woman architect in Canada, there is evidence that women may have designed major buildings here as early as the 1840s. Robert Hill has noted that a Sarah Turton Glegg signed as architect on a sheet of drawings for a town hall and market in Kingston and a Miss Mary McDonald is listed as architect in the Nova Scotia Directory of 1902. Personal letter from Robert Hill, dated June 11, 1993. On the career of Ethel Charles, see Lynne Walker, "Women and Architecture," in A View from the Interior: Feminism, Women and Design, Judy Attridge and Pat Kirkham, eds. (London: The Women's Press, 1989), pp. 99-100. A discussion of the acceptance of women to the Royal Institute of British Architects was published in "The Admission of Lady Associates," Journal of the Royal Institute of British Architects vol. 6, no. 3 (December 10, 1898), pp. 77-78, and no. 9 (March 11, 1899), pp. 278-81. On Bethune, see Madeleine Stern, "America's First Woman Architect," Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians vol. 18, no. 2 (May 1959), p. 66.

(f.9) Wright, pp. 284, 296.


(f.11) The competitive nature of the field in Canada is noted in "Opportunities For Young Architects Are Plentiful But Best Are Found In Our Smaller, Growing Cities," The Financial Post April 19, 1949, p. 18. This was frequently cited as a reason to refuse admission to women; see Peter Collins, Notes on the Centenary of the Faculty of Engineering of McGill University: Its Origin and Growth (n.p.: n.p., n.d.), p. 12; copy of this pamphlet is in the Peter Collins Collection, Canadian Architecture Collection, McGill University.


(f.14) For examples of this, see "'We Knew What We Wanted'," Canadian Homes and Gardens vol. 26, no. 12 (December 1949), pp. 32-33, 66; and Mary Jukes, "Renovation Turned That into This," Canadian Homes and Gardens vol. 23, no. 12 (December 1946), pp. 44-47, 60.


(f.18) L.M.H., Year-book of Women's Work, 1875, p. 84.

(f.19) Rhoda and Agnes Garrett were the first professional women decorators in England; they were cousin and sister to two of the most visible feminists in the women's movement, political reformer Millicent Garrett Fawcett and Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, the first woman physician in England. Their ideas were published in Suggestions for House Decoration (London: Macmillan, 1876). On the feminization of interior decoration in England, see Judith Neiswander, "Liberalism, Nationalism and the Evolution of Middle-class Values: The Literature on Interior Decoration in England, 1875-1914," Diss. University of London, 1988.


(f.21) Catharine Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe, The American Woman's Home (New York: Ford, 1869); Beecher's house plan is the focus of many feminist analyses of American domestic architecture. One of the earliest was Hayden, pp.
55-63.


(f.23) Interior Designers of Ontario was established in 1933; in Quebec, the Societe des designers d'interieur du Quebec was founded two years later. See Directory of Associations in Canada (1993-1994).


(f.26) Massey, p. 89. According to this literature, courses were offered at both McGill and University of Toronto. The 5-year McGill course was taught by Ramsay Traquair at $147 a year. This reference is baffling, however, as the School of Architecture at McGill did not accept a woman student until 1939. Blanche Lemco van Ginkel has suggested that women were accepted to McGill because of the dearth of students in the 1930s; van Ginkel, SSAC Bulletin, no. 8, and personal letter from Blanche Lemco van Ginkel, July 9, 1993.

(f.27) Dallaire's letter is reprinted in Collins, p. 13.


(f.31) See "Award in RAIC Student Competitions," RAIC Journal vol. 11, no. 3 (March 1934), p. 39. A photo of a female student's work, Ethelyn Wallace, was published in March 1930. Also, the OAA prize had been awarded to a woman student, Beatrice Centner, in June 1930.

(f.32) Phyllis Cook Carlisle was included in the exhibition, "For the Record: Ontario Women Graduates in Architecture, 1920-1960," which celebrated the 100th anniversary of the enrolment of women at the University of Toronto. The biographical data cited here is drawn from the exhibition material.


