Blanche Lemco van Ginkel, Montreal Modernist

by

Adrienne Richter, B.Sc.

A thesis submitted to
The Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of Art History
Carleton University
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Blanche Lemco van Ginkel, Montreal Modernist

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in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts.

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ABSTRACT

The thesis focuses on the career of Montreal architect, Blanche Lemco van Ginkel between 1940 and 1977. It presents four of her North American planning projects in relation to her philosophy of humanism and places her in relation to the broader architectural context of modernism in Canada. It is proposed that Blanche van Ginkel was in a unique position to comment on the built environment during this period because of her work in various modernist architectural offices both in Canada and in Europe. In addition, the thesis explores her association with CIAM and TEAM 10, and follows her maturation as an architect and planner upon her return to North America.

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INTRODUCTION

Blanche Lemco van Ginkel has been called a 'pioneering' woman in Canadian architecture by architectural historian Annmarie Adams¹ and her work in modernism has helped in an understanding of the architectural period of 1940 to the mid-1970's.

Through her writings and the projects she undertook during this period an alternative voice in modernism was heard. Her progress begins, as does Canadian modernism itself, in the 1940s, when, she began study as a student at the School of Architecture at McGill University in Montreal. As only the second woman to complete a degree in architecture at McGill, van Ginkel attracted the attention of the architectural community in Montreal. Later she brought to Canada an interpretation of modernism learned in Europe, at the feet of the modern masters of the twentieth century. Her contributions to the field have reflected her participation in architecture and planning with a view toward long-term goals of renewability and sustainability, in the hope of returning humanity to Mankind's interaction within the urban landscape.

In order to gain an understanding of the importance of van Ginkel's contributions, it is first necessary to recognize the nature of modernist architecture and planning in Canada during the 1940s and 1950s, the period just prior to her return from her studies abroad in 1957. Modernist planning strategies in Canada had mainly followed those set by architects and dominated by functionalist styles of the United States. Early Canadian modernism had been based on technological functions, a structural modernism, which took the form of advances in modern plumbing and heating systems for the home, and

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¹ Annmarie Adams, *'Designing Women'-Gender and the Architectural Profession*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000): 67.

modern appliances in the kitchen.² While the introduction of reinforced concrete and the glass-curtain wall lent a certain modern aspect to some buildings during the 1930s,³ the wholehearted change in style characteristic of modernism did not come about until after World War II. During the 1930s in conjunction with the stylistic choices inherited from the United States, Canada explored an early modernism based in regionalism and which utilized native materials of wood and stone, and iconographical symbolism. Cast in terms of John Lyle's philosophy of Canadian architecture, two examples of institutional commissions were: the Bank of Nova Scotia (Ottawa), with its use of sheaves of wheat and log cabins along the upper frieze; and the Runnymede Library (Toronto), with its depiction of totem poles and Canadian flora and fauna.

The advancement of full-blown modernism was hampered by a shortage of materials, by the dismal economy during the Depression of the 1930's and by the advent of World War II. The war, though, affected the manner in which the lack of housing was approached and led to new solutions. The influx of thousands into the urban areas of the country hastened the construction of new housing which could be rapidly constructed. The government of Canada, through the institution of the agency, Wartime Housing Limited (1941-1947)⁴ promoted home ownership and private enterprise. The subsequent relinquishing of this responsibility to Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation in 1947

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² Comment by Humphrey Carver looking at the manifestation of modernism in Canada in 1935. Kelly Crossman, "Humphrey Carver: Looking Back," Architecture and Ideas, 1:1 (Fall/Winter, 1996): 32. [hereafter AI]

³ Ernest Cormier in Montreal was engaged in solutions to building construction which combined engineering and Beaux-Arts aesthetics in such buildings as his Montée du Zouave garage completed in 1920. Isabelle Gournay (ed.), Ernest Cormier and the Université de Montréal, (Montreal: Canadian Centre for Architecture, 1990): 25.

⁴ Jill Wade, "Wartime Housing Limited, 1941-1947: Canadian Housing Policy at the Crossroads," Urban History Review, 15:1 (June 1986): 41.

created "favourable credit conditions that would encourage residential construction"⁵ and opened the door to private developers and suburbs.

The slow advance of modernism in Canada was later described by Toronto architect, John C. Parkin, saying:

Our struggle for the acceptance of contemporary architecture in Canada was made the more difficult for the existence of a curious fact --- there were numerically few protagonists of modern. The Great Depression...---...and five years of World War, almost cost Canada a 'middle' generation of architects -- those who might be in the age group 40 to 50.⁶

Those who did survive to practice brought to Canadian architecture an outward looking acceptance of modernism influenced predominantly by the West, Midwest and East coasts of the United States. This 'American fact in Canadian modernism', according to Cammie McAtee of the Canadian Centre for Architecture (CCA)⁷, influenced the way Canadian cities were planned, the building of transportation networks, and, finally, the manner in which modern buildings were conceived by Canadian architects. This is a powerful argument and one which has been corroborated by various Canadian architectural historians and critics.⁸

After the War, as Canadian society and the building industries began to recover, modernism became accepted into the mainstream. Modernism, termed the international style, and rational functionalism became the basis for design among architects born in the twenties and thirties. In Canada, though, there existed a variant of modernism with

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⁵ Wade: 53.

⁶ John C. Parkin, "Architecture in Canada Since 1945," Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada, 39:1 (Jan. 1962): 34. [hereafter JRAIC]

⁷ Cammie McAtee, "Reshaping the Canadian City: The Impact of American Modernism to 1967," Journal of the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada, 24:1 (1999): 4. [hereafter JSSAC]

⁸ For a discussion of Americans hired to teach in the School of Architecture at the University of Manitoba see Kelly Crossman, "North by Northwest: Manitoba Modernism, c. 1950," JSSAC, 24:2 (1999): 61-69. For a discussion of planning in Montreal, see Yves Deschamps, "Montreal: A Landscape of Modern America." JSSAC, 24:1 (1999): 24-28.

regionalist tendencies seen in many parts of the country. In the West, architects became identified with a regional Pacific style. Vancouver architects Ron Thom and John Porter garnered Massey Medals for house designs which featured modern construction utilizing a "timber structure, openness of plan, accessibility to the out-of-doors, and general informality."⁹ Separated physically from the rest of the country and East Coast architecture by distance and mountains, West Coast and Prairie regionalism was based, instead, on the influences of Japan, Frank Lloyd Wright and the California modernism of Richard Neutra and Bernard Maybeck. An 'architecture of place', or that architecture which reflected the specific region, whether that be woods, the prairies or the contours of the land, was an architecture of 'rootedness', and became manifest in housing in California, as well as in the West and the Prairies. In the Prairies, according to architect, Trevor Boddy, architecture was 'almost exclusively the creation of the twentieth century and by and large of the post World War II period.'¹⁰ Unlike the horizontal prairie architecture of Wright, in Alberta the built form stands out for its verticality reflecting the visual architectural past of tree, grain elevator, two-story farm house and church spire.

In Manitoba, design competitions, as well as architectural offices which welcomed young architects, created a centre of architectural modernism in this province. The Elizabeth Dafoe Library at the University of Manitoba and the competition for the National Gallery in 1953 won by Green, Blankstein and Russell demonstrated continued acceptance of the work of the Chicago school of Mies van der Rohe and the East Coast as well as a "social and economic climate that was conducive to innovation."¹¹

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⁹ Sherry McKay, "Western Living, Western Homes," Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada Bulletin, 14:3 (Sept. 1989): 65. [hereafter SSACB]

¹⁰ Trevor Boddy, "Recent Prairie Architecture," Canadian Forum, 58: 680 (April 1978): 10.

¹¹ Crossman, "North by Northwest": 63.

Modernism in Canada was marked not only by housing, office and corporate design, but by the emergence of suburban planning as well. Canada after World War II was faced with two conundrums: how to house the poor and how to house those who could afford single-family housing. Housing stock had been allowed to decline mainly due to the Depression and during which materials to repair them were in short supply because of the war. The answer for the poor often took the form of public housing initiatives, like the Regent Park Housing Development built in Toronto in the 1940s. The plan, which began formulation in 1944, called for the redevelopment of a slum area just east of the downtown. The plan, designed by J.E. Hoare, featured modernist ideas of Le Corbusier: cruciform building shapes surrounded by open green space and free from the intrusion of automobiles. The complex included an administrative centre, recreational facility and a church set on the edge of the site. Toronto also became well-known for its development of Don Mills, a 'corporate suburb'¹² further east of the city. Based on modernist planning concepts learned by its designer, Macklin Hancock, Don Mills was centred around neighbourhoods, contained curving streets and was the model of suburban planning in North America. Montreal, which will be discussed later in the thesis, also followed the ideas of modernist concepts as corporate headquarters rose along Sherbrooke Street as provincial and urban reforms transformed it during what was called its 'quiet revolution.'

Blanche Lemco van Ginkel returned to Canada in 1957 to a country metamorphosed from the one she had left ten years earlier. The country had shaken off its mantle of Victorianism and embraced modernism. Functional modernism and technology

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¹² A corporate suburb was defined as one developed as a unified project, in which all phases of planning and construction were controlled by a single corporation. Peter J. Smith, "Suburbs," *Canadian Cities in Transition* (2nd, Ed.), (Don Mills, Oxford University Press, 2000): 326n7.

became accepted into mainstream society and thought, divorcing itself from history in the process. The nature of that acceptance had, in the process, alienated mankind from each other, from nature and from the forces which made life worth living in a modern society. Social modernism and humanism held the potential to restore that aspect which had become separated from the international style now so dominant in the country. Van Ginkel's choice of projects in the next twenty years would reflect the necessities for an alternative modernism, one which would garner her respect in the community and internationally.

This thesis, then, proposes to demonstrate her attempts to reintegrate modernism's social function as an alternative to functional modernism and the importance of her role in modernism in Canada.

The methodology of this thesis is based on several sources. First, primary sources include van Ginkel's own writings, found in newspapers, popular magazines, and scholarly publications. Second, the architectural record of her career is contained in archival material in various locations. In the course of writing the thesis, and to aid in the establishment of the broader context of the social, environmental and education aspects of her career, the archives of the University of Toronto, McGill University, the University of Pennsylvania, the archives of St. John's, Newfoundland and the fonds housed at the Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montreal, were consulted. They provided invaluable necessary background information. Lastly, Mrs. van Ginkel agreed to three personal interviews which provided insight into understanding intimate aspects of her work and the influence those choices had on her projects.

Secondary sources were supplied by newspaper articles, film, books and periodicals, ranging from topics such as the architectural scene in England to modernism in Europe. Important background material relating to CIAM and TEAM 10, two international groups in which van Ginkel participated, provide the context for the broader perspective of her experience within the larger role of modernism. Architectural education in Canada and women in the architectural profession furnish the context in which the role of a woman in a male-dominated field and her failure or success due to gender can be explored.

The thesis is organized chronologically and traces van Ginkel's career from her entrance to McGill University in 1940 until her arrival at the University of Toronto in 1977, roughly a period of 25 years. The first two chapters of the thesis will provide background necessary to the understanding of her philosophy and projects contained in the third chapter.

Van Ginkel's training at McGill and the architectural culture of Montreal in the early 1940's allow for the examination of the two systems of architectural study in the city at that time: the French, characterised by the atelier method, and the English, which was slowly moving away from roots set in the Arts and Crafts movement. This provides a starting point. The environment for the few women entering the School of Architecture in 1940 was difficult and this explains many of the obstacles which van Ginkel had to overcome in order to complete her education. Her work in the Regina office of Toronto planner, Eugene Faludi, introduced van Ginkel to the practicalities of planning and convinced her of the further need for education if she wished to follow this new profession. These are topics that will be developed in Chapter One.

A journey to visit her father in England and other relatives living in France in 1947 soon led Blanche Lemco away from the stultifying atmosphere of Canada and put her on a path which would be a turning point in her career. Chapter Two will look at Lemco's work in the European offices of William Crabtree and Charles-Edouard Jeanneret (Le Corbusier). Her time in England was punctuated by her attendance in Bridgwater at the first of three meetings of the Congrès Internationale d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM). CIAM was the most important group of advocates of modernist building and urban planning at the time and the reunion meeting in 1947 was to put it on course to alter the notion of the functional city to focus on the satisfaction of Mankind's needs within the creation of a physical environment. It was there that she first came into contact with the leading modernists of the day, such as Le Corbusier who was particularly influential as well as the Dutch and English architectural groups such as Opbouw and the Modern Architectural Research Society group (MARS). The Bridgwater CIAM congress, and the three other CIAM meetings she would attend in the 1953, 1956 and 1959, would serve as milestones in her development as an architect as well as maturing her philosophical outlook. The thesis will follow her development from her seminal work on the Unité d'Habitation in Marseille to Harvard, her teaching position at the University of Pennsylvania and her continuing role in important architectural meetings during the 1950s.

With the foundations set, Chapter Three will investigate the nature of her practice as a principal in her firm, Van Ginkel Associates, examining four projects in detail which exemplify the scope of her oeuvre and the constancy of her vision. Upon her return to Montreal in 1957 van Ginkel was involved in enterprises which addressed various urban

issues, such as saving Mount Royal from development, stopping the destruction of the Old City, and addressing issues of upkeep in older buildings. Her belief in social and humanist concerns, which she learned as a result of her European experience, will be analyzed through her work for the new town of Meadowvale near Toronto, her conception for Expo '67 in Montreal, Bowring Park in St. John's, Newfoundland, and a reworking of the circulation system for the city of New York.

Chapter Four of the thesis will examine van Ginkel's method of practice within the context of the larger milieu of architecture and urban planning in Canada. It will briefly discuss the journey she has made as a woman architect, and the manner in which she operated within the firm established with her husband. In order to avoid confusion, she is referred to as Blanche Lemco or Ms Lemco until her marriage to H.P.D van Ginkel (Sandy) after which she is referred to as van Ginkel or Mrs. van Ginkel.

Finally, in Chapter Five, the thesis will address her career in the context of her writings and her methodology. Her early interaction with members of modernist groups such as CIAM and, later, TEAM 10 have been instrumental in her formulation of ideas and her philosophy related to the subject of the city.

CHAPTER 1: ARCHITECTURAL EDUCATION IN MONTREAL

Blanche Lemco arrived in Montreal from England as a school girl of 13 in 1935, and attended Westmount High School. In 1940 she was awarded the Sydney J. Hodgson Scholarship in the amount of \$200, given to the student with the highest percentage in the senior matriculation subjects required for admission into the Faculty of Engineering, which included the School of Architecture.¹³

Lemco entered McGill University in 1940 with the original intention of studying stage design. She had intended to go to New York City to study as there was no program in Montreal, but soon learned after her acceptance into first year at the School of Architecture that architecture was more important from a social point of view. With this in mind, she decided on an architectural career.

In Montreal a system of education based on the Parisian École des Beaux Arts offered the dominant system of training architects. An École des Beaux Arts was formed in Montreal in 1922, where students were trained in the traditional use of stone and its aesthetic application and were not concerned with the contemporary modern movements. Architecture students in the school learned that, except for the occasional “monument in a park”, the buildings they designed “were to be beautifully detailed, set among surroundings designed to go with the buildings, not to create a building that stands out so conspicuously from everything around it.”¹⁴ The Paris école served as a model for those

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¹³ McGill University Calendar, 1940-41.

¹⁴ Jean-Louis Lalonde, “L’École des Beaux Arts and the Quebecois,” *Canadian Architect*, 5:11 (Nov. 1960): 41-42.

students who sought to improve the practice of architecture through better education. We are told by Spiro Kostof, Professor of Architectural History:¹⁵

Its influence became particularly strong in America at the end of the nineteenth century when architects, like many other professions, felt the need to set higher and more uniform standards for themselves... The École... possessed... a well-organized curriculum, a rational design theory, and government patronage.¹⁶

To gain an understanding of Lemco's training at McGill, it is necessary to examine the architectural milieu of the early 1940's and place it in the context of the wider world of architectural education. McGill University's School of Architecture, founded in 1896, was one of the few schools at the time where teaching was not totally based on the École des Beaux Arts curriculum or training. Stewart Capper, its first director, was brought from Scotland to help establish the School and was succeeded over the next forty years by fellow Scots, Percy Nobbs and Ramsay Traquair, also trained in the Arts and Crafts architectural tradition of John Ruskin, William Morris and Philip Webb. As followers of arts and crafts, Nobbs in particular, believed that a close connection must be maintained between art and its social and physical setting.¹⁷ Under Nobbs, Traquair and their successor, Philip Turner, students followed an architecture course characterized by the influences of humanism, the traditional romanticism of Scottish domestic design, as well as the well-built, functional stone buildings of Quebec which the three professors felt were expressive of traditional craftsmanship and local conditions.

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¹⁵ The ultimate purpose of a Beaux-Arts education was to raise the status of the profession. "Architects wanted to become recognized as experts with specialized knowledge, obtained through long study. They sought to infuse the profession with a theoretical base and to establish ethical principles of conduct." Spiro Kostof (ed.), The Architect, Chapters in the History of the Profession, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977): 214.

¹⁶ Kostof: 209.

¹⁷ Norbert Schoenauer, "Montreal Arts + Crafts Dwelling," ARQ, 92 (août 1996): 7.

By the early 1940s the School of Architecture was small and undergoing change. Acting Director Philip Turner and Professor John Bland, who would later succeed Turner as director in 1941, reorganized the design program in 1940. Teaching, following Bland's lead, was now to be based on the modern movement's doctrine of rationalism and functionalism, with each professor responsible for directing his own course. The program was also broadened to include housing design and town planning.

The training students received at McGill stood out in the Canada of the twentieth century and soon set its students apart from others in the country. In the 1920's and 1930's architectural education in Canada had been based on École des Beaux-Arts training that dominated all schools of architecture in North America, with the exception of the School of Architecture at McGill. Beaux-Arts training begun in Paris was based on a style of teaching that included functional analysis expressed through principles of axial and symmetrical composition dressed in historical forms. It was especially responsive to designs displaying the classicism of Roman or Greek architecture. During the early nineteenth century and in the absence of another form of architectural education, the only way open for a student had been to attend the École in Paris. As this option was often not open to students in North America, the system of teaching was brought to North America in the late nineteenth century by its proponents and soon architectural departments not only in North America, but also in Canada, flourished.

In addition to the arts and crafts distinction at McGill, there was also the issue of the admission of women. The debate concerning the entrance of women into the Faculty of Engineering, of which the School was a part, had begun in the late 1930's. That controversy was to focus primarily on the women entering such a strictly male-dominated

environment. In the city of Montreal, where women could not even sign contracts under the law, the admission of women into architecture brought much attention to the young Blanche Lemco, attention which was to spotlight her accomplishments at McGill and which was to follow her throughout her career.

As Ms. Lemco entered McGill University's School of Architecture, the school itself was undergoing a reorganization. Professor Ramsay Traquair, its second director from 1913-1939, had died. Percy Nobbs, during his tenure, had established two streams within the school, a Bachelor of Science in Architecture and a Bachelor of Architecture, which incorporated less stringent entrance requirements in sciences and fewer courses in common with the engineers. In 1939, as Canada entered into World War II, the School of Architecture at McGill University also began another transition where because of lack of enrolment, it considered closing its doors altogether.¹⁸ Prompted by Montreal architects, who proposed among other recommendations, an advisory committee of leading architects and designers, the school finally agreed to admit women.

This decision was not without controversy. It was the last Canadian school of architecture to accept women to its program.¹⁹ The Committee struck by the Faculty of Engineering to consider this proposal was contentious. "Some members approved of opening of the course to women, others opposed it firmly; some accepted co-education in Architecture, others thought it was 'a bad thing to be recommended only on grounds of economy'".²⁰ The admission of women to the School of Architecture had long been a topic of discussion within the School. In 1930, Professor Traquair had listed reasons why it

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¹⁸ "McGill School of Architecture 100 Years," *ARQ*, 92, (Aug. 1996): 13.

