

Beautiful photography is mainly what this book is all about. Photographer Joy von Tiedemann, whose work has graced the likes of *City and Country Home* and *Toronto Life* for over twenty-five years, has, in this 161-page volume, given us a grand compendium of her style. Though she favours the extravagantly posed or at least carefully composed shot, she rarely relies on cliché, opting instead for more imaginative, artistic or playful presentations. Lighting often lends a sumptuous quality — whether natural and seized in fleeting moments, manipulated to bring out the richness or coolness of materials, or used for dramatic effect. And what a wonderful eye for geometry! Through Tiedemann's lens, painter William Pehudoff, working on the floor and surrounded by canvasses bearing his own slashes of colour, becomes an aesthetic accent in a totally angular composition. Elsewhere, colours are played against colours, and shapes against shapes, creating intriguing balances and counter-balances. Other photographer's tricks come into play, from framing techniques, and emphasis on lines that lead the eye into the picture plane, to delightful narrative touches (such as the toddler's dropped tutu by the bathtub), suggestive of small vignettes of life.

But in this book, real life is most often kept at bay. One rarely has the feeling of candidly peering into another's personal domain. Instead, people within these pages appear more like carefully arranged objects than the complex creatures we know our fellow human beings to be. Perhaps this distancing, however, is what has enabled us to have any peek at all into their largely privileged lives. These subjects, looking

their best and endlessly flattered by the photographer and by their own created environments, are in control — a far cry from the underclass subjects that have sometimes been treated in photographic essays or ethnographic studies. In their case, lack of power has often set up an imbalance between the viewers and the viewed, giving us the uneasy feeling we have usurped something private in our lust for more knowledge and experience.

No need to worry here though, except perhaps for ourselves. Why do we take such voyeuristic pleasure in looking upon the homes of the "beautiful people?" Bombarded by countless presentations of designer abodes in the media, do we set ourselves up for "home inferiority complexes," like the countless young women who develop poor body image in our nymph-focussed society? Perhaps we do need more media balance in our presentations on how most people really live. Conversely, perhaps we could all use a photographer like Tiedemann to flatter us and make us believe that we too are beautiful.

Until this perfect world materializes, however, many of us will fully enjoy such books as *At Home in Canada* for the sheer visual pleasure. And if nothing else, we might also expand our perceptions of the broad range of accommodations available to those with money and/or a creative spirit. Future readers, browsing this book as a record of Canadian domestic interiors in the latter part of the twentieth century, should be aware of the many choices, filters and contrivances that have shaped the images. But presumably, that in itself will be revealing of our times.

Harold Kalman, *A History of Canadian Architecture*

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Harold Kalman, *A History of Canadian Architecture*, Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1994, 933 pp., illus., maps, notes, bibliographies, glossary, building index, index. 2 vols. Cloth \$95, ISBN 0-19-540696-6.

Harold Kalman's *A History of Canadian Architecture* has been in the works for a number of years now. It will quickly find a place among those standard works that any researcher starts with when addressing architectural ques-

tions in a national context. This book joins the earlier work by Alan Gowans and the more recent studies such as that by Leslie Maitland, Jacqueline Hucker and Shannon Ricketts (*A Guide to Canadian Architectural Styles*, Peterborough: Broadview, 1992) that are introductory studies dealing with the development of Canadian architecture. Kalman's book will obviously be the new standard reference work, but it is important to know what it is and what it is not.

A History of Canadian Architecture intends to be a survey introduction to the topic. While the book is filled with Kalman's own reflections on general trends in Canadian architecture, it is primarily a synthesis of recent secondary work written across the country. In this regard, then, it is a summary of the research on Canadian architecture that has occurred in the last twenty years. Work conducted by academics — architectural historians, folklorists and historians — is drawn upon, as are studies from other sources: Parks Canada, provincial government researchers, and professional architects.

As a general introductory survey, Kalman often attempts to summarize rather than speculate. This book, then, is different from the earlier standard introductions to Canadian architecture, specifically the work of Alan Gowans in *Building Canada: An Architectural History of Canadian Life* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1966) and *Looking at Architecture in Canada* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1958). Gowans' work posited a number of themes in the development of Canadian building traditions, and certainly was not as concerned as Kalman with providing the many detailed descriptions of individual buildings. Kalman's focus on an extensive number of structures chronologically is, in many respects, the strength and weakness of the work. For most regions and periods, numerous examples are given of particular architectural traditions, enabling the researcher to investigate the particulars of numerous structures. Yet, the danger is that the reader sometimes becomes lost in the progression of examples of particular types, losing the overall point of the particular discussion.

Kalman's survey is first and foremost an architectural history. As such, it reflects the methodology and concerns of the discipline of architectural history over the years. The focus of this work is a history of buildings — how building forms and technologies characterize certain regions, and how these have changed over time. With this traditional emphasis of the architectural historian, the work is building-focused, rather than culture-focused. This is not to say that Kalman does not attempt to place his material in an historical context. He often does, and reading his book is in many ways like reading an illustrated history of Canada. But the cultural aspects of buildings often play a secondary role to the analysis of architectural features. This may be partly because so little of a culturally interpretive nature has been written on Canadian buildings. The material is often just not there to summarize.

The pursuit of architectural history, however, often methodologically forces the analyst to ask building-centred rather than cultural questions. Architectural history (like art history) often assumes a progression of styles over time, with each style reflecting some fundamental societal concerns of the era. Yet, much architectural history becomes fixated on the notion of style itself, and style becomes the overriding force that governs scholarship. Buildings follow certain styles, styles are adapted or are altered, one style succeeds another. People get lost in this equation; how styles reflect fundamental values is often missing. Buildings sometimes become super-organic entities, lacking the faces of human beings as they confront daily needs and concerns. And the architectural historian, as in this book, is often concerned with "firsts;" Kalman has, whenever possible, included the first example of an architectural style or technology, a different concern than emphasizing what is ordinary or everyday.

To Kalman's credit, he includes chapters that deal with more thematic concerns than regional chronological evolutions. The section on the domestic home chronicles the ordinary mass-produced homes of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, many of them influenced by builders' guides and mass-produced technologies. Again, the chapter on resource communities reflects the recent interest in industrial housing. Yet, finally, this is a very different survey from, say, Gwendolyn Wright's *Building the Dream, A Social History of Housing in America* (New York: Pantheon, 1981), which attempts to introduce the ordinary architecture of the United States in a socio-cultural framework.

One should recognize Kalman's book, finally, as an introductory survey of buildings (many elite) that mark the major highlights and players in Canadian architectural history. For anyone studying the wide scope of the history of Canadian architecture, it will be the new reference work from which to start — an instant classic in the field. That *A History of Canadian Architecture* is limited largely to a methodology of architectural history may be as much a reflection of the overall kind of scholarship that has been produced in Canada on architecture — a chronicling of styles, styles that often use as benchmarks buildings in the United States, Great Britain, or France. Kalman's book summarizes current research remarkably well, giving an overall view of Canadian scholarship. What is clear from that overview is how extraordinarily much still remains to be done.