(f.36) See Freda G. James, "How I Approach the Use of Colour," RAIC Journal vol. 24, no. 8 (August 1947), pp. 280-81; a brief biographical sketch of James is offered in the same issue, p. 285. For examples of James' design work, see "North York Public Library," RAIC Journal vol. 36, no. 12 (December 1959), pp. 412-17; and "The Imperial Oil Building," RAIC Journal vol. 34, no. 7 (July 1957), pp. 243-55. Her work also appeared in Canadian Homes and Gardens vol. 25, no. 5 (May 1948), pp. 32-33, 64; and Saturday Night, no. 51 (February 29, 1936), p. 9.

(f.37) This "pleasure" women supposedly derive from the design of interiors is also evident in the women's popular press. See, for example, the advertisement for paint which states "Decorating Is A New Thrill," Canadian Homes and Gardens vol. 27, no. 5 (May 1950), p. 53.

(f.38) For illustrations of buildings designed by Canadian women architects included in secondary sources, see Contreras et al., Dominey, and van Ginkel.

(f.39) Mary Clark's preliminary study of female students shows that the number of women graduates increased from 2.9 percent during the 1960s, to 12.2 percent and 25.1 percent during the 1970s and 1980s respectively. Mary Clark, "Women Graduates in Architecture from Canadian Universities: A Preliminary Overview," prepared in June 1988.


I am grateful to Linda Cohen for this insight.

Advertisements for door hardware featured commercial settings as well. See the ad for shopping centre doors in vol. 44, no. 1 (January 1967), pp. 6-7, or for the corporate boardroom, vol. 45, no. 2 (February 1968), pp. 26-27.

See the advertisement for Acousti-shell ceilings, for example, in vol. 41, no. 7 (July 1964), pp. 82-83; or the ad featuring twins for Pli-tone paint in vol. 42, no. 4 (April 1965), p. 34; or the woman on a stair surrounded by a lead barrier, vol. 44, no. 12 (December 1967), p. 13. Carpet ads are particularly common; see the image showing a woman descending a stair covered in wool carpet, vol. 45, no. 3 (March 1968), p. 68; the ad for Ozite carpets, vol. 45, no. 5 (May 1968), p. 29; and the ad for Armstrong carpets, vol. 45, no. 5 (May 1968), p. 24.

Another ad for smoke detectors featuring a nurse appeared in vol. 45, no. 6 (June 1968), p. 34.


The first instance of a woman shown in collaboration with men appeared in the advertisement for Canadian Gypsum Company Ltd., shown in Fig. 2.


Photograph of Douglas Johnson, president of the OAA, and his wife, both wearing hardhats, in front of Toronto City Hall, RAIC Journal vol. 42, no. 4 (Apr. 1965), p. 15.


"What is an Architect?" RAIC Journal vol. 19, no. 2 (February 1942), pp. 30-33.

Jennifer R. Joynes, "Women in the Architectural Profession," RAIC Journal vol. 36, no. 9 (September 1959), pp. 320-21. The article first appeared in Habitat vol. 11, no. 4 (July-August 1959), pp. 2-6, accompanied by eight illustrations of projects by Canadian women architects. Joynes was Assistant to the National Director of the Community Planning Association of Canada; she was not an architect.

These statistics result from a detailed search conducted by Dahlya Smolash of the records in the associations; trends in women's membership in Canadian architectural associations is the subject of ongoing research.

Joynes, p. 321.


On Wallbridge and Imrie Architects, see Monica Contreras, Luigi Ferrara, and Daniel Karpinski, "Breaking In: Four Early Female Architects," The Canadian Architect vol. 38, no. 11 (November 1993), pp. 2-23, and Erna Dominey, "Wallbridge and Imrie: The Architectural Practice of Two Edmonton Women, 1950-1979," Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada Bulletin vol. 17, no. 1 (March 1992), pp. 12-18. Records of the firm are held by both the Provincial Museum & Archives of Alberta, Edmonton, and the City of Edmonton, Parks and Recreation. Mary Imrie was included in the exhibiton, "For the Record." Two of Wallbridge and Imrie's projects were illustrated in Joynes' article in Habitat; see note 53.