¹⁹ Annmarie Adams, "Girl Architects-to-Be," *ARQ*, 92, (Aug. 1966): 12.

²⁰ Margaret Gillett, *We Walked Very Warily. A History of Women at McGill*, (McGill: Eden Press, 1981): 320.

was impracticable to admit women to architecture. In his report to the Faculty of Applied Science, under which Architecture was a department at the time, he stated:

Women are not admitted to the Faculty of Applied Science and the School of Architecture is an integral part of that Faculty; there are no provisions in the Engineering Building for the accommodation of women students, and it would be an expensive matter to provide them; at present the School of Architecture has a registration of forty, and there is no accommodation available for additional students; much architectural draughting is done at night, the main drawing room being open until ten o'clock. The responsibility for the maintenance of discipline in the evening is assessed by the students themselves. If women students were admitted, it would be necessary to provide staff supervision during these evening drawing periods, and such supervision would require additional members of staff and put the School to extra expense for which it has no funds.²¹

McGill was not alone at the time in its refusal to admit women into architectural programs. Harvard, Yale, and Princeton Universities in the United States also did not admit women. As the last holdout in Canada, though, McGill seemed ripe for change and the climate in Montreal supported this opinion. The admission of women to architecture, and, indeed, to other faculties within the university, foreshadowed changes in the air.

Discussions later held by the Faculty in December 1937 concluded that: from a physiological point of view, there was no reason why women should not be trained as architects and admitted to compete equally with men, and the university removed itself from responsibility if women failed to obtain employment or gain practical experience.²² Another deciding factor in its decision to admit women was that McGill saw that if it did not, it would be the only fully recognized School of Architecture in the British Dominions not to admit women.

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²¹ Gillett: 319.

²² Gillett: 321.

Thus, in February 1938, Senate accepted the recommendations of the Faculty and in 1939 Arlene Scott and Catherine M. Chard became the first women to be admitted to Architecture at McGill. It should be noted that Catherine Chard was the first woman to graduate from McGill in Architecture while Blanche Lemco was the second.

Courses in architecture in the first two years were taken by students in architecture with the civil and mechanical engineering students and were designed to give the students experience in structure and equipment of buildings.²³ An examination of the McGill calendars from the period 1940-1945 shows that the students were presented with not only technical subjects in mechanics, physics, mathematics, and building construction, but were also exposed to ancient and modern architecture and drawing classes.²⁴ The course was rigorous and demanding, and architecture students found little time to pursue other interests. But, Ms. Lemco managed to pursue her studies as well as participate in various university activities. As noted in the University yearbook, Old McGill, she was a member of the Player's Club Scenery (1941); I.S.S. Campaign Committee; Cosmopolitan Club Secretary (1942); Radio-Workshop Productions (1942); War Council Executive (1943); Film Society Executive (1943-44); and Architectural Society (1943). In addition to winning the Lieutenant Governor's medal, Lemco also was awarded the McLennan special prize for the highest standing in the School of Architecture.

During the summer breaks, though, students were expected to "work for 5 weeks in the office of an architect or contractor, or to prepare 35 reasonably large freehand

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²³ John Bland, "The Architectural Course at McGill," JRAIC, 20:8, (Aug. 1943): 139.

²⁴ McGill calendars 1940-45. Canadian painter Arthur Lismer, founding member of the Group of Seven and Edmund Dyonnet taught freehand drawing, sketching, the history of art and theory of design, McGill Calendars, 1940-1945.

sketches in any desired medium, or carry out a program of study approved by the Director of the School".²⁵ H.R. Little, the professor in charge of the course on building materials, knew the difficulty Lemco would face finding summer employment, and, therefore, came to her aid for her first summer term at McGill. Lemco recounts two searches for summer employment saying:

He [Mr. Little] got me a job at the Canadian Custodian Chimney Company tracing their industrial chimneys in ink on linen... through a hot summer. A friend of his was an engineer and had asked for a student who could draw well. In the second and third work terms, I was on my own. That was when I answered the ads in the engineering offices for a draughtsman [during her second summer work term]. I could draught. I had done pretty well in the engineering construction classes and I could do that. They wouldn't even let me in the office. They said they didn't employ women. [But at] Dominion Rubber there was a job working for a Scottish engineer. I started out doing assembly drawings for the machinery in the plant. He asked me if I knew about construction architecture. He gave me the specifications for a huge storage shed to be constructed in Drummondville. I went home and studied all my books and did the working drawings and took them to him.²⁶

John Grierson, founder of the National Film Board, recruited Lemco during her third summer to prepare plans for the needed renovations and fire safety requirements for the National Film Board's recently acquired, but ancient, industrial building in Ottawa. Important fire protection devices were required for its film studios and the Department of Public Works architects were busy with the office and building renovations.

C'était tout à fait merveilleux parce que c'est ainsi que j'ai appris les rudiments du métier d'architecte. Je faisais des cauchemars juste à penser aux implications de mon travail.²⁷

²⁵ McGill University calendars 1941-45. This regulation had replaced an earlier one, which required students to pass an examination on a selected architectural work.

²⁶ Author taped interview with Blanche Lemco van Ginkel, February, 2001.

²⁷ André Boisvert, "Une entrevue avec Blanche Lemco Van Ginkel," *Urbanité*, 4:1, (Spring 1999): 2.

Lemco continued explaining the details of the job, saying:

Nitrate film which was used in those days was highly explosive and even an unopened can of nitrate film left alone could explode all by itself. I was sent down to the [National] Research Council to study fire hazards with nitrate film and then I designed hatches [to address this problem]. You cut a piece of the roof and put in a hatch which was fastened by a fusible link which meant that when the temperature went up to a certain point the link fused and the hatch dropped and the fumes and fire went up there which posed less of a hazard to the rest of the building.²⁸

At the end of her fourth year, she was again employed by the National Film Board to design an extension to the building.

As has been noted earlier, the School of Architecture was reorganized in the early 1940's away from its Scottish Arts and Crafts roots. John Bland, as the fourth Director of the School, became the catalyst for the substantial transformation of the curriculum, reorganizing it "in accordance with contemporary design teaching principles, broadened the scope of architectural education to include housing design and planning, and introduced the first Canadian graduate programs in architecture."²⁹ Bland, himself a graduate of the School of Architecture at McGill in 1933, had studied in England, receiving his diploma in planning from the Architectural Association School in London. He had worked for the planning department of the London County Council (LCC) after graduation where he must have had knowledge of modernists, like Maxwell Fry, fellow Canadian Welles Coates, and the activities of the Modern Architectural Research Group (MARS). He utilized not only Percy Nobbs's book, Design, as a text, but also introduced students to various modernist writers and critics like Lewis Mumford and Siegfried

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²⁸ Author taped interview with Blanche Lemco van Ginkel, January, 2002.

²⁹ Norbert Schoenauer, "John Bland: A Biographical Note," in Ramsay Traquair and His Successors, Irena Murray (ed.), (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1977): 42.

Giedion. Bland utilized as texts in his courses such books as Mumford's Sticks and Stones, The Culture of Cities, and Giedion's Space, Time and Architecture, as well as A Key to Modern Architecture (Yorke and Penn), Town Planning (Thomas Sharp), Design (Anthony Bertram) and Introduction to Modern Architecture (J.M. Richards).³⁰ Students also studied the more traditional courses of ancient and classical, as well as medieval and renaissance architecture from Bland, who, Adrian Sheppard, a former student in the School, called a 'transitional' figure in the history of teaching of architecture in Canada. He said of Bland, "... he understood the old rules, he could re-interpret them and apply them in a modern way and he could erase the frontiers between two eras."³¹ The strength of the School, Sheppard went on to say, "was perceived by many as deriving from the heterogeneity of its faculty, ... , a homogeneity of ideology."³² This was indeed reflected in the architects who came to teach at the school like Hazen Sise, who was very familiar with the European scene having attended the fourth meeting of CIAM in 1933, and Gordon Webber, who established a basic design course along the Bauhaus model.³³

Mumford and Giedion's works no doubt had a subsequent positive effect on Ms. Lemco and, perhaps, influenced her decision after graduation to pursue modernism in Canada and in Europe. It is, though, indisputable that John Bland was instrumental in introducing Blanche Lemco to European modernism.

Lemco had a chance to demonstrate what she had assimilated under the new modernist curriculum in the design for her second year project. "A Dancer's Studio" [Figure 1a] appeared in the February 1942 edition of the Journal of the Royal

³⁰ McGill University calendars 1940-1945.

³¹ Adrian Sheppard, "Teaching Architecture in the Age of Modernism," Architecture Quebec, 96 (April 1997): 8. [hereafter ARQ]

³² Sheppard: 8.

³³ "McGill School of Architecture 100 years," ARQ, 92 (Aug. 1996): 15.

Architectural Institute of Canada (JRAIC)³⁴ and this was to be the first of many articles on Ms. Lemco. The project was designed to answer the problem of a space of “given size suitable for an artist of the author’s choice”. Ms. Lemco, in designing the spartan space, accounted for the dancer’s athleticism with a perfect dance floor and his/her needs for fresh air. As a place to rest she also included a roof deck, as well as one wall with panels which opened to reveal the terrace. The design incorporated flat featureless walls, punched windows and pipe railing surrounding a flat roof. Gone were the historical references, the pitched roofs, massing of an earlier classical period, or arts and crafts styling. What remained was what modernists called ‘truth to materials’, those constructions which revealed the concrete structure of the wall without decoration, and the stark, geometric window massing which allowed light to flow into the space. No longer overwhelmed by a steeply pitched roof or the heaviness associated with Victorian and Edwardian architecture, the structure revealed that it was thin, light, almost translucent and a reflection of the technology. Much of her incorporation of these modernist tenets was similar to a model house designed by Richard Neutra ten years earlier for an international housing exhibition sponsored by the Austrian Werkbund in Vienna.³⁵ [Figure 1b] This house had the same characteristic band of ribbon windows; with stairs on the entrance façade leading to a roof garden. Neutra, who had already immigrated to the United States, would figure prominently in the development of modernism in Southern California.

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³⁴ “A Dancer’s Studio,” JRAIC, 19:2, (Feb 1942): 26.

³⁵ The Vienna exhibition focused on detached single-family houses grouped in the modernist, garden-city suburb of Lainz and this design was the smallest in the exhibition. Other contributing architects included Adolph Loos, Josef Hoffmann and Gerrit Rietveld. Thomas S. Hines, Richard Neutra and the Search for Modern Architecture, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982): 204.

At a time when many articles in the JRAIC recorded women's roles in designing houses, there were other articles which featured student work at the major Schools of Architecture in Canada, among them articles featuring work by female students like Lemco and Catherine Chard. These represented a shift in policy, as designs by women began to appear regularly.³⁶ There were also articles by two women architects, Mary Imrie and Jean Wallbridge of Edmonton. According to architectural historian, Annmarie Adams:

The RAIC covered the extensive travels of these prolific women who designed houses, schools, and other public buildings, on their trips to eastern and western Europe, the Middle East, South America and Asia. ... They wrote five major articles for the journal on their observations of architecture and practice in other lands, from 1948 to 1958.³⁷

The novelty of such coverage was further demonstrated by the more typical gender roles showing women as users of space, rather than the creators of space. Women shown were usually working as nurses, secretaries or housewives. Coverage of Lemco by this prestigious professional journal must have done much to bolster her confidence in her choice of career and, also, afforded her a higher profile at a time when many women had stepped in to fill men's roles in factories and plants during the war. Lemco's career was certainly followed in the press of the day in Montreal as witnessed by three articles which appeared in the Montreal Gazette and Montreal Star. The Gazette article mentions her award winning film, "It Can Be Done" shown at the Vienna Congress³⁸, while a Star

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³⁶ Annmarie Adams notes in her book, Designing Women, that the JRAIC was continually re-defining its image of the architect from manly, powerful and virile administrators to include many articles by women and showed women who were married to architects in social activities at architectural conferences. In the 1940s, though, the journal was extremely selective in which women architects it featured.

³⁷ Adams: 55.

³⁸ "Local Girl Wins Award at Vienna Congress," Montreal Gazette, (n.d.), McGill University Archives, scrapbook, vol. 14: 392.

article, entitled, "Leads Architecture"³⁹ praised her achievement in winning the McLennan special prize for the "highest standing in the fifth and final year in the School of Architecture." In 1945, furthermore, she received the Lieutenant Governor's medal for an exhibition on town planning in Windsor, Ontario.

In 1946 another Star article, "Town Planning is Full Time Job of Blanche Lemco of Westmount",⁴⁰ noted her new career in town planning. Her motivation to change from architecture after graduation in 1945 reflected more her ability to gain employment than her choice to do town planning, then in its infancy in Canada, but it was to become an important first step in her development and subsequent career in the field.

By the time Lemco graduated World War II was over but there was very little being constructed in Montreal and work for women was almost non-existent. "Thousands of workers, jobless with the sudden closure of the war plants, entered the labour market at a time when the servicemen started to return from overseas."⁴¹ It was, perhaps, for these reasons that Lemco did not hesitate when she received an offer to work in the office of Eugene Faludi in Windsor, Ontario in 1945.

Hungarian-born Faludi had fled Fascist Italy in 1939, and immigrated to Canada in 1940. Lemco would have seen Faludi during her years at McGill, as Faludi lectured there and at the University of Toronto during the early 1940s. His office, Town Planning Consultants, Ltd., was one of the earliest advocates of town planning in Canada, and Faludi, in his capacity as consultant, had been the major force behind the city of Toronto's master plan completed in 1943.

³⁹ "Leads Architecture," Montreal Star, (May 1945), McGill University Archives, scrapbook, vol. 11: 62.

⁴⁰ "Town Planning is Full Time Job of Blanche Lemco of Westmount," Montreal Star, (Jan. 1946). McGill University Archives, scrapbook, vol. 11: 162.

⁴¹ Kathleen Jenkins, Montreal-Grand City of the St. Lawrence, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1966): 499.

Town Planning Consultants had a wide clientele, in many Ontario municipalities, and as far west as Regina.⁴² Faludi was very busy in the years following the war⁴³ and hired Lemco as his need for people increased. Lemco, after spending a few months in Windsor, was sent to act as office manager in Faludi's Regina office. Lemco was just twenty-one years old and was responsible for making plans for the city of Regina and for reporting to the Planning Committee. A staff of four reported to her, two men who had come out of technical college, a secretary and another woman who arrived from Faludi's Hamilton office, to do demographic studies. She admits to having had no knowledge of planning, except for the little she had learned through classes at McGill, and pragmatically added, "I was the manager of the Regina Planning Committee office, which was somewhat ridiculous, but you find out what to do, and how to do it. Faludi would turn up now and again. He'd check everything that I would do."⁴⁴ Therefore, by observing those in the office she realized that she would have to further pursue her education if she wanted to be active in the field. In 1947, she left for Europe which was to be the beginning of the next critical and instrumental stage of her life. When she returned to Montreal ten years later she was to find the city changed. She would begin to place her mark not only upon its structure but also upon its urban thought.

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⁴² John Sewell, *The Shape of the City*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993): 54.

⁴³ Faludi's office was also involved in developing master plans for Hamilton, Ontario, Peterborough, Ontario, Stratford, Ontario, Etobicoke, Ontario as well as plans for Regent Park, Thorncrest Village and Humber Valley Village.

⁴⁴ Author taped interview with Blanche Lemco van Ginkel, January, 2002.

CHAPTER 2: EXPERIENCES IN EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA (1947-1957)

Blanche Lemco arrived in London in 1946 to visit her father, who had remained in England during the War, and after answering an ad in the newspaper, went to work for William Crabtree in the office of Crabtree, Slater, Moberley and Reilly. Crabtree's office was involved in the plans for the rebuilding of Southampton which had been blitzed by the Germans during the war, the extent of which can be seen in Figure 2.

Southampton had been chosen as a 'test case', along with the other heavily bombed cities of Bristol and Coventry, as an opportunity for comprehensive planning by its local authority and they had been encouraged to 'plan boldly' by Lord Reith, the minister responsible for post-war town and country planning.⁴⁵ The city, heavily blitzed in the period 1940-1941, had lost nearly 30 percent of its housing, and had seen 60 acres of land devastated, the most of the three cities under study.

With so much destruction in London and elsewhere in England there was, unlike the climate in Canada, immediate work for anyone with training. Blanche Lemco, who had just completed her architectural training and spent one year working in the planning office of Eugene Faludi, explained her situation saying:

I went to London for family reasons and decided to stay there and work for awhile, and I also appreciated the fact that I was out of a rather stultifying Canadian environment. When I went looking for a job (in England) I found Crabtree had an advertisement out for someone in his office and, I think, it asked for someone with planning skills, too. So, first of all I thought this was a job and, secondly, I knew his name as the designer of one of the modernist department stores in London; a building that I admired. So I thought he was a respectable architect.⁴⁶

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⁴⁵ Junichi Hasegawa, *Replanning the Blitzed City Centre*, (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1992): 3.

⁴⁶ Author taped interview with Blanche Lemco van Ginkel, February, 2001.

Although Ms. Lemco may not have been aware of the full extent of the work undertaken by Crabtree in Southampton, a search of the Royal Institute of British Architect's (RIBA) website shows that he had designed two schemes: one, a proposal for a series of civic buildings, possibly located along what remained of an ancient walled town [unspecified], and the other a design for a 3-story block of flats along the high street leading to the medieval Bargate.⁴⁷

Crabtree was a gifted, young architect whose design for the Peter Jones Department Store [Figure 3] in London, 1935, had distinguished him as a rising modernist, the department store "one of the most distinguished Modern urban buildings in Britain".⁴⁸ His design, like the Schocken Department Store [Figure 4] in Chemnitz, by Erich Mendelsohn, who Crabtree admired, featured a horizontal banding of windows along a curved, cantilevered façade, which gently curved at the corner of King's Road and Sloane Square, with windows set away from the supporting columns. While the horizontal banding emphasised the linear proportions of the building, there was also verticality in its use of narrow rectangular windows which opened around a centre post, creating a kind of *brise soleil* and an interior space which contained two large light wells.

While town planning was an important aspect of design in England, the architectural scene in the 1930's witnessed a shift from neo-classical and neo-Georgian styling to an active culture of modernism. This was due to three factors: the immigration of European modernists from Russia and Germany; sympathetic coverage by the British architectural press; and the influences of the MARS group. The convergence of these

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⁴⁷ See www.architecture.com and reference numbers RAN 75/L/6 and RAN 75/L/7.

⁴⁸ Edwin Johnston, "Sloan Leader," *Architectural Review*, 187:1115, (Jan. 1990): 75.

significant elements serve to explain the overall favourable response to modernism and modernist architects after the war.

The influx of German architects escaping Nazi regimes and settling in England, such as Erich Mendelsohn, Walter Gropius, and Marcel Breuer, and the Russian Serge Chermayeff, and the Georgian Berthold Lubetkin, whose work had garnered attention throughout Europe and in England, was a boon to the field of social housing. But, according to author Charlotte Benton, these architects found themselves shut out of council work due to many factors. Many found their work in social housing dominated by borough engineers; they were precluded from taking salaried employment in the public sector because of conditions imposed by their immigration; and many local authorities could not easily deploy funds to employ outside architects as consultants.⁴⁹ They were able to find work in the private sector, though, and gained reputations for designs from zoo buildings (Lubetkin) to apartment flats such as the 45 Lawn Road Flats (Wells Coates) and High Point I and II (Lubetkin and Tecton).

These projects were given sympathetic coverage by the architectural press of the day, especially by the Architectural Review. Books such as The Modern House (1934) by F.R.S. Yorke, The New Architecture of the Bauhaus (1935) by Walter Gropius and Pioneers of the Modern Movement: From William Morris to Walter Gropius (1936) by Nicholas Pevsner all influenced the dissemination of modernism.

Lastly, one of the most influential promoters of modernism in Britain was the Modern Architectural Research Society (M.A.R.S.). Established in 1933 by Canadian

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⁴⁹ Charlotte Benton, A Different World: Emigré Architects in Britain, 1928-1958, exhibition catalog, RIBA Heinz Gallery, 23 Nov 1995-20 Jan. 1996: 53.

Wells Coates, Maxwell Fry, Morton Shand, Berthold Lubetkin, Ove Arup and others⁵⁰, MARS was known not only for its studies and designs for their Master Plan for the City of London in 1942, but also for its active participation as the English representatives at many of the meetings of CIAM held from 1933 until 1960.

During the intervening War years, MARS's plans for the city of London had attempted to translate CIAM ideas of the rationalized city into a socially acceptable concept for the future. While Le Corbusier had long promoted linear city planning complete with functional zoning, his plans for a contemporary city of three million inhabitants (Ville Contemporaine), featured a grid of high density apartment buildings set on 'pilotis' to free the ground for parks and road systems of varying speeds. City and country would become reintegrated so that the city became a vast park. The plan was rational, disciplined and mechanized mirroring Le Corbusier's scheme for ideal order. The MARS plan, though rational, paid homage not only to Corbusier, but to the Garden City movement which had been influential in England since the turn of the century. The MARS plan was based on a linear design which featured areas following the Thames River in an east-west direction, with residential zones laid out along a series of secondary axes separated from each other by a two-mile wide band of countryside which crossed the primary line of the river. Each residential area was approximately one mile wide, and replete with its own apartments, houses, schools, medical centres and recreation centres organized around a transportation system of major and secondary roads. It illustrated a form of future planning which incorporated transportation, new urban forms and brought

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⁵⁰ Other members included F.R.S. Yorke, Godfrey Samuel, Serge Chermayeff, John Gloag, Erno Goldfinger, Raymond McGrath, Amyas Connell, Basil Ward, Colin Lucas, as well as architectural journalists J.M. Richards, Hubert de Cronin Hastings and John Betjeman. In Eric Mumford, The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism, 1928-1960., (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2000): 91.

the country into the city. When Corbusier's plan, envisioned in 1922, could only have been brought to realization after the complete demolition of the city, following Baron Hausmann's solution for the city of Paris, and was, at the time, thought to be wholly utopian in vision. The MARS plan, formulated between 1939 and 1942, was strongly attacked and never implemented, but was thought to be less of a fantasy and more in the realm of reality considering the destruction that cities were enduring.

John Summerson, in his book Modern Architecture in Britain, stated that British moderns of the 1930's, though making only a modest contribution to the continental movement, did lead a whole generation of young English architects to identify themselves with modernism, so that after WWII "it was possible for certain national building problems to be studied in a spirit of collaboration and realism from which enormous benefits were derived".⁵¹ These opportunities brought British architects opportunities to demonstrate their abilities in designs for industrial buildings, large housing projects, schools and new towns, and they were soon to lead the way in the larger international architectural community. By 1947, architects associated with MARS were no longer a "small avant-garde group" but were instead in powerful positions of influence due, as Eric Mumford reports, to their "key positions in many Government Departments and other influential organizations".⁵²

An important aspect of the London scene for Lemco was the opportunity to attend the CIAM meeting held in Bridgwater, England in 1947. CIAM had been founded in 1928 by Charles-Edouard Jeanneret (Le Corbusier). The foundational meeting had called together the leading architects in the world to discuss architecture, building and town

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⁵¹ John Summerson, "Introduction," in Modern Architecture in Britain, Trevor Dannatt (ed). (London: Batford, 1959): 15.

⁵² Mumford: 169.

planning. Its manifesto put architecture “back in its true sphere, which is economic, sociological and altogether at the service of humanity.”⁵³ The group members wished to bring architecture into the modern age, no longer tied to historical references, and between 1928 and 1959 CIAM met in nine scheduled congresses to creatively discuss how this could be accomplished. Architectural historian Kenneth Frampton, described the three stages of CIAM’s development as follows: Stage 1: (1928-1933) problems discussed during this period centred on minimum living standards, and the efficient use of land; Stage 2: (1933-1947) the group shifted its focus to town planning; the most important document to come out of these discussions being the Charte d’Athens⁵⁴; Stage 3: (1947-1959) “attempted to transcend the abstract sterility of the ‘functional city’ by affirming that ‘the aim of CIAM is to work for the creation of a physical environment that will satisfy Mankind’s emotional and material needs.’”⁵⁵ CIAM, then, was the voice and philosophy of modern architecture. It was international in membership and, though it met to discuss topics of mutual interest, each member (or group of members) brought ideas and solutions particular to their own situation. Its ideas would become known throughout the world with members promoting a communication network among progressive-minded architects of the day. While CIAM did not formally promote the particular modernistic certain of its formulations not only changed the manner in which Mankind lived in cities, but influenced the way architects and planners approached cities on a world-wide scale. Some of these formulations included an honest expression of

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⁵³ William Curtis, *Modern Architecture Since 1900* (3rd ed.), (London: Phaidon, 1996): 254.

⁵⁴ The Charte d’Athens (Athens Charter) set out the current conditions of town and cities as submitted by members and its proposals for rectifying these conditions by instituting functional zoning with green belts, and the building of high-rise, high density apartment blocks.

⁵⁵ Kenneth Frampton, *Modern Architecture: A Critical History*, (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1980): 271.

materials, the use of modern technologies, rejection of historical references, flat, unadorned surfaces; use of large expanses of glass, building orientation to facilitate the maximum availability of sunlight and air, and town planning with specific attention paid to the influence of the automobile and to transportation. The influence of CIAM was felt not only in Europe but also in the United States, where many German émigrés, before and after the War, were appointed to prestigious Schools of Architecture, such as Harvard, M.I.T., Princeton, I.I.T. and Black Mountain, and significantly altered architectural education in the United States. The modernist ethic also found influence in Canada because of Canadian architects who studied at these American universities.

Thus, it was an important circumstance that Blanche Lemco was in England and able to attend this meeting as among only a handful of Canadians able to attend.⁵⁶ Lemco recalls that a classmate of hers from McGill, H. Peter Oberlander, Lemco recalls, had come to London, and told her about the meeting scheduled for September 7-14 in Bridgwater, England. She and Oberlander attended the four day conference without need of a formal invitation. She described the situation saying:

Anyway, it was Peter who told me about CIAM and he said, 'Why don't we go?' So I went. ... They were working meetings. It was assumed that you were there because you were interested in the subject, you had some sympathy for the organization, and most of all that you were going to contribute something.⁵⁷

The CIAM 6 meeting was billed as the reunion meeting; the group having discontinued its meetings during the war. CIAM 6⁵⁸ centred around three purposes: (1) to re-establish

⁵⁶ Hazen Sise and John Bland were also Canadian representatives. Mumford: 316.

⁵⁷ Author taped interview with Blanche Lemco van Ginkel, January 22, 2002.

⁵⁸ Previous CIAM meetings held before the war had been: CIAM 1 (La Sarraz, Switzerland, 1928); CIAM 2 (Frankfurt, Germany, 1929); CIAM 3 (Brussels, Belgium, 1930); CIAM 4 (on board the S.S. Patris II, 1933); and CIAM 5 (Paris, France, 1937). Many representatives from North America were unable to attend

contact between the different architectural groups and their activities; (2) to consider a reorganization of CIAM and re-evaluate its aims to meet changed conditions; and (3) to develop and prepare the program for the seventh congress.⁵⁹

The sixth congress at Bridgwater was hosted by the MARS group and was divided into three working commissions, each of which tackled different aspects of the meeting's rather broad and amorphous theme: 'where modern architecture stood now in the various countries'. Blanche Lemco participated in the third commission, the topic of which was: architectural expression⁶⁰, and which was chaired by the author of Space, Time and Architecture, Swiss art historian Sigfried Giedion. This must have been a heady experience for a young woman, barely out of university. Gathered around her were some of the greatest and best-known architects in the world. [Figure 5] Among them were Dutch architects, Aldo van Eyck and Jaap Bakemas, Josep Lluís Sert, from Spain, as well as Wells Coates, Serge Kadmé, Clive Entwistle, Peter Shephard, and P. Morton Shand representing the English MARS group.⁶¹

There were architects who had studied and proposed the manner in which architecture needed to change in order to address the growing social concerns in the pre-war city. In the post-war city, these concepts now centred on how to implement technology and mass architecture together in order to re-house those displaced by the war.

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this meeting because of the high cost of transatlantic travel after the war, so it is all the more important that Canada had four people in England at this time.

⁵⁹ H. Peter Oberlander, "Twenty years of architectural growth, CIAM 1928-1948," JRAIC, 25:6, (June, 1948): 200.

⁶⁰ The first and second commissions were, respectively, 'Restatement of Aims' and 'Reorganization of CIAM.' Mumford: 172. The remaining half of this commission dealt with urbanism and was chaired by Le Corbusier and London planner Arthur Ling.

⁶¹ The MARS group provided 32 out of the 97 delegates attending the Congress.

Reports from varied groups spoke of the situation in Los Angeles, reconstruction efforts in Europe and, soon to be noteworthy for Blanche Lemco, the ASCORAL report on the Unité d'Habitation, the large block of flats designed by Le Corbusier in Marseille, France, then in its initial stage of construction. "Architectural expression" in commission III.b. was a formulation of themes which Lemco would hear over and over in the next few years and which would become the basis for her own direction in architectural education and co-operation. The projects presented a new acceptance of modernism and reflected the strategy taking place worldwide. Based now in the technologies developed during the war, modern building techniques incorporated faster, more efficient methods of construction. There was also an interest in addressing the social aspects of housing, a confrontation of life. Where the poor, ill-housed sections of society had been mostly ignored by builders, governments, and architects who had previously found employment working for the well-to-do, there was a shift from private to public sector interests. In Corbusier's office, and other architectural offices around the world, architects began to focus on the problems of making the world a better place in which to live, and that focus began with the home. They saw the advantages of the need for training in teamwork, as well as the co-relational aspects of theoretical studies and actual building experience. Housing concerns soon expanded from the home to the neighbourhood, the neighbourhood to the city and the city to the nation as architects addressed themselves not to the Utopian visions of the 20's and 30's, but to the realities of the present. Blanche Lemco had, through the act of attending the CIAM reunion congress in Bridgwater, begun a journey into the world of new ideas and influential professional contacts.

In 1948 Lemco decided to leave London to go to Paris, where she visited her aunt and uncle. As she recalled:

My mother's sister's husband encouraged me to stick around in Paris for a while and work as a stagier in order to get practice. He told me that if I worked as an apprentice others would be aware of my capacity and other young people in the office might then offer me jobs. He also advised me to go to work for the architect I admired the most. It was completely clear that I work for Le Corbusier.⁶²

Architectural jobs after the War burgeoned to accommodate the expeditious massive rebuilding needed. Owing to the nature of Corbusier's atelier, open to young architects, engineers, and other building specialists from various countries eager to learn from Corbu and willing to work for free, Lemco soon joined the myriad others in the atelier of Le Corbusier at 35, rue de Sèvres. The collaboration between architects and engineers was unusual for the time, but typified by Corbusier's French CIAM group, ASCORAL (Assemblée de constructeurs pour une renovation architecturale), formed in 1942. Lemco, by her own admission, arrived at Corbusier's office at a time when there was a rush to finish some drawings. She found that the best way to transmit her acquired knowledge and basic skills was "to just do." Thus, she was hired to make engineering drawings of the concrete structure which was to become one of the most important modern buildings in the post-war world: the Unité d'Habitation.

Corbu had been awarded the commission in 1945 by the French Minister of Reconstruction, Raoul Dautry, for his demonstration of a large residential unit, in accordance with the ideas that he had long been advocating",⁶³ recounted André

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⁶² Author taped interview with Blanche Lemco van Ginkel, February, 2001.

⁶³ André Wogenscky, "The Unité d'Habitation at Marseille," (trans. Stephen Santorelli), in H. Allen Brooks. Le Corbusier Archive. Unité d'Habitation, Marseille-Michelet, vol. I. (Paris: Fondation Le Corbusier, 1983): ix.

Wogenscky, one of Corbusier's early collaborators on the project. Lemco recalled her time spent in the atelier, where she was put in charge of designing a portion of the roof treatment. Since much has been written concerning the Unité, it will not be the purpose of this thesis to describe it in detail. Yet, it is important to note that the Unité represented an important modernist form. Averse to garden cities built on the edge of large towns, with its wasteful land usage and low density single-family housing, Le Corbusier produced what was a vertical garden city within one structure in order to demonstrate how modern building techniques could be used to better Mankind's life; it was a conception that had been brewing in him for over 25 years.⁶⁴

She was given two design jobs for the rooftop treatment: one, the tile detailing for the *maternelle*, the second, the ventilator shafts. The rooftop contained, according to Corbusier's image of a self-contained community, amenities for the residents and was to include a gymnasium, a nursery school, a children's wading pool, sculptural forms for informal conversation, a running track and an outdoor theatre. Lemco was asked to design the tile work on the walls of the *maternelle*, the nursery school. She recalled that day saying, "It was Corbusier's idea. He said that the *maternelle* should have some tile to provide colour for the children and that we should use the Provençale tile. So I was given a sample of Provençale tile and did something very simple with it." Lemco subsequently created the colourful chevron pattern which continues to grace the rooftop of the building. [Figure 6]

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⁶⁴ In 1907 Corbusier had visited the Carthusian monastery at Ema near Florence. The Marseille Unité was designed on this idea of collective life and community housed together in one building; built with human dimensions in mind and containing the necessities of city life. In Jean Jenger. Le Corbusier, Architect, Painter, Poet. (New York: Harry Abrams, 1996): 77.

Lemco's second design was for the two exhaust ventilators also contained on the roof. Willing to take up the task but not knowing what the cylindrical ventilators were, she asked. "So I went to the engineers and said 'What is this thing?' And they told me there were three fans in there. So I thought I could make something out of that; let's have a trefoil."⁶⁵ She altered the design creating a tri-partite curvature which poetically echoed the mechanical equipment contained inside the giant forms, and splayed them outward to the sky. [Figure 7a, b] Her design of the shafts reflected not only her growing acknowledgement of combining form and art, a theme Corbusier incorporated into most of his work, but her willingness to find an artistic solution to the problems of form. Decoration, was not to be gratuitously applied to the technology of the concrete, but the form of the concrete was demonstrated to be beautiful in and of itself and showed the modernist rigour with which she was now working.

Lemco not only learned the technical requirements of architecture, but also the requirements of artistry under the watchful eye of Le Corbusier. She related the following incident:

The nursery school became a pavilion, scaled both to adult and child (hopefully). It had walls. Concrete walls. Le Corbusier was not happy. Many illustrated lectures on the walls --- dissertations over the draughting table for my edification. Reacting against the gratuitous decoration of my Montreal formation, I had nothing positive to offer. I questioned and demurred. As Le Corbusier said, 'You young people, you are such purists!'⁶⁶

While in England Ms. Lemco had learned of the city planning program at Harvard from Peter Oberlander. Oberlander had been a student in the program, having obtained a

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⁶⁵ Author taped interview with Blanche Lemco van Ginkel, February, 2001.

⁶⁶ Blanche Lemco van Ginkel, "Lessons," *The Fifth Column*, 5:2, (Oct. 1985): 11.

scholarship from the National Research Council. After being rejected by the NRC for a scholarship because she was a woman,⁶⁷ she successfully applied directly to Harvard for a bursary and was accepted for the 1949 fall term. She was not certain that she wanted to leave, though, saying that she was now feeling useful in Corbu's office, but Corbusier urged her to accept it, writing her a letter of reference, and telling her she could return anytime she wanted. Lemco recalled the details as, "He [Corbusier] pushed me to accept it. ... He thought it was important for me to go there. Of course, at that time Gropius was chairman of architecture, so it was one of his buddies sort of. We thought this was a good thing for me." Lemco soon left for Boston and embarked on the second step of her journey along the path of modernism.

Modernist influences in the United States.

In order to understand why Blanche Lemco would opt at this time to return to North America, and Harvard in particular, it is essential to acknowledge the path that architecture had taken in the United States and the influences it was exerting on not only architecture but planning and architectural education.

Modernism in the United States had formed and blossomed while Lemco was at McGill and during her years in Europe. In the period before the War, modernism had been brought to the United States and disseminated by prominent European architects, many of whom were escaping Nazi regimes and the War in Europe. Three leaders of the German modernist movement settled in the United States in the late thirties and early forties: Erich Mendelsohn, Walter Gropius and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe. They had been preceded by Rudolph Schindler (in 1914), William Lescaze (in 1920) and Richard

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⁶⁷ Boisvert: 2.

Neutra (in 1923), but van der Rohe's directorship at the Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT) and Gropius's chairmanship at Harvard were the most efficacious in influencing design and architectural education.

Van der Rohe's design for the campus of the Illinois Institute of Technology, done after he arrived in Chicago in 1939, brought a rectangular steel-framed essence to modernism with its grid-like simplicity, mimicking the grid of the city's layout, and displayed van der Rohe's philosophy of structural expression. Chicago thus became the setting for this particular style of modernism and influenced local architects as well as Canadian architecture students as far away as Manitoba. Van der Rohe followed the IIT buildings with the Farnsworth House (1946) and the Lake Shore Drive apartments (1948). "As director of the Department of Architecture at the Illinois Institute of Technology from 1939 to 1959, he had ample opportunity to develop a 'school' of architecture in the broadest possible sense and to generate a culture of simple, logical building ... and to open in principle to the optimum utilization of industrial technique."⁶⁸ His pared-down, honest approach to materials, and his utilization of steel and glass, symmetry and asymmetry, was seen by many as the evocation of power. Therefore, in a manner contrasted to the use of the heavy, solid, and bulky stone edifices of the 19th century, his light, transparent and technological style became the symbol of banking, business and commerce of the late 20th century.

Walter Gropius, who, like van der Rohe, had been associated with the Bauhaus in Weimar, Germany (1919-28), arrived in the United States and assumed his post as Director of Harvard University's Graduate School of Design in 1937. Gropius's approach to the teaching of architecture seems to have stemmed from his early training in the office

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⁶⁸ Frampton: 237.

of Peter Behrens in Germany. His strength was in recognizing “the inevitability of an industrial culture” and giving expression to that culture through buildings. In an article for Architectural Record in 1937, Gropius put forward what was to become his teaching methodology while at Harvard. He initially stated: “My intention is not to introduce a so to speak cut and dried “Modern Style” from Europe, but rather to introduce a method of approach ... to make young people realize how inexhaustible the means of creation are if they make use of the innumerable modern products of our age...”⁶⁹ He went on to say that the student should not only see and utilize organic development, but also see a new spatial vision which encompassed both technical and rational and the harmony of colour and proportion. Good architecture was therefore a projection of life itself: biological, sociological, technological and artistic.

It was recognized that this view was radical and out of step with many U.S. schools of architecture which still adhered to their Beaux-Arts roots. When Joseph Hudnut, Dean of the School of Architecture at Harvard (1936) hired Walter Gropius, this act had a profound effect on the overall direction in architectural education in the United States, “... for during the years after Gropius’ and [Marcel] Breuer’s arrival in this country, almost every major architectural school patterned itself after Harvard’s GSD.”⁷⁰ Hudnut, who had been educated in the traditional Beaux-Arts tradition at Harvard, the University of Michigan and Columbia, had turned toward a modernist agenda in the 1920’s feeling that modernism addressed important social issues. In 1933 when he became Acting Dean of Architecture at Columbia, he began to champion European modernists. According to architectural historian Jill Pearlman, “Hudnut was one of the

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⁶⁹ Walter Gropius, “Architecture at Harvard,” Architectural Record, 81:5, (May 1937): 9-10.