Contreas et al. note that "much speculation was given to their free lifestyle." See Contreas et al., p. 23. Six Acres was illustrated in Joynes' article in Habitat (see note 53) and in RAIC Journal vol. 36, no. 2 (February 1959), p. 41; the notice of the firm's move was given in RAIC Journal vol. 35, no. 5 (May 1958), p. 196.

As of 1992, 14 women had been elected fellows of the RAIC.

Van Ginkel was also one of the first women (with Siasa Nowicki) appointed to teach architecture at the University of Pennsylvania in 1951 and was the first Canadian woman to receive the ACSA Distinguished Professor award in 1989 (personal letter from Blanche Lemco van Ginkel, July 9, 1993). On the representation of faculty women in schools of architecture in North America, see Sherry Ahrentzen and Linda N. Groat, "Rethinking Architectural Education: Patriarchal Conventions and Alternative Visions From the Perspectives of Women Faculty," The Journal of Architectural and Planning Research vol. 9, no. 2 (Summer 1992), pp. 95-111; the ACSA's Status of Faculty Women in Architecture Schools: Survey Results and Recommendations (Washington: ACSA Press, 1990); H. Landecker, "Why Aren't More Women Teaching Architecture?" Architecture vol. 80, no. 10 (October 1991), pp. 23-25. Dana Cuff comments on the absence of women teaching design in her Architecture: The Story of Practice (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), p. 121.

See the publication of McGill student work which includes work by Blanche Lemco and Catherine Chard, one of McGill's first women students, RAIC Journal vol. 19, no. 2 (February 1942), p. 26. See note 51.


The question of whether marriage to another architect eased women's way into the profession was broached by Kathleen Rex, "Woman Architects vs the Hard Hats," The Globe and Mail, August 9, 1973, Sec. W, p. 1. Partnership with a man was actually recommended for women in British career guidance literature. See Robson, p. 3.


O'Connor was elected in 1976 and Cluff became a fellow in 1982.


In 1941 and 1951, 1.2 percent and 2.5 percent respectively of those classified as architects by the Census of Canada were women. See Canada, Dominion Bureau of Statistics, 1941 Census of Canada, Occupation: no. 0-3j Canada, table 1, p. 8; Canada, Dominion Bureau of Statistics, 1951 Census of Canada, Labour Force, Occupation by Sex: Canada and provinces, 98-1951 p-6, table 4, p. 1. The 1941 figure for men included those on active service. It should also be noted that the census category included architect and building architect, both of which presumably would be recognized by the profession. However, the category also included naval architect (1941), landscape architect and landscape designer (1951), all of which would be excluded by the profession's definition.


A number of common objections, including men's objection to women climbing ladders, is discussed in "A Plea for..."
Women Practising Architecture," The Builder no. 82 (February 22, 1902), pp. 179-83. The article is an extensive report on a speech made by Ethel Charles at the Architectural Association in London. See also aforementioned article, "Women as Architects" in Saturday Night, for the explanation that women cannot undertake site supervision due to their "distinctive dress."


(f.80) The first woman Assistant Editor was Leah Gingras, B.I.D. See RAIC Journal vol. 39, no. 12 (December 1962); Anita Aarons' first article for the journal appeared in January 1965, pp. 55-56.

Table 1

New Registrants, Women Architects by Year of Registration, Quebec, Ontario, B.C., 1920-93a Year of New Registrants Registration Quebec Ontario B.C. (OAQ)b (OAA)c (AIBC)d 1920-29 0 0 0 1930-39 0 2 1 1940-49 3 5 4 1950-59 5 8 3 1960-69 10 17 5 1970-79 77 46 19 1980-89 133 43 1990-93e 210 93 45 TOTAL 623 304 120

a. Data gathered for the "Designing Women" project on women architects in Canada, initiated in 1993, based at the McGill Centre for Research and Teaching on Women.
b. L'Ordre des architects du Quebec data are from registrar's ledger on membership, computer database, and files.
c. Ontario Association of Architects data are from OAA Official Certificate List, computer database, and files.
d. Architectural Institute of British Columbia data are from computer database.
e. On the basis of current trends it is possible that the 1990s will overtake the 1980s in terms of the number of new registrants.

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