⁷⁰ “Obituary Joseph Hudnut,” Architectural Forum, 128:1, (Jan/Feb. 1968): 117.

first --- if not the first --- American scholar to bring the designs of Le Corbusier, Gropius, Mies van der Rohe and others to the attention of students and to present them in a positive light.”⁷¹ Many others shifted toward modernism reflecting the influence of other European immigrant faculty members.⁷² While Hudnut’s support of Gropius for Chairman of the School was not without conflict, together they were able to re-design the curriculum to reflect the tenets of modern architectural pedagogy. These, according to Pearlman, included the view that modern architects had a social responsibility to make good designs available to all people; a recognition that modern clients had new functional and spiritual needs that differed from any earlier eras; and that architects must work collectively with colleagues from a variety of fields in order to find solutions to design problems.⁷³ Under Hudnut and Gropius, Harvard hired other noted modernists, further entrenching modernism’s hold on the East Coast School.

Modernity also began to influence many aspects of urban life: in housing, like the Newport Beach House (1925-26) by Lovell and the Schindler-Chase house (1928) in California; in educational institutions like Mies van der Rohe’s design for IIT in Chicago; and in banking, like the Pennsylvania Savings Fund Society (PSFS: 1929-32) by Lescaze and his partner, George Howe. During the 1920s and 1930s the look of cities across the country was changing.

Two other factors ensured that modernism in the United States, if not accepted, would at least be noticed. These were the Modern Museum of Art’s (MoMA)

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⁷¹ Jill Pearlman, “Joseph Hudnut’s Other Modernism at the ‘Harvard Bauhaus’,” *JSAH*, 56:4 (Dec. 1997): 458.

⁷² Besides Gropius at Harvard, Eliel Saarinen was at Cranbrook, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy was at Chicago’s Institute of Design; van der Rohe was at IIT; Alvar Aalto was at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology; and Erich Mendelsohn was at Berkeley.

⁷³ Pearlman: 466-67.

International Style exhibit of 1932 and the coverage of modernism in the press and publications. The MoMA exhibit opened in New York on February 9, 1932. The exhibition had grown out of a project initiated by its curators, Alfred Barr, the first director of the Museum of Modern Art, art historian Henry-Russell Hitchcock, and architect Philip Johnson. As noted by Terrance Riley, curator of the 1992 review exhibition on the International Style, held at Columbia, "The substantive effects of the exhibition were many: the introduction of the European architectural avant-garde, particularly Mies van der Rohe, to America; the increased visibility and acceptance of modernist architects before the Second World War..."⁷⁴ The three curators, who had toured Europe and seen first-hand the new architecture in Germany, France, Belgium, Holland, Sweden, Denmark, Switzerland, Czechoslovakia and Austria as well as meeting with many of "the principal protagonists" of the day, including Le Corbusier, van der Rohe, Oud, Gropius and Giedion, prepared the exhibition for the New York museum to showcase both American and European modernism. In one section of the exhibit was shown the "type of building best suited to his [the architect's] genius."⁷⁵ Each architect chosen was to build a model of his building; a critical survey, photographs and biographical profiles were also displayed. In total, nine architects and their works were selected. From the United States came Raymond Hood, Frank Lloyd Wright, Howe and Lescaze, Richard Neutra and the Bowman Brothers; from Germany, Mies van der Rohe and Walter Gropius; from France, Le Corbusier; and from Holland, J.P. Oud.

Reacting against another architectural show by the New York Architectural League just prior to the opening of the MoMA exhibition, Philip Johnson also mounted

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⁷⁴ Terence Riley, The International Style: Exhibition 15 and the Museum of Modern Art, (New York: Rizzoli, 1992): 11.

⁷⁵ Riley: 17.

an exhibition which highlighted those modernist architects not included in the Architectural League show. As Robert Stern notes in his book, *New York 1930*, were it not for Johnson's intervention this slight of young architects by the League would have gone largely unnoticed. Entitled the 'Rejected Architects', Johnson's counter-exhibition attempted to organize the works of these architects and present them to the public. One Canadian architect of note rejected in the Architectural League exhibition was Montreal architect Hazen Sise, an early participant in CIAM congresses and colleague of John Bland at McGill. Many young architects considered to be working in the modern style were highlighted in the exhibit which added much to their reputations as the 'Rejected Architects' exhibition did not go unnoticed by the public on the streets of New York. Johnson recalled the atmosphere: "We made a lot of noise by having 'sandwichmen' parade up and down Lexington Avenue in front of the Grand Central Palace, [with signs reading] 'See Really Modern Architecture, Rejected by the League.'"⁷⁶ In the end, the American models represented un-built works, while the European models were completed buildings.⁷⁷

The international scale of modernism also focussed on a second division Johnson organized by country, which included forty projects by thirty-seven architects from fifteen countries. A third section represented advances in housing. This exhibit, as Riley stated was "to ensure the success of the exhibition and, therefore, of 'the movement' in America."⁷⁸ It included special previews and openings for housing advocates, architects

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⁷⁶ Robert Stern, Gregory Gilmartin and Thomas Mellins, *New York 1930: Architecture and Urbanism Between the Two World Wars*, (New York: Rizzoli, 1987): 343.

⁷⁷ Riley: 104. The exhibition included, for example, the Tugendhat House and German Pavillion from the Barcelona International Exposition [van der Rohe], Savoye and Stein houses [Le Corbusier], Johnson House and a row of small houses [Oud], the Bauhaus and Fagus Factory [Gropius].

⁷⁸ Riley: 41-42.

and directors of university art departments, and also attempted to reach the general public through public lectures at the museum as well as at various New York department stores featuring modern art, furnishings and decorative arts.⁷⁹

In addition to major exhibitions like the one at MoMA, one of the key areas of debate was the planning of cities and this topic was given much play in mainstream journals such as, the New Republic, the New York World, the New York Times, and, especially, the New Yorker. Prominent among critical writers of the time was Lewis Mumford.

Between 1918 and the late 1960s, Mumford reached not only professional architects and planners with his articles for professional journals as Architectural Record, Architecture and the Journal of the American Institute of Architects, he also informed a wider readership in his numerous articles for the New Yorker and the New Republic. Especially notable were his articles 'The Plan of New York, New Homes for a New Deal' and a review of the MoMA exhibit in 1932. As well as a critic of the contemporary scene, Mumford, a great observer of his native city of New York, also authored the books, The Culture of Cities (1938) and Sticks and Stones (1934), in which he explored America's usable past, and how it could bring a fuller understanding of contemporary architecture. He was also sought after for various academic appointments to institutions, such as Dartmouth College (1929-35), Stanford University (1942-44) and the University of Pennsylvania (1951-56). Largely self-taught, but keenly observant and truly an advocate of the roles architecture, technology and urbanism played in modern civilization, Mumford's importance in the press of the day cannot be overlooked. He was a key figure

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⁷⁹ Stern: 336-37. Exhibitions that could be seen in Macy's, Marshall Fields, Lord and Taylor, and Wannamaker's included shows on silk, an exposition of decorative arts and the Architectural and Allied Arts exhibit. These were stores which attracted the middle-class.

in the introduction of European ideas to the United States. Mumford had been instrumental in planning in New York as the sympathetic and effective spokesman for the Regional Planning Association of America (RPAA) in the 1920's.

Harvard and after

Changes at the School of Architecture began with Hudnut's arrival and continued with the coming of Gropius. Together they changed the curriculum initiating a system whereby professional architects were brought into the School as visiting critics, and united the previously separate programs of architecture, regional planning, and landscape architecture into one department⁸⁰, which Hudnut saw as complementary, not distinct, disciplines. Hudnut had long held that a student required a broad, liberal and interdisciplinary education in order to understand the society for whom they were building. CIAM secretary and Harvard professor, Jaqueline Tyrwhitt, explained how the changes affected the students: "All incoming students are exposed to some general principles of environmental design; done in studio. They then learn the technicalities within their own field... The student also attends a special seminar throughout the year, as well as taking 1 or 2 elective courses in a department of the school or in another faculty of the university or at MIT. It is hoped that the student will gain a wider range of awareness by doing this."⁸¹

Blanche Lemco has commented on how the curriculum affected her as a student, saying: "Harvard was energetic, socially conscious, intellectually rich, unlike McGill.

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⁸⁰ Mary N. Woods, "First-generation modern: Homecoming at Harvard's Graduate School of Design," Architectural Record, 171:1, (Jan. 1983): 63.

⁸¹ Jaqueline Tyrwhitt, "Education for Urban Design---Origin and concepts of the Harvard program," in The Architect and the City, Proceedings AIA-ACSA, Cranbrook Academy of Art, June 11-22, 1962: 125.

The core of the program was in studio. Students also studied outside of their discipline, as sociology, school of government, etc. You learned from people in these disciplines and it was an exciting place.”⁸²

For two years Ms. Lemco pursued her studies in city planning at Harvard, and worked during the summer in the Ottawa office of Humphrey Carver at Central Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC). Carver, as chairman of the Research Committee, was a planning theoretician and responsible for directing research in housing and housing policy in Canada. The importance of the CMHC as an agency of the government was underlined by its mandate of providing housing through mortgage insurance, through direct government loans and in providing for public housing.⁸³ With the help provided by insured mortgages, housing became relatively affordable to many Canadians and, through CMHC’s planning initiatives, helped to ensure planned growth in the developing cities after the War. During her term at CMHC, Lemco, though, worked on an urban map project, which became a CMHC guide to establish a common, standardized graphic language for Canadian map preparation.

Graduating from Harvard in 1950 with a degree in city planning, Ms. Lemco returned to Montreal in the hopes of gaining admission into the Province of Quebec Architecture Association (PQAA); one of the requisites of entry being that a potential candidate had to have gained one year’s practical work experience in the office of an architect. She, therefore, joined the Montreal firm of Mayerovitch and Bernstein because Mayerovitch was a modernist whom she felt was “probably influenced to a degree by the

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⁸² Valerie Schatzger taped interview with Blanche Lemco van Ginkel, University of Toronto oral history project. University of Toronto Archives. Accession B1993-0042, Nov. 20, 1987.

⁸³ Humphrey Carver, “Planning in Canada,” *Planning 1960*, Conference Proceedings, American Society of Planning, Bal Harbour, FL, May 22-26, 1960: 24.

modernist architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright”⁸⁴. Harry Mayerovitch and Alan Bernstein, both graduates of McGill (1933, and 1934, respectively), had long been interested in housing and planning problems in the city. Their firm specialized in designing commercial, industrial, and office buildings, apartment blocks and residences in and around Montreal, and during her year there Lemco was involved in designing both country and city houses for the firm that may have included several duplexes designed by the firm in 1950. She remembered Harry Mayerovitch as “decent” and very generous to her. She recalled her work for a factory building, saying:

“My big job was designing an industrial building. Not very fancy, but I was pleased with it. It was a brick building. It had to be secure, it had to be a certain height, ... , and brick faced. I designed it so that all of the dimensions conformed to the dimensions of a standard brick...that was my module. All of this comes from my purist tendencies. That I learned from Corbusier. I guess it was that kind of thinking. They were such good sports, because it was a lot more work to do it that way. But, Harry Mayerovitch was such a good sport, he just let me do that.”⁸⁵

In 1951 Ms. Lemco received a telephone call from G. Holmes Perkins, Dean of the School of Architecture at the University of Pennsylvania to join the faculty there and aid in the set up of a new program. This was to become an important five years in Lemco’s professional life and one which would see the establishment of more contacts with important architects. In Philadelphia Lemco would broaden her experiences even further by the demands of her teaching duties, in becoming known within Philadelphia by architects involved in new urban objectives being planned around the city, and by becoming more active in CIAM congresses.

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⁸⁴ Author taped interview with Blanche Lemco van Ginkel, February, 2001.

⁸⁵ Author taped interview with Blanche Lemco van Ginkel, February, 2001.

The University of Pennsylvania was the second oldest architectural program in the United States, but under Perkins's direction it cast off its Beaux-Arts tradition, its professors in the vanguard of modern planners who were beginning to tackle the problems of urban renewal. The city of Philadelphia was engaged in the 1950s in what was to be called the 'Philadelphia renaissance'. From 1947 the Wagner-Steagall Act had empowered the United States Housing Administration (USHA) to make loans up to 90% of the cost of slum clearance, so many North American cities had become engaged in slum clearance and introduced low-income housing projects. Seen as "freeing the slum dwellers from the bondage of unsafe and unsanitary tenements", free-standing superblocks became the high-rise slums of the future. In Philadelphia, though, low-cost housing consisted of three- and four-story brick buildings arranged in eight quadrangles, self-contained and undifferentiated. After the War, many large cities in the United States suffered from blight, eroded tax bases, and saw an increase in black populations within the inner city while witnessing the move of whites into the growing suburbs. In Philadelphia, after the War, substandard housing accounted for 80,000 of its 550,000 structures. In 1945, G. Holmes Perkins had helped draft the city's Redevelopment Law. This legislation required the Citizen's Council on City Planning (CCCCP) to certify which of the city's neighbourhoods would be redeveloped. Redevelopment, in the case of Philadelphia, meant revitalization, rather than slum clearance. "Thus, between 1945 and 1952, Philadelphia began its first housing and redevelopment program."⁸⁶ The design for the redevelopment plans were put into the hands of architects Oscar Stonorov and Louis Kahn. Where possible, the Triangle Plan, as the redevelopment project was called, tried

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⁸⁶ John F. Bauman, Public Housing, Race and Renewal, (Philadelphia: Temple University, 1987): 105.

to preserve historic areas, protect the social structure of neighbourhoods and do this with a minimum of dislocation of its present inhabitants.⁸⁷

Perkins, as one of the main forces behind this urban development, began to attract some of the brightest architects and planners on the east coast to Penn's planning department. Over the next few years he would hire Robert Mitchell, a well-known planner to be Chairman of the department, Robert Le Ricolais, Romaldo Giurgola, Robert Venturi, Robert Geddes, Louis Kahn and Blanche Lemco. She greatly respected Perkins, who had been Chairman of Planning when she was at Harvard, and she considered him as a mentor. So, "... lorsque Perkins vous demandait de faire une chose, c'est bien simple, vous deviez le faire.." ⁸⁸

At the time of Lemco's arrival, Perkins was involved in revising the curriculum, much as Hudnut had done at Harvard, in order to reflect modernism. Perkins hired three new professors besides Lemco: Sasha Nowicki to teach first year studio and Robert Geddes to teach the second year studio. Lemco was put in charge of third year because of her background both in architecture and in planning. To Perkins, as Lemco recalled, third year was to encompass architecture in the context of community, and she was to devise its program without much direction: there was no previous curriculum to rely on, no suggestion for a textbook and no one who had taught the course in the previous year. According to the University of Pennsylvania calendar, Lemco taught two courses: ARCH 300, Architecture and City Planning and PLAN 402, Introduction to Design for City Planning. Even though the third year group of students was taught in co-operation with two other professors with more experience, she was responsible for the course. The fact

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⁸⁷ "The Philadelphia Cure: Clearing slums with penicillin, not surgery," *Architectural Forum*, 96:4, (April 1952): 113.

⁸⁸ Boisvert: 2.

that she was a woman teacher created 'many smiles, mockery and surprise among the students.' Most of her students were older than she and had recently returned from the war making it very difficult for her, at times, to earn the respect enjoyed by her male colleagues.

The move to Penn was rewarding in other respects. She had become friends with some of her new colleagues, and with some prompting by Jaqueline Tyrwhitt, formed a Philadelphia CIAM group with Robert Geddes, George Qualls and Romulo Giurgula. Drawing upon Ms Lemco's knowledge obtained by her previous CIAM experience at Bridgwater the group prepared a presentation of the planned CIAM meeting in 1953, scheduled for Aix-en-Provence.

CIAM, in the intervening years leading up to 1953, had held two congresses: CIAM 7, in Bergamo, Italy and CIAM 8, in Hoddeston, England. The topic for both congresses had been the problems of urbanism --- the Athens Charter in practice, and town planning was the theme of the Bergamo meeting, while the 'Heart of the City' was tackled at Hoddeston. At Bergamo, Corbusier had introduced the idea of the '*grille*' or grid, which was to aid in analyzing, in a systematic manner, the topics set forth at this meeting and at all subsequent meetings. The grid allowed for analysis according to a number of factors: scale, function, and time. John Gold, author of The Experience of Modernism, explained: "Using it, member groups were asked to devise analyses of urban developments at three different scales: a residential unit, a new town of around 60,000 people and a major city undergoing change."⁸⁹ Working within a grid framework, titles were arranged across the top which included subjects such as the environment, land use, economic and social influences, finance [Figure 8: 10, 11, 15, 17], etc., while the vertical

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⁸⁹ John R Gold, The Experience of Modernism, (London: E & FN Spon, 1997): 204.

component would contain reactions to the theme by either the client, the general public or the authorities. Each theme would then be discussed according to the four established functions found in the Athens Charter: dwelling, working, recreation and circulation. In short, each of the 10 themes could be discussed in terms of the four functions. The grid would then be presented in the form of either a dossier, an exhibition or a wall display. Over the next 10 years of congresses, though, the grid would be further simplified by groups who found it too cumbersome.

The theme of the Hoddeston congress had been changed from the Charter of Habitat to the 'Civic Center', reflecting the efforts of many of the groups 'working on pedestrian centers in Dutch, Swedish and British new towns'⁹⁰ This had been further amended and had become 'The Heart of the City' proposed by the MARS group, the most active of the CIAM groups at that point. Thus, the focus of the congresses since Bridgwater had begun to evolve toward examination of problems and solutions of urbanization taking place at a rapid rate throughout the world. The Hoddeston congress reflected an awareness of suburbanization and the need to consider other elements beyond the four CIAM functions, i.e., the element which made a community a community. For the Aix meeting, then, the theme of the Charter of Habitat was finally to be tackled.

The program for this meeting was held from July 19 to July 21, 1953 with concentration focussing on the large topic of 'living'; that is, "everything that man plans and constructs for living"⁹¹. As suburbs and suburban planning were mushrooming, brought about by returning veterans, low interest rates and mortgage guarantees which

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⁹⁰ Mumford: 201.

⁹¹ Mumford: 226. Each group was to present a grid on 21 x 33 cm panels and colour-coded by function. Approximately 40 grids were displayed at the meeting attended by 500 members for 31 countries.

encouraged home ownership for the middle class fleeing many run-down urban centres, it was propitious that Lemco and her Philadelphia colleagues chose to submit for analysis a new icon of suburban development, Levittown, as part of the commission on urbanism.

The analysis of the new suburb of Levittown, near Philadelphia, was of interest to Lemco because it was new and innovative, a good example of American-style planning. The plan, according to author David Popenoe, was based on a system where approximately 17,300 single-family homes were grouped into seven or eight superblocks. The superblocks would be divided into 40 named neighbourhoods ranging in size from 51 to 990 homes, each bounded by arterial roadways but accessed by collector streets.⁹² At the centre of each superblock was a public school surrounded by curving streets, to reduce traffic flow through the neighbourhood. The houses along the major roadways faced inward and were so similar in style that they could only be differentiated by colour, creating a homogeneous and, yet, lifeless feel. Each house provided a garage for the resident's automobile upon which life in the community depended due to the lack of public transportation. Services and shopping were only available outside of the development.⁹³ At CIAM 9 Lemco's grid portrayed four facets of the Levittown housing suburb: the carport as a meeting place; its residents as young families with all the trappings of the middle-class, i.e., owners of a dog or cat, a television, washing machine, and lawn mower; the materials for the house which were pre-cut, marked, packaged, delivered and assembled on the site; and the standardization of working, housing, clothing, food, information and communication where the automobile was a status symbol. [Figure 9] Levittown was unique from the point of view of construction

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⁹² David Popenoe, The Suburban Environment, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977): 113.

⁹³ Popenoe: 117.

techniques and overall concept and thus was looked upon as a model for many suburban communities in North America.

Levittown also evoked critical reaction. Some critics spoke of its mass-produced housing which lead to 'mass-produced lives' and noted the long commuting times, absence of urban stimuli, and an atmosphere which produced 'social hyperactivity.' Sociology professor David Popenoe's description of his walk through Levittown on a spring day in 1977 is such an example:

On a half-hour walk through one Levittown neighborhood on a warm sunny mid-day in March, the streets, sidewalks, and front yards were deserted of people; not a single home-dweller or pedestrian was seen or heard, and only an occasional delivery truck or car, plus the barking of dogs, broke the silence. This experience is not unusual.⁹⁴

Herbert Gans, the author of a 1967 study of Levittown, who lived in Levittown gathering statistics, found his experience ran counter to much of the criticism weighed against suburbia when he said:

Critics of suburbia looked at suburbia as outsiders who approached the community with a 'tourist' perspective. The tourist wants visual interest, cultural diversity, entertainment, esthetic pleasure and emotional stimulation. The resident on the other hand wants a comfortable, convenient and socially satisfying place to live."⁹⁵

For Gans, the experience of living in Levittown was a satisfying one.

Unlike many suburbs, Levittown had been developed by a single builder, the firm of Levitt and Sons, Inc., the largest builders in the eastern United States. Until the beginning of World War II, the firm had built only a small number of subdivisions on

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⁹⁴ Popenoe: 117.

⁹⁵ Herbert Gans, The Levittowners: Ways of Life and Politics in a New Suburban Community, (New York: Pantheon, 1967): 186.

Long Island aimed at the upper-middle class. "After World War II as a result of experience gained in building Navy housing, the Levitts developed a mass production scheme that allowed them to build inexpensive housing for the postwar flood of veterans and their families."⁹⁶ Levittown, an experiment in creating a community, and planned to provide safe, residential neighbourhoods without through streets, attracted buyers with its promises of a town centre, parks and a complete set of community facilities. It was to be a 'bedroom' community where every morning workers would leave, drive to their offices in the city and return at night. Housing was based on three basic designs: Cape Cod, Ranch and Colonial and prompted criticism by the press and New York critic Lewis Mumford for its physical and demographic homogeneity. Besides their affordability to residents, each house included modern appliances as part of the house price, was situated around Village Greens that consisted of neighbourhood shops, and offered schools with playgrounds and swimming pools; attractive amenities for women with young children.

For the CIAM 10 Dubrovnik meeting Lemco and the Philadelphia group presented their solutions to the problem which they saw as inherent in Levittown. "[In 1953]...it was a response to mechanization at the time; a kind of systematizing of the building process. From that point of view it was very successful. And, then, for the next congress ..., we designed our answer to Levittown, which was to take the same basic Levittown type of housing and reorganize it. That is, into groups instead of on the street pattern that Levittown used. The Dubrovnik meeting was not a design ... it was a response."⁹⁷ For Lemco and her colleagues, their alternative for housing relationships and a reconfiguration of neighbourhoods was very much along the lines of that which social

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⁹⁶ Gans: 3.

⁹⁷ Author taped interview with Blanche Lemco van Ginkel, February, 2001.

planners, Percival and Paul Goodman, advocated in their 1960s book, Communitas, which Lemco had read and admired. “The idea was what you see at the glance of the eye being very important. And that was at the basis of the grouping of the houses,” she recounted. “The eye is the sure measure is how I remember it.”⁹⁸

Suburban developments like Levittown had an early precedent during the war when many communities were constructed in order to house the thousands of munitions workers working in plants near large urban centres. Many well-known modernists were successful in having their designs realized at this time. The Farm Security Administration (FSA), and its sister agency, the Federal Works Agency, were convinced that by utilizing these architects it could solve the housing shortage and avoid the stigma of associated with public housing in the United States.⁹⁹ Therefore, in the United States architects found themselves in the unusual, yet enviable, position of having government as their client. In Pittsfield, Massachusetts, Frank Lloyd Wright received a government commission to design a 100-unit housing project, in conjunction with a rifle factory. His design [Figure 10] incorporated cloverleaf houses in a pinwheel cluster with rooftop play areas, each with its own yard. It remained un-built as the government agency ran out of money. In 1942, though, Walter Gropius and Marcel Breuer built a project called Aluminum City Terrace in New Kensington, PA [Figure 11]. Its minimal construction was due to financial constraints which limited the unit cost to \$3,750. The modernist design of Aluminum City Terrace was aesthetically pleasing, its hilly wooded site approached by a single winding road. Most of the units were two stories high and featured open plans with large southern facing windows that afforded each unit maximal

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⁹⁸ Author taped interview with Blanche Lemco van Ginkel, February, 2001.

⁹⁹ Donald Albrecht (ed.), World War II and the American Dream, (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1995): 12.

light and air. In the same year, George Howe, Oscar Stonorov, and Louis Kahn designed the Carver Court housing project [Figure 12], and in California, Channel Heights was designed and built by modernist Richard Neutra [Figure 13].¹⁰⁰

The next CIAM meeting held in Aix-en-Provence in 1953 was not only a pivotal one for Lemco, but for CIAM as well as it faced a challenge to its functional city beliefs by its younger delegates who believed in a more human association in housing. This caused a division in philosophical outlook. Lemco, as a witness to this, recognized the change of atmosphere, and shifted her stance from the earlier 1947 conference. The grid presented by English architects Alison and Peter Smithson, entitled, “Urban Reidentification”, exemplified this change. The Golden Lane project (1952) for workers in London’s East End typified an environment in which people could interact on what they termed the ‘street-deck’. It was an homage to Corbusier’s Unité, yet criticized the slab building and its socially inhumane sensibilities. Where Corbu had seen an ordered environment complete in one building, the Smithson’s free-standing blocks were linked together linearly by their ‘deck’ running along the outside of each unit. This would mimic life on the street and ‘enhance chance encounters, and was a[n] ... abstract attempt at restating traditional working-class doorstep life in the air.’¹⁰¹

A result of Lemco’s work was an ever-expanding sphere now included architects from England, Morocco and Holland and included Shadrach Woods, Georges Candilis, John Howells, Aldo van Eyck, Jaap Bakema, John Voelcker, Alison and Peter Smithson

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¹⁰⁰ Carver Court, in Coatesville, Pennsylvania, built for black steelworkers, featured open ground space for storage and automobiles with living spaces on the second story; Channel Heights, built for workers in the San Pedro shipyards, was sited on hills, canyons and ravines overlooking the Pacific Ocean and featured a meandering road and continuous park system with a pedestrian footpath system throughout the development. Albrecht: 12, 13.

¹⁰¹ Curtis: 444.

and H.P. D. van Ginkel (Sandy). Together they furthered their architectural and humanistic interests by helping to found Team 10 at the last CIAM meeting to be held in Otterlo in 1959.

In 1957, Ms. Lemco married Sandy van Ginkel and returned to Montreal to set up practice. In the twelve intervening years since her departure, she had grown intellectually and spiritually, and formed long-lasting international friendships. The next twenty years would see her participation in successful and fulfilling projects, intermingled with periods of frustration due to governmental and political disputes over how to address the problems involved in city planning. This next chapter in her life illustrates her continuing efforts to implement her vision of modernist urban design.

CHAPTER 3: RETURN TO MONTREAL AND PROJECTS

The van Ginkel's return to Montreal was undertaken after some discussion about the possibility of living in Europe. Mr. van Ginkel, who saw an openness in government in Canada along with the fact that Blanche knew many people in Montreal, finalized their choice.

As Sandy van Ginkel noted after their arrival in Montreal in 1957, "Important things were being built, like the St. Lawrence Seaway (1956) and the Trans-Canada Highway."¹⁰² The Seaway project, a joint venture between the United States and Canada, made for easier, faster shipping on the Great Lakes and ensured Montreal's status as the major port terminus for Canada and the Great Lakes.¹⁰³ By 1958 Montreal was in the throes of massive urban development. Under Mayor Jean Drapeau, construction had begun on Metropolitan Boulevard, one of the "main factors required in the renewal of the city."¹⁰⁴ This created a new urban centre in the northern half of the city. This new centre saw a shift in commerce from rue St. Jacques in the old section of the city to Boulevard René-Lévesque and Sherbrooke Street. In the wake of the new highway and movement of the commercial centre, the city witnessed the introduction of commercial malls and suburbs, and modern skyscrapers rose, vying with each other in glass and steel displays of power. Financial and business centres designed in the International style of America's modern architectural masters, like I.M. Pei, Skidmore, Owings and Merrill,

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¹⁰² Kelly Crossman taped interview with H.P.D. van Ginkel. Oral history tape, August 23, 1995. ARCON 1996:002-001, Canadian Centre for Architecture.

¹⁰³ With the opening of the Seaway, two-way traffic of grain to Montreal and the return trip of ships carrying iron ore to Canadian and U.S. steelmakers within the Great Lakes resulted in Montreal becoming the hub of shipping activity and it soon led all Great Lakes ports for tonnage shipped between 1958 and 1977. Jennifer Sussman. *Quebec and the St. Lawrence Seaway*. (Montreal: C.D. Howe Research Institute, 1979): 11.

¹⁰⁴ Yves Descamps, "Montreal: A Landscape of Modern America," *JSSAC*, 24:1 (1999): 24.

and Mies van der Rohe, were sought after to visually transform the city marking its new cosmopolitanism.

While the outward signs of transformation were slowly evolving, there was also a very deep transformation taking place within Quebec society. Before the war, Quebec had suffered from a falling birth rate and decreased immigration. Rural families had remained tied to the land. The Catholic Church and the Union Nationale-led government of Maurice Duplessis conspired to maintain Quebec as a traditional and repressive society, in which women could neither vote nor own property. The Church's power was based on the faith of ninety percent of the population; aligned with its central role as dispenser of services in schools, hospitals and charitable and cultural organizations. The Duplessis government was also highly conservative "defending the established order and opposing a welfare state and increasing government intervention."¹⁰⁵ The end of the war saw an undercurrent of social change as women became enfranchised in 1948, and traditional cultures, based on stories, legends, ceremony and religion-based celebrations, were soon replaced by radio, movie, newspapers and mass-market books.¹⁰⁶

The traditional power structure in Montreal society, overwhelmingly anglophone and university educated, was now shared with three new groups: the middle bourgeoisie, the petite bourgeoisie and the new elites.¹⁰⁷ Thus, Montreal, followed by the remainder of Quebec, began what historian Paul-André Linteau termed 'rattrapage' or the process of catching up with the rest of urbanized North America. As religion gradually lessened its

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¹⁰⁵ Paul André Linteau, René Durocher, Jean-Claude Robert and François Ricard, *Quebec Since 1930*, (trans. Robert Chodos and Ellen Garmaise). (Toronto: James Lorimer and Co., 1991): 149.

¹⁰⁶ Linteau, et al.: 121.

¹⁰⁷ The middle bourgeoisie composed local labor, manufacturing and transportation companies and were mostly Jewish businessmen and French-Canadian; the petite bourgeoisie came either from the state or the clergy; and the new elite were comprised of the new, emerging professions, such as reporters, social workers, economists, professors. It would be this group who would spark what was to become known in Quebec as the Quiet Revolution. Linteau, et al.:216-218.

hold on the population and its own institutions, the French majority challenged the English minority in the economy, the society and the city itself. Montreal prospered economically as money poured into building and development. Into this new Montreal, Blanche and Sandy van Ginkel returned and set up their practice, Van Ginkel Associates.

The firm's activities fell broadly into two categories: transportation and the city. Transportation projects included many plans for development of airports and circulation problems. Their urban projects encompassed suburban developments, new towns, housing studies and cultural endeavours.¹⁰⁸

The van Ginkel's work has often been handled by only the two of them; larger projects, of course, meant a larger staff. In any case, the nature of their professional relationship was always co-operative and overlapping in influence and design. As Mrs. van Ginkel commented, "...after we settled in Montreal we found that we were contributing ideas to each other's work ... I think our strengths are complementary and our backgrounds are very different. I guess I try to examine every aspect of a problem. I come from nowhere, so to speak, into architecture; Sandy comes from a couple of centuries of builders."¹⁰⁹ Each of the van Ginkels, like other architectural couples, have shared in the design process of each project to varying degrees. Like other female partners, Mrs. van Ginkel's professional input was at times secondary to her role as a mother. Their firm was often in the family home, making it easier for her to conduct business and care for the family simultaneously. The circumstances of women married to architects is explained by the following comment by WALAP (Women Architects, Landscape Architects and Planners),

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¹⁰⁸ The Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montreal holds in their collection all of the projects for Van Ginkel Associates and the personal papers of Blanche Lemco van Ginkel.

¹⁰⁹ Author taped interview with Blanche Lemco van Ginkel, January 2002.

A flexible work schedule is mandatory at the present time, if the capabilities of women are to be realized. Women find that their childbearing years overlap a critical period in their careers and are forced to make an all-or-nothing choice between having a family or continuing their professional development.¹¹⁰

The professional partnership of Sandy and Blanche van Ginkel was not unique in the world of architecture as seen by the examples of other husband-wife collaborations: Jane Drew (wife of Maxwell Fry); Wendy Foster (wife of Norman Foster); and, later, Denise Scott Brown (wife of Robert Venturi). In the late 1950's, though, small firms were still the norm as husbands and wives were more able to practice in a wider range of building projects not only encompassing residential projects, but also schools, libraries, etc. But escalation in the scale of projects in the 1960's, for the most part, foreshadowed the development of larger and larger offices as diverse architectural needs were needed; the office of Architects in Co-operative Partnerships [ARCOP], in Montreal, was one such example. Its design needs for Place Bonaventure, a megastructure combining offices, mall, railway and subway systems required not only architects, but planners and construction engineers. In the case of Van Ginkel Associates, it is necessary, unless specifically noted, to remember that the work was collaborative and, therefore, it is difficult to make distinctions as to the percentage of input into the projects by either van Ginkel.

Van Ginkel Associates continued to be a small firm, as demonstrated by the nature of its projects, four of which will be discussed: Bowring Park, the new town of Meadowvale, Midtown Manhattan, and, finally, Expo '67. These projects were chosen for their innovative design solutions, their breadth of vision as examples of modernist

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¹¹⁰ "The Case for Flexible Work Schedules," WALAP, 137:2 (Sept 1970): 53.

conception, as demonstrations of Blanche van Ginkel's belief in all aspects of urban design as the basis for the creation of a landscape in which Mankind could live and thrive.

Bowring Park

In 1958 Blanche van Ginkel was introduced by Hazen Sise to a man who knew about the planned expansion of a park in St. John's, Newfoundland. The development of a master plan was to turn the small park into a large metropolitan park. Mrs. van Ginkel, who saw it as a modest design project, accepted the commission which afforded her an opportunity to transform a romanticized early 20th century vision of a city park into one which reflected modern sensibilities and uses.

The city of St. John's, Newfoundland obtained 150 acres for an extension to its main city park, located three miles from downtown. Bowring Park [Figure 14], which had been purchased as the Rae Island Farm, was donated to the city in 1911 by Bowring Brothers Ltd., in celebration of its 100th anniversary of its business in Newfoundland. The Bowrings were well-known in Newfoundland for their passenger liners, for shipping of cod fish to Europe and South America and its coastal mail service down the East Coast of North America. Benjamin Bowring, an English watch and clock maker had come to St. John's in 1811. The business, originating as Mrs. Bowring's dry goods store became a thriving general department store business and, over time, developed into a global empire, which today survives as Bowring Jewellers in many Canadian cities.

The original 50 acres of farmland encompassed the Waterford and Kilbride Rivers when Bowring Park opened in 1914. The park, designed according to picturesque and

romantic traditions of the day, was the work of Rudolph Cochius, a landscape architect from the Montreal firm of Frederick Todd. Todd had himself worked in the New York office of Frederick Law Olmstead (1896-1900) before moving to Olmstead's Montreal office in 1900. Olmstead had been responsible for the design of major parks in North America, including Central Park in New York, Chicago's park system, major park commissions in Boston and San Francisco and Montreal's Mount Royal Park. It is assumed that Cochius, in his plans for the original park, would have also adhered to the principles he had learned in Todd's office, namely, a balanced mix of grass, wood and water, the use of existing topology, the integration of architecture into the landscape and, importantly, all intended to promote the physical and mental health of the user. This last criterion, meant to address issues of congestion, alleviate overcrowding and risks of infection in the city, sought the design of parks to counteract these negative aspects of urban life in the early part of the century. The park movement, stated urban planner M. Christine Boyer, had "spread across the urban mentality of the late nineteenth century, valued woodlands and meadows for their spiritual impact; ... were places of simple virtues and pleasures on the edge of urban disquietudes and troubles."¹¹¹ People worked long hours which limited the time they could spend getting to recreation areas. Boyer continued: "The provision of parks became a major improvement scheme for small and large towns alike... parks for walking, for boating, for picnics, for meditation and games, ... , were to be provided."¹¹²

Commissioned by Sir Edgar Bowring to create the park, Cochius began work on the park on May 8, 1912 and remained in Newfoundland until March 25, 1917. "Cochius

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¹¹¹ M. Christine Boyer, *Dreaming the Rational City*, (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1983): 34.

¹¹² Boyer: 35.

was responsible for creating the Park's unique atmosphere and mystique, which lingers to this very day..."¹¹³ Cochius continued the traditional elements of romantic picturesque park design in Bowring Park by including the 'three grand elements' of a pastoral landscape: meadows, forests and water. As the site had originally been farmland intersected by two rivers, it was not a difficult task for Cochius to develop these elements into the park's design. [Figure 15] Nestled between the rivers, renamed North and South, Cochius preserved open meadow land intersected by a winding road which on the north meandered through natural woodland. A natural element incorporated in 1915 --- the old swimming pond --- and various architectural elements, such as the Rustic Bridge, the Bungalow and the Neville Farm House, completed the design.

Picturesque in character and intimate in scale, Bowring Park had served the community of St. John's well. But, as the park began to absorb more and more visitors brought in by automobiles, it contained few open spaces and had not kept up with the changing activities of its public, such as sports fields and other areas for group activities. Fifty years had passed since the opening of the park and alterations were needed to reflect user demands, problems associated with hazardous level railway crossings and the expansion of road access.

The van Ginkel's approach to the design was both technical and aesthetic. The van Ginkel's first recognized the park design as a project of landscape architecture, but were soon compelled to extend their original ideas to include a study of road access and level rail crossings. The Canadian National Railway, which bisected the newly acquired land, and the nearby Trans-Canada Highway, as well as other road connections, made traffic considerations one of the major factors in their integrated proposal. As Blanche

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¹¹³ Doug Crane, Bowring Park, History and Interpretation, (St. John's: Bowring Park, 1995): no page.

van Ginkel commented, "These problems were more acute and administratively more complex when we considered the railway crossings, and inevitably the problem became one not only of landscape architecture but also of city planning and traffic engineering."¹¹⁴ Two bridges were designed and built to cross the CN tracks: one for automobile traffic and the other for foot traffic.

With the engineering firm of Ove Arup and Partners, the van Ginkels next solved the problem of the new footbridge. The bridge, designed by Sandy van Ginkel, was credited to Mrs. van Ginkel, the architect of record, as she was a registered architect and at the time Sandy was not.¹¹⁵ Therefore, it was she who was awarded the Massey Medal for its design in 1964.

The footbridge [Figure 16] was both an aesthetic and functional work in reinforced concrete. Cantilevered in both directions from a single supporting pier, the pedestrian handrail followed the alignment of the deck and was constructed of teak with bronze railings, both sophisticated and elegant materials.¹¹⁶ [Figure 17]

Mrs. van Ginkel's practice of collaboration with people having a variety of technical expertise, which would soon be common in large firms, like ARCOPI in the 1960s, was not known in North America in the late 1950s but was integral to the manner in which modernist architects worked in Europe; an example of her continued belief in CIAM's credence of cooperation between fields. Arup described such cooperation as "achieving the perfect union of design and construction."¹¹⁷ The collaboration of

¹¹⁴ Letter to Municipal Council, City of St. John's, Newfoundland, October 28, 1959. CCA AR27-A06-04.

¹¹⁵ In The Netherlands there had been no registration of architects. He did finally become a registered architect in Canada in 1970; Mrs. van Ginkel became registered in 1952. Author taped interview with Blanche Lemco van Ginkel, January 2002.

¹¹⁶ "Footbridge in Bowring Park, St. John's, NFLD," *TCA*, 9:12 (Dec. 1964): 43.

¹¹⁷ Ove Arup, "The Engineer and the Architect," *Architect's Yearbook*, 9 (1960): 167.

technical experts was driven by the development of new materials and new, innovative ways of construction, such as prefabrication, seen in the construction of new suburban communities. Arup confirmed this in a paper written in 1960, in which he said,

The difficulty which faces designers nowadays is that the knowledge required to design a modern building or structure is far too extensive to be mastered by one mind. This is so because of the enormous technical progress which has taken place in the past 100 years... Old-fashioned building relied on tradition for its guide. In contrast, modern technique is distinguished by the fact that every step taken towards the goal is carefully planned beforehand, and the design is the key to all this planning.¹¹⁸

The van Ginkels often acted as their own contractors in employing engineering firms to develop and solve engineering solutions to their designs. In Bowring Park, Ove Arup provided the expertise needed to bring their design to reality. Arup was famous for his pioneering work in reinforced concrete and had been involved in many modernist projects in London. Arup himself was a leading figure in the MARS group and had also been employed in modernist projects, including Tecton's Highpoint 1 and 2 and the penguin pool at Regent's Park Zoo [Figure 18].

Van Ginkel's sensitive design, with its 'floating' steps, notably functional in addition to aesthetically satisfying, earned her the following comment in a journal discussion of the Massey Medal competition:

... the Footbridge in Bowring Park, designed by Blanche van Ginkel ... is a completely unique thing. It demonstrates how a relatively minor work of civil engineering can by sensitive handling become an object as perfect and satisfying as a jewel or a hand tool.¹¹⁹

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¹¹⁸ Arup: 167.

¹¹⁹ "Massey Medals 1964," *JRAIC*, 41:11 (Nov. 1964): 36.

With the problem of the level crossings solved, van Ginkel turned her attention to the second of her objectives: to remedy some of the park's deficiencies. The park's earlier design features, streams, meandering walks and rocky terrain were in a sense fine, but limiting for modern activities. Therefore, in order to address these concerns the van Ginkel approach consisted of creating both passive and active areas [Figure 19], which would cater to both the young and older visitor, individuals, families, and varying types of activities and serve as a recreation area throughout the year, according to human needs. As with other projects with which the van Ginkels would become involved, their master plan for the park contained various stages for implementation, but always began with services which could be realized almost immediately so that the public could begin enjoying them. Among the first-stage plans were a new picnic area, a swimming pool, tree planting, construction of the main road, the footbridge over the railway and some connecting trails, while projects such as the new main entrance could wait until a later stage. The Cochius design had not taken into consideration the ubiquitous influence of the automobile, a concern addressed by van Ginkel. She explained, "With elderly people in mind, ... , it was felt that automobile traffic could not be completely excluded. However, the roads and paths have been designed so that one can walk through the park with a minimum awareness of automobiles."¹²⁰

Van Ginkel's plans added to the already beautiful and serene qualities designed by Cochius. Attempting to preserve as much as possible of the natural landscape, the new designs contained water elements: falls, rapids, and pools, and formal gardens, one as a sculpture court, another for roses and a third with fountains in shallow pools. An amphitheatre was designed to be set into the natural slope rising from the South Brook. A

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¹²⁰ Van Ginkel Associates, Plan for a Park, (St John's, NFLD, 1958): 7.

lookout, from which visitors could view the gardens, the city, the harbour, Signal Hill and the Narrows, gave a spectacular vista over the entire park and, was, itself, a series of observation platforms enclosing a sundial and other sculptural elements. For more active pastimes, the van Ginkel plan called for a new picnic area with its own playing field, enlargement of the tennis courts, sports fields, a playground for children and a public swimming pool. The concept of opposites was a conscious part of the design process of Bowring Park. Just as there were passive and active areas, noisy and quiet areas were included, harsh, wild elements of rushing river were conceived against the civilized, softer, more controlled elements of formal gardens, still pools and sculpture to create not only variety to the eye but also to add variety to the other senses as well.

Van Ginkel returned to the last CIAM meeting held in Otterlo, The Netherlands in 1959 to present the Bowring Park project to the congress. At the time, Dutch architect Jaap Bakema commented that he thought the van Ginkel's project was being too kind to the landscape, that it was too refined among the more rugged features of forest, twisted trees and projecting rock.¹²¹ Other comments expressed at the congress, she recalled, spoke about the park in terms of its modesty of scale. It was large in terms of terrain, yet did not include big buildings. "There were two bridges, but even they were rather modest bridges. What he [Bakema] was referring to as much as anything else was the atmosphere, the attitude towards the project, what you could do with the whole in an everyday good way. I thought that was the most important remark," she commented.

The van Ginkel's modernist design in Bowring Park brought a balanced approach toward satisfying the public's need for rugged beauty and quiet nature and successfully fulfilled its aims of creating spaces for activity and repose, companionship and solitude,

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¹²¹ Oscar Newman (ed.), *CIAM '59 in Otterlo*, (Stuttgart: Karl Krämer Verlag, 1961): 106.

for the community and the individual, for young and old, and is enjoyed today by thousands of visitors. The park continues to grow and in honour of the van Ginkel work, the footbridge has been named the Van Ginkel footbridge.

“Sub-city not Sub-urb”

From the time of her first contacts with Le Corbusier and years spent in the company of modernists and educators on the east coast of the United States, Blanche Lemco van Ginkel had learned the fundamentals of good city planning. In 1960 two things occurred which soon made it possible for her and Van Ginkel Associates to advance in a concrete way the ideas and beliefs she had formulated regarding community. The first, was an important film for the National Film Board, and the second, her creation of a master plan for the new suburban community of Meadowvale.

She and her partner knew what comprised viable communities. Sandy van Ginkel had been involved in the planning of towns and cities since the end of the war in his native Holland and had worked along side Aldo van Eyck on the creation of a new ‘polder’, Nagele. She had analyzed the community of Levittown and seen first-hand the positive and thoughtful alterations which were occurring in Philadelphia. As Blanche van Ginkel explained, it was this experience as well as their many contacts which enabled their practice to develop. She continued saying, “during the time when we had a lot of work, it was because people knew about us, and we were passed from one to the other, and frequently, interestingly, because of people in the United States that knew us, we were recommended for jobs in Canada.”¹²² That seems to have been the case when modern town planner and professor, Jaqueline Tyrwhitt, who had in the past been so

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¹²² Author taped interview with Blanche Lemco van Ginkel, February 2001.

interested in Mrs. van Ginkel's career, again supported her when Tyrwhitt was asked to act as consultant for a film by the National Film Board, but recommended, instead, van Ginkel.

Van Ginkel, who was hired, along with Toronto architect and planner, James Murray, to act as a consultant, became, instead a participant in the film, "Suburban Living---Six Solutions". Completed in 1960 the film featured the development of suburban communities in Europe, Scandinavia and Toronto and explored the promotion of sensible suburban planning which could act as solutions in Canada. Van Ginkel became the driving force behind the film, giving advice on the direction, content and locations to be used.

The film focussed on six communities, Harlow and Alton Estates in England, Le Corbusier's Unité d'Habitation in Marseilles, France, a suburb of Rotterdam, in The Netherlands, Vallingby in Sweden and Don Mills, in Toronto.¹²³ Except for Don Mills, which will be discussed later in this section, the European communities all displayed similar characteristics, that is, all had central market squares, which became the heart of the commercial centre; all were planned on the neighbourhood principle and grouped around schools; all were designed with separation of vehicular traffic from pedestrian traffic in the form of footpaths or bicycle paths; there was a mix of housing types and, in general, all were high density. A number of factors distinguish Don Mills [Figure 20] from its European relatives: Don Mills had been built by private developers; its streets were long and curving, creating a discontinuous road system as well as generating neighbourhoods which acted as exclusionary units, and discouraged entry by those who are not residents; it had a preponderance of single-family houses and excluded rental

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¹²³ "Suburban Living – Six Solutions," film (1960). National Film Board #113B0160020.

units normally contained in apartment buildings. The community had been designed around nine neighbourhoods, totally developed around the automobile, which was necessary in order for home owners to access the centrally located commercial district or their jobs, located at the edges of the community. Don Mills, developed along English and Swedish new town models, was unique in Canada, and became a model for future Canadian suburban developments.

Asked in the film why Canada did not have more well-planned towns, Murray responded saying,

Two things are troubling our towns. First, they have grown much too fast, and we haven't had time to think through their solutions. Secondly, until people can be persuaded to take an interest in their total town, we will, as planners, never be able to raise their eyes beyond the limits of their backyard fence.¹²⁴

Van Ginkel's closing statements summarized her belief in the European model for the Canadian suburb. She said,

I don't think it is just a matter of learning from the European experience; they have managed to find a better way to live in terms of basic human needs, such as, the human scale, the need for identity, a contact with the countryside, a real separation of town and country and separation of traffic. Recognizing this we can solve our own problems by application, skill and imagination.¹²⁵

Van Ginkel and Murray suggested that by looking at communities in other countries, planners might learn what went into creating a successful community and translate those positive points into viable Canadian suburban communities.

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¹²⁴ Murray: "Suburban Living -- Six Solutions."

¹²⁵ Van Ginkel: "Suburban Living -- Six Solutions."

Subsequent to van Ginkel's participation in the film, the firm was hired by W. Eric Adams, who had been involved in English new towns and had been brought to Canada to oversee the project,¹²⁶ to develop the master plan for the northern section of the new town of Meadowvale. This was to be privately built and planned as part of the overall growth pattern for the Toronto Metropolitan Regional plan.

The subject of suburban development in North America was tied to many factors, but two stand out: the effect of the automobile and what architectural professor Avi Friedman called, "the opportunity to reside among compatibly perceived neighbours and maintain social distance from others"¹²⁷ which led to a wider disparity between poor and middle class. These two factors were leading in the early 1960s to a widely dispersed and automobile-oriented society. The ubiquitous character and spread of suburban housing units, which rose to over 1 million during the period 1946 to 1970, alarmed many in the planning community and led to much comment and analysis, as was evidenced by films like 'Suburban Living --- Six Solutions'.

The van Ginkels agreed to develop the plans for Meadowvale on the condition that they would have guiding control over all aspects affecting the design of the community, believing that such a community could only be successful if there was single, guiding framework of design.¹²⁸ Thus, on October 3, 1960, Van Ginkel Associates became consultants to the company, Markborough Properties, Ltd.

The van Ginkels incorporated many of the positive aspects of European new town planned communities and took their ideas for cities and applied them to the master plan

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¹²⁶ Adams was the author of The New Town in Harlow and probably realized the similarity of viewpoint with that of Mrs. van Ginkel.

¹²⁷ Avi Friedman, Planning the New Suburbia, (Vancouver-Toronto: UBC Press, 2002): 31.

¹²⁸ Letter to W. Eric Adams, Sept. 27, 1960. CCA A27-14-02.

for Meadowvale. They recognized that many of the problems confronting Canadian suburban communities, such as increased urbanization, population growth and a general expansion of the economy, had led European town planners to new ideas of freedom in space and closeness of community and that those solutions might be adapted to Meadowvale. Two planning formulas undertaken in Europe had favoured either simply adding onto the existing city or, in the alternative, the model used in Sweden and England, the creation of a new detached urban community within the vicinity of the existing city. While Don Mills had also been based on these 'new town' models, it was too close to Toronto. Meadowvale, though, was located 40 kilometres from the Toronto city centre and was more suited to being called a 'sub-city', and one which would more closely fit the way European new towns were conceived. Thus, it is believed that the van Ginkel's began with the city of Vallingby, Sweden, as their planning model for Meadowvale, and adapted it for Canadian use, creating a community where people could live and work in an exciting, varied and complex environment.

Vallingby

Vallingby had been designed as a new town between 1950 and 1954 by Sven Markelius, architect for the city of Stockholm and director of the City Planning Commission. In Sweden, modernism had been accepted almost everywhere by 1930 and the architecture reflected the work of Le Corbusier, Gropius and others in France, Germany and the Netherlands. Swedish planners had adopted a sociological approach to better housing and living conditions, believing that this approach was a timeless one. This sociological approach applied also to planning where "relation (of buildings) to site and

sympathy with environment were among the greatest lessons of Swedish work.”¹²⁹ In making the determination of the best development pattern for new housing, Swedish planners chose, rather than expanding the city of Stockholm, to cluster new developments into separate units, leaving open space between them and making them accessible to Stockholm by rail.¹³⁰ Situated 9 miles west of Stockholm, Vallingby had been minutely planned before ground was broken in order to incorporate roads, building locations, amenities and services and integrated these in relationship to the land surrounding it. One of the Planning Commission’s basic decisions was to give Vallingby a modified commercial, business and industrial base which could employ up to 25 percent of the resident population. Its final population of 23,000 would form part of an arc of similar communities: Blackeberg, Hasselby Gard and Hasselby Strand surrounding the Grimsta Forest Recreation Area. [Figure 21] Vallingby provided separation of pedestrian and motor traffic, integrated transportation, parking and shopping and incorporated a variety of housing types. Vallingby’s central commercial, amusement and cultural activities were built over the rapid transit lines linking it with Stockholm. On the plaza created by the shops, offices and theatre, no vehicles were allowed; parking was situated on the periphery.

Housing was an important consideration in the plans and took the form of high- and low-rise apartment buildings, row houses and single-family cottages. The high-rise apartments were grouped around the *centrum* placing the greatest number of people in easy walking distance to shopping and the rapid transit station, while further away were row houses and cottages for families or those with automobiles. [Figure 22 a,b,c] All

¹²⁹ G.E. Kidder Smith, Sweden Builds, (London: Architectural Press, 1957): 17.

¹³⁰ David Popenoe, The Suburban Environment, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977): 36.

housing units were in easy access to local grocery stores which could be accessed without crossing a street. Unlike many North American housing developments, 95 percent of Vallingby's apartments were rental; the remaining 5 percent were co-operatives. A split-level row house, a cylindrical tower and a two-story prefabricated housing unit completed Vallingby's model experiment in housing.

Meadowvale

Although Meadowvale was in many ways similar to Vallingby, its differences were due to the van Ginkel's attempts to address the Canadian situation. Their vision of the project was as a new town and not as another suburban enclave as proposed by the development corporation. Not designed simply to be a bedroom community for the larger metropolitan area of Toronto, Meadowvale was envisioned to stand alone as its own city, with all the amenities and services of a city.

As a pre-planned community, the Meadowvale plan would be extremely complex and if implemented, would set the model for other suburban communities. The van Ginkel's approach to the master plan addressed itself to three major problems: creating a viable community, growth of the community, and the automobile.

In terms of a viable community, the city would contain a variety of housing, and contain within it a complexity of commercial, recreational and industrial mix. As was noted by the van Ginkels, industry since the pre-war period had changed significantly. Industry was no longer, for the most part, based on large-scale manufacturing, but had evolved to smaller operations, such as pharmaceuticals, which did not take up large land usage and could be easily accommodated within the community, not on its periphery. If

commercial and recreational amenities were situated close to their users, there would be little or no need for automobile usage.

The complexity of a neighbourhood encompassed not only housing type, it also addressed how the units were clustered and the density they promoted. As they knew from Vallingby, housing varieties and clustering produced not only various heights but also interest for the eye. Therefore, they designed low-, medium- and high-density structures, and also added another dimension: clustering. "One cluster might include as many as seven different types of dwelling units. Clusters of high density residential were combined with shopping areas."¹³¹

In September, 1960, James Murray and Henry Fleiss wrote in the Canadian Architect¹³² about a new form of family housing. In it, Murray and Fleiss explored possibilities of housing form not yet exploited in Canada. Their study mirrored housing seen by Blanche van Ginkel in Europe in the Vallingby development and provides us with the 'seed' to one of the housing solutions used by the firm in Meadowvale, namely, the row house and the garden court home.

In an article entitled, "Housing Design", the editors detailed the different types of housing available to Canadian architects. Here, they sought to also incorporate a more humanistic approach. Their examples were drawn from the United States, British and Canadian sources, the theme of which was 'diversity and variety of accommodation required to reflect the diversity and variety of society itself.'¹³³

Suburban communities in Canada, as in all of North America, had initially been influenced by the Radburn, New Jersey design of Clarence Stein and Henry Wright done

¹³¹ H.P.D. van Ginkel, "Credo," TCA, 9: 7, (July 1964): 47.

¹³² James Murray and Henry Fleiss, "New Forms of Family Housing," TCA, 5:9 (Sept. 1960): 54-58.

¹³³ "Housing Design," JRAIC, 29:9, (Sept. 1952): 1.

in 1928. A brief analysis of the Canadian community of Fraserview, British Columbia [Figure 23] and the Radburn Plan [Figure 24] demonstrate their similarities. Both contained curving streets surrounding a centrally located park and school. On the periphery of Fraserview (upper right corner) were located the 'cultural precinct', industries and the shopping centre. In Radburn (lower right corner), community, business use and a plaza building are set aside for later development. The designers of Radburn, "the first planned community to consider the automobile as a vital part of the American way of life"¹³⁴, created a community which directed automobiles around the community instead of through it; this same consideration can be seen in the diagram of Fraserview.

The van Ginkels also reasoned that if a variety of housing was made available at Meadowvale, instead of being based on single-family housing, as families grew and children moved into their own homes, parents would not have to move away, but simply move to an apartment within the complex, thus perpetuating a vibrant community with young families, working couples and older members. Sandy van Ginkel noted this in his criticism of the modernist planning of Le Corbusier's Unité d'Habitation and CIAM's attempts at suburban planning in post-war Europe, when he stated, "The single-function building *per se* as well as the single-function city area never had a place in the urban environment". Consequently, the van Ginkels set about how to address the social interaction between people at different stages of life and create a viable community.

The second problem, allowing for growth, was tackled next by the van Ginkels. In addition to this, Meadowvale was designed to allow for growth of the community in another unique way. The van Ginkels incorporated the concept of the 'spine' which

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¹³⁴ Daniel Schaffer, Garden Cities for America: The Radburn Experience, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982): 152.

combined the Vallingby example of the shopping centre over the rail lines but altered to become shopping and services located over a major road system. The spine [Figure 25] concept was not new, but it was adapted by the van Ginkels as a viable solution to the problem of growth of the community. In the MARS plan of 1940 for a future metropolis [Figure 26a,b], growth had been based on linear principles, in which the city would radiate in a ribbon configuration, each community connecting to the next along the spine. Spiros Doxiadis, a Greek planner, had also developed a similar model for how cities developed, [Figure 27], which was based on a linear overlapping circular pattern. Meadowvale followed these models and so it was hoped that it would, then, never enter the sphere of influence from the larger, nearby city of Toronto.

Beginning with this linear model, Meadowvale was carefully planned to develop in a harmonious way. In combination with its surrounding neighbourhood, each unit would contribute to the overall form of the community and lead to subsequent growth. [Figure 28a] Along the spine high density would be nearest to the transportation centre surrounded by medium-density, then low-density areas. Development would begin with a mix of all three types of density, with low density housing located further away from the centrum, higher density closest to the spine. Then when future market demands warranted, higher density allotments would already be in place, thereby negating the need to change land use due to obsolescence [Author sketch, Fig 28b]. This gave the new town not only a three-dimensional quality of height, breadth and depth but also a more comprehensive spatial cohesiveness over time, a concept not envisioned as part of developments of the day. 'Vers un casbah organisée' was the term used by Sandy van

Ginkel in 1964¹³⁵ and developed by CIAM and Aldo van Eyck to describe the image of the new city in today's world. It was a total entity, like the 'casbah', that is, tightly clustered like the traditional old cities of the Middle East, but more of a total environment, incorporating daily activities for all its citizens.

In Meadowvale, the van Ginkels identified and designed new types of housing units in order to achieve varying densities and accommodate people at different stages of their lives. The organization of these housing units worked spatially in three different ways:

1. from low-density to medium-density to high-density;
2. from periphery to centrum; and
3. from low- to high-rise.

Indeed, variety not only in housing types, but variety in dimension of scale was echoed in an article by W.M. Dudok and reproduced in the Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada in 1952.

The town plan must lay down precisely how the various buildings are to be distributed, since this distribution is of social, economic and aesthetic importance. A town's beauty is not accidental, is not the outcome of chance, it is based on precise and well-timed repetition and variation. To achieve this a good town plan must contain the necessary instructions, not only for two dimensions --- a plan --- but in three dimensions, at least roughly.¹³⁶

Ten years earlier, Eugene Faludi commented on the need for designing communities which evolved over time. In the article he promoted his design of Thorncrest Village in Etobicoke, a model for a neighbourhood which would eliminate

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¹³⁵ van Ginkel, H.P.D.: 46.

¹³⁶ W.M. Dudok, "Town Planning and Architecture as an Expression of Their Time," JRAIC, 29:11, (Nov. 1952): 339.

segregation of income groups, adapt various sizes of homes and incorporate open space, shopping and recreation. It was, in its day, a model of modernist functional design with a section for recreation, a place for shopping with curving streets of homes set on one-third- to one-half-acre lots. Somewhat a failure in two respects --- it was not a community of all income classes, and the shopping centre (still unbuilt in 1950) awaited sufficient population, -- Thorncrest Village showed that a complete community could not be carried out in one stage, but required many stages.¹³⁷ The design by the van Ginkels, then, added a volumetric sense of space not often seen in many North American suburban settings, and one which, in its master plan, would evolve over the next 10 to 20 years. It would have also set itself apart from other modern suburban community plans.

In August 1961, the van Ginkels submitted to W. Eric Adams two proposals for residential areas. The first outlined a proposal according to the Township by-laws, while the second projected their plans for what they considered a “‘good neighbourhood’, as it should be built”. The ‘good neighbourhood’ was one in which there was a variety of housing types, amenities in close proximity, streets where day-to-day communication would foster a sense of unity, etc. It was not a vision shared by the city by-laws which dealt mainly with lot frontage sizes, allowable street widths, set-backs for detached garages, and public and private laneways. Adhering to their belief that they were in charge of all aspects of design, the van Ginkels produced a variety of housing plans which were both cost efficient and suitable for the public they were designing for. When the van Ginkels proposed underground garages to homes, in order to avoid wasted land, the developer countered saying the public would object to underground garages based on

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¹³⁷ E.G. Faludi, “Designing new Canadian communities theory and practice,” Journal of the American Institute of Planners, 16 (Spring 1950): 73.

the impracticability of manoeuvring (“due to women drivers”) within a confined space.¹³⁸ When the van Ginkels recommended garages be added to its two-story house designs, the developer countered saying that perhaps some garages could be eliminated occasionally due to economy and cited as comparison the omission of garages in most Toronto semi-detached housing units. Battles continued between the van Ginkels and the development corporation over what was seen as their ‘experimental’ housing and school designs, all deemed costly to service.

The third problem, that of the automobile and its requisite road system, was also taken into consideration. Designing for the pedestrian as well as the motorist supported van Ginkel’s own writings along with the very modernist conception of motion, which was normally not a consideration in most North American suburban designs. In her article “The Centre City Pedestrian”, she favoured a design process which treated both movement at 60 mph and movement at 3 mph equally. “Instead of designing for the pedestrian or the motorist, the essential requirements are for people moving at a variety of speeds – and for different purposes.”¹³⁹ One should design, she said, in terms of varying functions and speeds as the physical and visual requirements were completely different. This spatial quality enjoyed by both pedestrian and motorist was necessary for richness and “should be knit into the larger system of the city, rather than being a separate entity gratuitously embedded in it.”¹⁴⁰

While the concept of circulation separation was not new to suburban developments, having been used in Stein’s Radburn Plan, and the MARS plan for London which incorporated a clear hierarchy of transportation, the van Ginkel’s use of it

¹³⁸ CCA MEART.3, 27-A14-08.

¹³⁹ Blanche Lemco van Ginkel, “The Centre City Pedestrian,” *Architecture Canada*, 43:8 (Aug. 1966): 36.

¹⁴⁰ Van Ginkel, Blanche Lemco, “Pedestrian”: 38.

as a spatial quality was new. Each neighbourhood was defined by the high speed roadway along the spine, and was accessible by a secondary road which ran along the top of each neighbourhood unit, utilizing tertiary roads at lower speeds through the neighbourhood [Figure 29].

Intrinsic to her belief in the city as a three-dimensional study was the need to achieve this separation of functions while attaining high-density to create a new meaning of space and time. How people interacted within the context of speed, time and building height became part of her design focus in this development.

The city form which allowed for greater complexity and diversity of movement, then, indicated a new form for the city, based on fulfilling a functional, spiritual and aesthetic demand. The Meadowvale community as designed by Van Ginkel Associates was not implemented, though the development corporation did stress many of the ideas projected by the van Ginkels. The development noted the “benefits of a pre-planned community to potential buyers”. They emphasized the social, recreational and educational aspects that the community had to offer.¹⁴¹ In an ironic twist, the prospectus also noted the following: “By 1985, new towns like Meadowvale will be being planned all over North America as an answer to hit-and-miss urban sprawl. And it’ll be odd to think back to 1971, when nobody knew what a “new town” was.”¹⁴² When asked her opinion on the development as it was built, van Ginkel said, “It hurts when I see what is there, knowing it could have been a whole lot better; it could have been more urban, it could have been a real city. There was a possibility of something else happening there

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¹⁴¹ Anna-Marie Raftery (ed.), Mississauga... Places in Time, (Mississauga: Mississauga Heritage Foundation, 1997): 25.

¹⁴² “Meadowvale Prospectus to Buyers,” Mississauga: Markborough Properties Ltd., 1985: 2.

and it didn't happen."¹⁴³ Markborough Properties abandoned the van Ginkel's northern section proposed in the master plan, an area now earmarked as an industrial/business park. However, some of van Ginkel's concepts and visions seem to have been implemented in the south portion. [Figure 30] One small section, the area bound by Derry Road, Millcreek Drive and Winston Churchill Boulevard, utilized one of the neighbourhoods as conceived by the van Ginkels. It incorporated a mix of low-, medium, and high-density housing, [see yellow (I and II), orange (I and II) and brown (I and II)] with a small commercial area running along Derry Road (which could be considered their idea of the 'spine'. The development as it appears today, though, lacks the cohesion and thought-provoking ideas envisioned by the van Ginkels. In 1976, Meadowvale, as predicted by the van Ginkels, was able to attract a number of industries into the area east of Erin Mills Drive, including Alcon Labs, Sandvik Canadian, Ltd., National Cash Register of Canada and Helena Rubenstein. It should be noted that the area just to the west of Winston Churchill Boulevard developed later, reflects the return to the suburban standard of low density, single-family housing. The current development of Meadowvale does not contain the impact of the proposed van Ginkel design and is today just one of the many suburban enclaves straddling Highway 401 leading to Toronto.

EXPO '67 Montreal

From the challenge of new town planning, the van Ginkels embarked on an even more venturesome project, that of the Canadian World Exhibition, Expo '67. It is not the purpose of this thesis to fully explore the full nature of this project; it is much too

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¹⁴³ Author taped interview with Blanche Lemco van Ginkel, January, 2002.

complex. Rather it will view the project from the perspective of displaying to the public what could be accomplished with housing within an urban setting.

During the previous 10 years from 1957 to 1967 the van Ginkels were extremely involved, not only with plans for Bowring Park and Meadowvale, but also within the city of Montreal itself. The city's renewal began with explorations into a new high speed road system and culminated with the birth of Expo '67. From the late 1950's, the van Ginkels were involved in planning initiatives involving the Old Port, the Old City, the crosstown elevated expressway and plans to save Mount Royal. Their role in all these plans cannot be overlooked. The general public was not concerned with issues of urban design and preserving the historic areas of the city, but these were two subjects important to Blanche van Ginkel and ones which she had come to respect from her work in Europe and in Philadelphia.

In 1958, as a response to increased automobile traffic entering the city of Montreal, City Council decided to build an elevated expressway along the shoreline beside the Old Port and passing through the Old City. Before the highway was re-located, there was much discussion about the route of the highway and what its impact would be on the port and old city. The Old City, deemed to be not as economically viable in comparison with the newer commercial sector of the city along Blvd. René Lévesque or rue St. Catherine, had been slated for demolition with the exception of the historic Bonsecours Market and Bonsecours Church. In 1959, the Montreal Citizen's Committee became involved in the fight to preserve the entire old city complex. Almost every major city had been built along a navigable waterway or harbour with this section becoming its central business core. Following the conventional wisdom of the day, many North

American cities like New York, Boston, St. Louis, Missouri and Toronto, had all chosen to construct expressways along their respective waterfronts. In Montreal, businesses had begun forsaking the Old City for newer corporate headquarters further away from the port, allowing the section near the port to run down and decay.

The plans for the new elevated 8-lane expressway would greatly impact on the old city centre and in June, 1960, the Montreal Citizens Committee, headed by Michel Chevalier, asked the van Ginkels to do a preliminary study on the related topic of the Port of Montreal, but to also include ground transportation. They were concerned about the encroachment of the entrance and exit ramps from the expressway which would impede trucking access to the port and create a barrier between the waterfront and the rest of the city. There was also a concern that the historic buildings in the old city would be destroyed. While there were a few individuals concerned with preserving important buildings, there were no groups who cared about preservation, stated van Ginkel in her article, "Planning Action by Indirection".¹⁴⁴ In June, 1960, the report of the van Ginkel's argued "against construction of the elevated expressway on the grounds that it would further impede trucking access to the port, that it would create a barrier between the waterfront and the rest of the city and that it would attract such a tremendous volume of traffic that the existing street system in the vicinity would never be able to handle it."¹⁴⁵ The report also recommended rehabilitating the Old City.

The idea of an elevated expressway along the waterfront through the Old City died due to their report. Following this Van Ginkel Associates was commissioned by the Montreal Citizen's Committee to make a study of the Central Area Circulation in

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¹⁴⁴ Blanche Lemco van Ginkel, "Planning Action by Indirection," *Environments*, 20:3, 1990: 54.

¹⁴⁵ Blanche Lemco van Ginkel. "Planning":54.

anticipation of the expressway being realized somewhere in the downtown core. A new route for the east-west expressway also raised other broader transportation issues, which led to recommendations for a new subway system as well as a recommendation that the location of the expressway be developed along one of the existing terraces the city was built on. Therefore, two courses of action were recommended: first, in order to create as little disruption to the city's urban neighbourhoods as possible, the roadway should be constructed adjacent to the railway lines running along one of the upper terraces, and secondly, by using the natural rise in the land, much of the roadway through the downtown core could be underground. In the fall of 1961, the study was donated to the city and became the official working document of the Planning Department, sparing the Old City as a consequence.

Finally, the van Ginkels, with architects Harry Mayerovitch and Hazen Sise, formed what was to be called the 'Save the Mountain' Committee. To try to preserve the beauty of Mount Royal Park from development and produce a plan which would ensure its protection, they put into place safeguards for its enlargement. The proposal was taken to the Province of Quebec, where it was finally passed into law, more or less in accordance with their proposal.

Thus, in 1962 the van Ginkels were well-known in Montreal for their urban planning expertise and their commitment to habitat, and they began, on their own initiative, to formulate plans for the international exposition planned for 1967.

The story of Expo began in 1958 when Mark Drouin, a Canadian senator, returned from the World's Fair in Brussels with the idea that Canada should have a universal exhibition in 1967 to celebrate its centenary of Confederation. The Canadian

government, and Montreal's mayor at the time, Sarto Fournier, campaigned for the fair, which had been won by the Soviet Union. Due to worries about the staggering cost of mounting such a venture, two years later the Soviets changed their mind. By this time, Jean Drapeau was mayor of Montreal, and after persuading then Prime Minister John Diefenbaker that Canada should submit a new application, Ottawa re-applied and, in March, 1962, won the right to hold the exhibition.

The van Ginkels, who had learned of Montreal's successful bid, began working on plans for the exhibition and in July, 1962, after presenting their preliminary work to Jean Drapeau, it was recommended that Sandy van Ginkel be named Chief Planner, in charge of the overall development of the master plan.

The van Ginkel's selected the city of Montreal as the site for the exhibition because of the visual impact created by the waterfront and Mount Royal parkland when entering across the bridges into the city. [Figure 31] The choice of location acknowledged the city's history, its Old City, the harbour, the skyline as well as its many amenities. Important developments in highways, public transportation and approaches to the site would also generate revenue through shopping, restaurants and entertainment.

The van Ginkel's chose the four inner city neighbourhoods of Maisonneuve, Ville La Salle, St. Leonard-Anjou and Mercier as well as Point St-Charles [Figure 32], in order to further ensure the development of the theme of the city. They envisioned an international theme of housing which would promote modernism in much the same way as the European Weissenhofsiedlung exhibition had done in Stuttgart in 1927. Foreign as well as provincial governments, led by some of the world's best-known modernist architects, were asked to come to Montreal and participate in building projects which

would define what modern housing was.¹⁴⁶ To this end, the van Ginkels began approaching the leaders in modern housing including many CIAM and Team 10 friends, among them Jaap Bakema and Aldo van Eyck (Holland), Kenzo Tange (Japan), Ralph Erskine (Sweden), Jerzy Soltan (Poland) and Andresz Wogenscky (Poland).

Blanche van Ginkel was placed in charge of determining the overall theme of the exhibition. While her original concept was entitled, 'Man and the City', this was changed and she is credited with proposing the theme title of 'Terre des Hommes'¹⁴⁷, which came to be translated as 'Man and his World'. Expo '67, she stated, "must take cognizance of the fact that the world is, and, is increasingly becoming, more a 'terre des hommes' than a 'terre des nation'". Recognizing that previous exhibitions had always been about the participation of individual country's national pavilions, unrelated to any overall theme, the van Ginkels proposition of Mankind and his world would explore, instead, the contributions of Mankind's achievements into a coherent whole. Thus, it was proposed that these be Man the Producer, Man and the City, Man the Explorer, Man and the Polar Regions, Man and the Oceans and Man and the Universe. "Man, with his needs, achievements and aspirations, should be at the focus of attention",¹⁴⁸ Under this general thematic umbrella, then, participating nations were free to present their exhibitions. Thus, "the world of man, the world which has made him, the world which he has made"¹⁴⁹ and his interaction with the environment became the overwhelming focus of their plans for the exhibition. The exhibition would have interwoven the fabric of the city, its

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¹⁴⁶ Author taped interview with Blanche van Ginkel, June, 2001.

¹⁴⁷ The title originated from the Antoine de Saint-Exupery book, Terre des Hommes, which explored Mankind's place in the universe.

¹⁴⁸ Significance of the theme and story lines. CCA Accession 027-A21-03.

¹⁴⁹ Blanche Lemco van Ginkel, CCA Accession 0277-A21-04.

transportation system and its neighbourhood venues into a mosaic unseen in modern exhibitions.

As plans continued, venues for the location of the exhibition changed to exclude the urban locations chosen by the van Ginkels and would eventually include Ile Ronde, Ile Notre Dame and Ile Verte, islands in the St. Lawrence. Expenditures sky-rocketed, time constraints could not be met and the project soon shifted from its original purposes. All of these factors resulted in the separation of Sandy van Ginkel, as chief planner, from the project in December 1963, thus ending the firm's participation.

The only housing exhibition to be built at Expo '67 was 'Habitat', the thesis project of Sandy van Ginkel's student at McGill, Moshe Safdie. Habitat was part of the 'Man and the Community' theme, located on Mackay Pier which formed the link between the islands and the city. The building was a high density cluster of interlocking, prefabricated units grouped to give a community feel without sacrificing the individual. It was similar to Corbusier's Unité in that it was a self-contained entity complete with children's play area, nursery school, and above-ground street. There the similarities ended. Where Unité was a self-contained slab building, Habitat's irregular collection of blocks were arranged in a three-dimensional way that gave each apartment its own garden terrace and three different views. Clustered like a village, the complex allowed for a high-rise feel but with the individual sense of a home. [Figure 33] Where Unité was built of reinforced concrete, Habitat's precast concrete cubes were fabricated at the site and lifted into place at the site. Although Safdie intended that Habitat should contain between 800 to 1,000 units, it never expanded beyond the 158 units which remain on the site to this day.

The exposition of modern housing with input by modernist architects in the end did not occur, but the van Ginkel's effort in having the exhibition located in Montreal was a legacy which cannot be denied. Expo '67 brought world-wide attention to the city of Montreal, and was attended by millions of people. It is difficult to assess the impact that such an exhibition would have had on modern housing in Canada, if the van Ginkels had been successful in their original plan. According to van Ginkel, housing was an important international issue at the time and they wanted to capture the public's imagination and interest in it. The Weissenhofsiedlung exhibition in 1927 by the German Deutscher Werkbund had brought together architects from Belgium, France, Holland and Germany whose lessons in housing would eventually be known as the International Style. The impact of the International Style was felt all over North America and became the quintessential mark of modernism. What CIAM and Team 10 architects would have left as their legacy as new generation modernists, one can only imagine. But, it was obvious that the van Ginkel's vision of creating a forum for new modernism was not well understood by the politicians of Montreal. The van Ginkel's work as sensitive planners, though, did not go unrecognized by others and soon led them to their next project for the City of New York.

Midtown Manhattan

Mr. Jacquelin Robertson, the director of the Midtown Manhattan Planning Office, had been to Montreal and seen the van Ginkel's central circulation plan, and it was through his prompting that Van Ginkel Associates was hired to help solve the transportation problems endemic to the city. Concerned with the form of the city, the van

Ginkels believed that the way the city was built ultimately determined the transportation problems, and turned the project into a design problem. Traffic management not only determined how to address parking hours and volume, but entailed making the flow of traffic more functional to drivers and, in addition, more agreeable to pedestrians. The attainment of these two goals had been a central occupation of the modernist's designs for cities and the van Ginkels began by recognizing that traffic flow problems were problems of street management and pedestrian circulation.

The city of New York had monstrous problems when John Lindsay began his second term as Mayor in 1970. He inherited, as had mayors of New York before him, a city which was almost un-governable. Besides problems endemic to large cities: financial crises, poverty, crime, deteriorating race relations and city services always on the verge of strike or shut-down, New York City streets were habitually congested with traffic. Sheer density, or what Lindsay termed, "dis-economies of scale", was the cost of being a huge, densely populated and concentrated city. As Mayor Lindsay stated in his memoirs,

...I believe that through a subtle link, the world of urban America as a dark and desolate place undeserving of support or help, has become fixed in the American consciousness. And we are paying for that in our cities today.¹⁵⁰

Lindsay was committed to addressing the many ills of New York City and to the implementation of programs in order to address them. According to Lindsay, basic city programs had never undergone any real examination to see if they were working.¹⁵¹

Many city departments operated as separate fiefdoms running costs higher than market

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¹⁵⁰ John V. Lindsay, *The City*, (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1969): 60.

¹⁵¹ Lindsay: 75.

price, and the city was facing bankruptcy.¹⁵² Therefore, one of Lindsay's policy initiatives during his second term of office was to try to rectify the city's chronic congestion problem in Midtown Manhattan. Lindsay was supportive of urban design in the city as a solution to its ills, and though subsequent mayors have not always been sympathetic to those policies instituted during his term, history has shown that they have had considerable success.¹⁵³ The survey by Van Ginkel Associates and its first phase recommendations made to the City of New York was completed in less than six months; its success due to the cooperation of the Office of Midtown Planning and Development (OMPD), and the commissioners of various departments. Robertson, especially, worked well with the van Ginkels. "From the first meeting between Jacquelin (Jack) Robertson, Director of OMPD... there was a consensus on the direction and strategy of the project," van Ginkel said during an interview.¹⁵⁴ One of the reasons the van Ginkels were chosen by Robertson was that they worked very quickly and did not make extensive studies. As van Ginkel related, "We've been in cities long enough; we know how they work. There are some things you don't have to keep inventing."¹⁵⁵ The project, therefore, did not begin with the customary data collection; rather, as soon as each problem was identified,

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¹⁵² The city's unplanned growth of municipal bureaucracy was a reflection of 30 years of indifference, various overlapping agencies and little or no coordination between agencies, departments and communities. Lindsay: 84.

¹⁵³ New York City now has historic districts and landmark preservation, has implemented acceptance of neighbourhood planning; has completed development projects like Battery Park City, and has instituted better design of important private buildings. Jonathan Barnett, "City Design and the Development of New York City," in *Cities in Our Future*, Robert Geddes (ed.), (Washington, DC: Island Press, 1997): 118

¹⁵⁴ Author taped interview with Blanche Lemco van Ginkel, June, 2001.

¹⁵⁵ Author taped interview with Blanche Lemco van Ginkel, June, 2001.

specific data was collected in order to resolve that particular problem¹⁵⁶ along with various reports made available to them by the city.¹⁵⁷

These earlier reports indicated that the city needed to increase its population density if it was to continue generating revenue through taxes. This could not be accomplished, though, if residents continued to leave the city, due to problems of parking and congestion. A partial solution would be to make zoning changes in order to develop more amenities. By solving the problem of congestion, through the institution of a new Municipal Parking System, the city could generate more revenue and, simultaneously provide more services. This had been confirmed by OMPD Report 129, entitled the 'Stirling Report' after its consultant, architect James Stirling, which had recommended an increase in residential population in the area near the Hudson River; an area both underutilized and underdeveloped.

The van Ginkel's partial solution for the congestion problem was identified by the following:

The Midtown grid was a logical system at the time it was designed. But the scale of development had changed. Buildings were higher. Land use is more intense. This generates more employees, more residents, more cars, more trucks. The result is congestion, noise, inefficiency, high costs to the city and individual, and stress. The grid cannot be changed significantly. But we can change the way it is used by separating traffic which is not essential, by clarifying routes of traffic in and out of Manhattan. By optimizing the use of streets and avenues, congestion can be relieved, movement can be speeded, pedestrians can have more space.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶ Van Ginkel Associates, "Movement in Manhattan," *Architect's Yearbook*, 14, 1974: 67.

¹⁵⁷ Reports 126, 127, 128, 129 had been previously prepared by the City of New York and dealt with parking in the Central Business District (CBD), development, critical issues and housing studies. ARCON A27-A52-26(1/3 and 2/3), CCA.

¹⁵⁸ Van Ginkel Associates fond, CCA, ARCON A27-A52-A (27-T/43).

The study area was roughly defined by 30th and 60th Streets, the Hudson River to the East River. [Figure 34] The area was the most densely populated in Manhattan and included the Pennsylvania and Grand Central Railway stations, Park Avenue, Fifth Avenue, Times Square, Broadway, Lincoln Center, Rockefeller Center, the Chrysler Building, the Empire State Building and the United Nations.

The problem of traffic congestion was related to how the existing traffic did, or more precisely, how it did not, circulate in the designated region. Traffic congestion was attributed not only to cars, but also to service vehicles, delivery trucks, emergency vehicles, and buses. They all used a system of streets and avenues [streets in New York City run East-West, while avenues run North-South and are much broader]. There was an imbalance of streets that were over-utilized while avenues could not carry the volume meant for them because of the growth of the city. What was originally a North-South business grid had become an East-West grid.

The van Ginkels' solution first involved a system of diverting the traffic traveling North-South within the midtown grid and placing it onto express arterials at the rivers. [Figure 35] The major streets --- 34th, 42nd and 57th --- were designated one-way. Through traffic in the grid, it was recommended, would be diverted to the periphery. The expressways, which would gain more volume through these two recommendations, would be redesigned as two-part routes --- a bypass with no connections to Midtown, and a feeder route with connections to major crosstown arterials linked to the bypass north and south.

Delivery and parking, a major source of on-street congestion, was analyzed and a solution recommended. By using a survey of delivery truck activity for a 12-hour period

(7 a.m. to 7 p.m.) on a specified day, in the area of Madison and Lexington avenues, between 48th and 49th streets, it was found that trucks were not discouraged from parking on these streets; large trucks were used to deliver small items; deliveries took longer than usual; drivers sat in their trucks reading, drinking coffee, or waiting for new orders; trucks were parked while drivers were at breakfast or lunch; and some building contractors or service trucks were parked on the streets all day. The solution was to try to keep the parking time to a minimum, try to restrict delivery to specific periods of the day and to use smaller vehicles.¹⁵⁹ Two recommendations were made concerning delivery vehicles and parking of cars. First, curb parking would be drastically reduced, and second, the number of Municipal Parking garages would be increased, through a formula set out by the van Ginkels where a system of bonuses, determined by how many spaces were provided in each municipal garage, would be given to the owners of these parking facilities. The city would benefit in the revenue gained from real estate taxes incurred by building more garages.

Another problem was that population densities increased as more and higher buildings were erected in Midtown Manhattan [Figure 36] and that density was moving further and further west across Midtown. John Lindsay describes the situation:

There are authentic joys in city life. But nevertheless, density is responsible for inevitably higher costs for almost every conceivable service. Transportation is more expensive because it is so enormously complex to move people into the core city. Every morning, for example, 3-1/2 million people are packed into the dozen or so square miles in midtown and downtown Manhattan. Buses and subways, built for a city with about 3 million fewer people [New York City had at the time a population of approximately 8 million], are always overcrowded at the rush hour; commuter roads, built before

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¹⁵⁹ Sandy and Blanche van Ginkel, "New Patterns for a Metropolis," *Architectural Forum*, 135:3, (Dec. 1971): 33.

the last great suburban exodus, are a cause of near-insurrectionary dissatisfaction. And, as far as driving an automobile goes, the remark of our late Traffic Commissioner, Henry Barnes, is all too accurate: 'The only way to get to the West Side, ... , is to be born there.' Average traffic flow is barely six miles an hour.¹⁶⁰

By making the city more habitable through the addition of green space, by opening vistas, widening sidewalks and by creating a system to deal with traffic congestion, the city became more humane. The associative element of urban identification was central to the Team 10 method of design and one to which van Ginkel subscribed. She believed that the hierarchy of human associations, beginning with the home and extending onto the street was linked to the social realities of human interaction. Unlike Corbusier's dream of tearing down cities and starting over again with a blank slate in order to create viable cities, the new generation of modern architects had to work within the concomitant actualities of the present. And that meant recognizing that positive change could be secured by attempting to create an environment which promoted well-being.

The answer proposed by van Ginkel was a system of street modifications, changes to zoning, a minibus system and shrub and tree plantings to ease the stress on humanity due to sidewalk overcrowding, "disorientation and lack of identity". Reasoning that much of the stress was created by constant activity and movement, they set about designing areas which would be "low-level activity, place[s] to walk and relax, vehicle free precincts [with] trees and grass."¹⁶¹ Pedestrian street plantings were used to replenish oxygen as well as reduce noise levels, while wider sidewalks would stimulate a relaxing

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¹⁶⁰ Lindsay: 192-193.

¹⁶¹ Blanche Lemco van Ginkel, "Patterns": 32.

atmosphere while shopping or strolling, and offer the pedestrian a more pleasant overall atmosphere. [Figure 37] The van Ginkels also proposed the creation of pedestrian streets in an area of intense pedestrian traffic, Madison and Lexington north of 42nd Street, 48th and 49th streets between Lexington and 8th Avenues, and Broadway between Herald Square and Lincoln Center. By widening the pedestrian streets, and making them accessible only to emergency vehicles and minibuses, they would create a pleasant walking area available to most people, only a four-minute walk from most midtown offices.

Thus, the heart of the project was the creation of large pedestrian precincts. The design of minibus routes which connected several elements, namely, stations of subway lines, Grand Central station, major employment and retail areas, and the theatre district [Figure 38] was needed. Movement along what the van Ginkels called the 48th Street spine required a different type of transportation than that provided by the rapid transit line proposed for 48th Street. Thus, Sandy van Ginkel proposed a vehicle that would be simple to get on and off, capable of frequent stops, easily manoeuvrable, and scaled to pedestrian movement. Placed on 48th and 49th Streets initially, but intended to extend across the island of Manhattan in the future, the minibus, called the Ginkelvan [Figure 39] a play on the van Ginkel name, was substantially smaller than a city bus, and intended to carry only 20 passengers, 15 seated and 5 standing. With the closure of 48th and 49th to vehicular traffic and with sidewalks widened, a third lane was created for emergency vehicles. Therefore, along 48th Street, now 60 feet wide, the minibus would occupy 12 feet while pedestrians would have the use of the remaining 48 feet. [Figure 40]

The transportation study was published by the Mayor Lindsay's office in June 1970 and generated a number of articles in the press.¹⁶² Although the press reported that key city officials were enthusiastic about the study and its recommendations, there were those who were not. Those opposed, namely, the Commerce and Industry Association and the representatives of the taxi drivers, cited the loss of business. Just as the taxi industry took offence to the OMPD's findings that "taxis foul the air more than buses", twenty business groups issued a statement condemning the installation of a pedestrian mall as "a disruptive experiment that could seriously damage commercial vitality". Mayor Lindsay, who had initiated the study, through the OMPD, an arm of the mayor's office, also stopped short of endorsing the changes, while characterizing the plan as "significant and exciting". In a telephone conversation with Mr. Jeff Zupan, Director of Transportation, Regional Plan Association (New York City), Mr. Zupan recalled that none of the recommendations reported in the study were actually implemented because of New York's financial woes during the 1970s. Mr. Zupan said the RPA had conducted its own study concurrently with the OMPD and had arrived at similar recommendations.¹⁶³

As a result of the van Ginkels's study and particularly their design of the Ginkelman, they were awarded recognition in Canada and received the Canadian Architect Yearbook Award in 1972. The jury, consisting of Raymond Moriyama, Ray Affleck and James Murray, found the van Ginkels had, in accepting the reality of automobiles and New York's grid system, "with a mixture of good analysis, common

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¹⁶² Martin Tolchin, "City Studying Proposal to Close Parts of Broadway and 2 Avenues as Malls," New York Times, (Jan. 29, 1971): 39, and Michael Stern, "Pedestrian Mall is Proposed for Madison Ave.," New York Times, (Dec. 7, 1971): 49; 93.

¹⁶³ "Another Step to Save Older Cities: Study Shows How to Make Downtown Pedestrians Happy: Wider Sidewalks; Higher Buildings; Space; Sunlight in Subways". Regional Plan Association Report, No. 1125 (May 20, 1971).

sense and imagination attempted ... to make the streets of Manhattan not only a little more efficient but once more livable and even enjoyable.”¹⁶⁴

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¹⁶⁴ “The Canadian Architect Yearbook Award 1972: Movement in Midtown Manhattan,” *TCA*, 17:12 (Dec. 1972): 56-59.

CHAPTER 4: METHOD OF PRACTICE AND HER FUTURE

What is the general attitude of the town planner of today? What does he seek to achieve? From what concepts does he proceed to his work? Questions such as these are of the utmost importance in any consideration of planning work and were posed by Sigfried Giedion in 1941.¹⁶⁵ The modern city of the 1960s and 1970s presented new, and varied subjects to define and explore compared to those of Giedion's day. Yet the solutions remained the same: to formulate plans based on and adjusted to existing conditions, to be aware of a sense of space, to take into account the complexity of relationships and the need for balance, and not to allow the technical or industrial to dominate at the expense of other elements. These issues were tackled by Blanche van Ginkel in her planning practice and they will now be addressed in detail.

Town planning for Blanche van Ginkel was first and foremost a human issue; its problems were by no means exclusively technical and economic. Planning, therefore, could never be carried on satisfactorily without a clear understanding of the contemporary conception of life with Mankind's interaction within it a central issue.

Through the decades of the '60s and '70s, Blanche van Ginkel formulated and presented in many articles planning problems which she felt needed to be addressed. Borrowing from Giedion's book title, Space, Time and Architecture, space, time and planning were very much the three major preoccupations of van Ginkel. They were first, a reflection of the ways in which problems were solved, an understanding learned through her associations with CIAM and Team 10, second, they were a rational reaction to the *zeitgeist* of daily life in Canada and third, a result of the need to address the broader

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¹⁶⁵ Sigfried Giedion, Space, Time and Architecture, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1941): 604.

topic of projections for a socialistic viewpoint among her architecture and planning contemporaries.

Van Ginkel's practice in Montreal, begun in 1957 and terminated in 1977 with her move to Toronto, varied in content and scope, encapsulating house renovations and new towns, designs for parks and airports, canals, hotels, feasibility studies and circulation studies. Blanche van Ginkel was internationally known and worked on projects across Canada from St. John's, Newfoundland to Vancouver and as far north as Nunuvut, as well as in the United States, Jamaica, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, and Israel.

An examination of Mrs. van Ginkel's practice must begin with the manner in which she came to practice at all. For a woman in Montreal even to attempt to set up an architectural office was rare, given the times. Women after the war had left the labour force in factories and munitions plants and, as noted by feminist historian Ruth Rose, "more women were working in the labor force in 1955 than had worked during the war [and] it was abundantly apparent that the idea was for women to go back home. The women understood that."¹⁶⁶ For the most part, both Canadian and American women became victims of what was called, 'the American dream': of finding a man, getting married and having children. This represented a view strongly encouraged in advertising, movies and television. But for women who did go out to look for jobs, what was open to them was often limited to secretarial or clerical positions.

For women trained in universities to become architects, the need was to become adaptable, "adjusting their training to what was available and possible."¹⁶⁷ Women, Adele Freedman has written, "became proficient at designing domestic interiors, doing house

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¹⁶⁶ Ruth Rosen, *The World Split Open*, (New York: Viking Press, 2000): 20.

¹⁶⁷ Adele Freedman, "An Intimate Portrait of the First 'Girl' Architects," *Globe and Mail*, Sept. 20, 1986: F17.

renovations, led fights to save important landmarks and conducted studies into public housing and community needs.”¹⁶⁸ However, it should not be concluded that female architects were unable to find work in any architectural firms because that was not the case; firms such as Page and Steele, Lyle, Mathers and Haldenby in Toronto, and Bernstein and Mayerovitch and ARCOP in Montreal were among the many which engaged women. Still for many women, the only way open to participation in an architectural firm was to go into business with their husbands. This was what Blanche van Ginkel did in 1957. Thus, in choosing to operate Van Ginkel Associates instead of joining a large firm, she continued a method of practice which she had known in Philadelphia, where she had operated her own small office. More importantly, this allowed her to choose projects not being addressed by the larger architectural community.

The van Ginkel's decided that since she was well known in Montreal, one of her roles in the firm would be one to establish and maintain contacts within the community. This was a function which would lead to their obtaining commissions. She described it this way:

He [Sandy] would say that I was our tie to the community. He rather pushed me into them. You were always expected to do your ties to the community, professionally; at least in the circles in which Sandy worked. [Otherwise] our working relationship depended on the job. There were some where we were very close and others Sandy would tend to carry and others [where] I would act as consultant.¹⁶⁹

The division of labour settled on by the van Ginkel's exemplified the process described by Martha Manevish, a planner in the office of Ritchie Organization, Chestnut

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¹⁶⁸ Freedman: F17.

¹⁶⁹ Author taped interview with Blanche Lemco van Ginkel, June, 2001.

Hill, Pennsylvania: "... the decision-making really happens at the inception of a project and its future depends on front end work, not on a designer working 20 different schemes for an elevation ... what I do best is facilitate the process of making decisions, triggering ideas with clients, consultants and a team of architects. I can usually work with people in such a way as to get the best out of them."¹⁷⁰ A similar understanding of the role of women in an office is contained in the following comment by Jennifer Joynes in an article which appeared in the JRAIC. "If a woman can make a unique contribution because of her sex, it probably lies in her greater supply of patience and tact in dealing with the client."¹⁷¹ Like other female architects, with the arrival of her children, Blanche van Ginkel chose to operate her office out of her home allowing her to maintain the traditional role of mother and homemaker while continuing to provide design input, and confer with clients.

Mrs. van Ginkel's career was, in contrast to many of her contemporaries, a successful one from the aspect of being able to practice in her own firm and the support shown her by her male and female contemporaries. Many women were discouraged from entering the architecture profession since this was considered 'a man's job.' Those who pursued careers after graduation found "substantial barriers constructed by twentieth-century society, the professional association [and] the architectural press"¹⁷² Many women, though, were able to have successful careers in large architectural offices that hired women. For example, the Montreal firm Architects in Cooperative Partnership

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¹⁷⁰ Andrea O. Dean, "Women in Architecture: Individual Profiles and a Discussion of Issues." AIA Journal, 71:1 (Jan. 1982): 44.

¹⁷¹ Jennifer Joynes, "Women in the Architectural Profession," JRAIC, 36:9 (Sept. 1959): 320.

¹⁷² Adams: 59.

(ARCOP) had five of Quebec's eighteen women architects on its staff in 1965¹⁷³; David Bulva Clive (DBC) and Barott, Marshall, Merrett and Barott (BMMB) also hired many women as architects and draughtsmen. Like van Ginkel, many women entered the field of city planning, while others focussed their attention on residential commissions or interior design. For the many women who became registered, though, there were countless others who did not remain in the field. Included in their choice to leave were low wages, feelings of being exploited and negative relations in the workplace, scheduling and the family.

To properly situate Mrs. van Ginkel within Canadian modernism it is necessary to explore the types of commissions she obtained and the clients those commissions represented. In general, the van Ginkels practice derived from two different sources: from clients who sought them out for their particular approach to modernism and as the result of projects which they initiated on their own volition, because they felt there was a problem which needed to be solved. Blanche van Ginkel maintained contact with colleagues in Europe, the United States and Canada over the years, and, like architects and planners before her, gained commissions through those who knew her and her work. She explained this saying, "During the time when we had a lot of work, it was because people knew about us, and we were passed from one to the other, and frequently, interestingly, because of people in the United States that knew us, we were recommended for jobs in Canada."¹⁷⁴ This 'being passed from one person to another' contributed to her being able to procure further work related to the downtown core of Montreal because of her commitment to saving Mount Royal from development; and as noted in the previous

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¹⁷³ Adams: 61.

¹⁷⁴ Author taped interview with Blanche Lemco van Ginkel, February, 2001.

chapter, the film with James Murray was responsible for her being sought out for the Meadowvale project. In addition to these commissions, the firm was able to obtain work in Esterhazy, Saskatchewan; American colleagues contributed to her getting work in the Northwest Territories, while work on a project in Malaysia came from engineers who knew about the firm. They also continued to be supported by the Montreal Citizen's Committee as well as by individuals like Michel Chevalier, W. Eric Arthur, Hazen Sise, and Jaqueline Tyrwhitt, and Jacquelin Robertson. Although being a female principal of an architectural/planning firm may have been limiting for some, projects continued to appear for Blanche van Ginkel. This must be attributed to her alternative, more humanistic modernistic vision; a vision which will now be explored.

In the four topics already discussed in Chapter 3, we saw that van Ginkel's outlook was based on holistic and humanistic associative impulses arrived at from her understanding of the work of both CIAM and Team 10 and then further developed for each particular project. The dictionary defines 'holistic' as emphasizing the organic or functional relation between parts and wholes. Van Ginkel had seen this formulated in her work on the Unité d'Habitation while employed in Le Corbusier's atelier. The Unité was an example of interconnecting units, combining the necessities of life in one built form, and was the development of Corbu's holistic principles interpreted through a functional approach, not unlike his urban designs. That is, each followed functional tenets. According to Le Corbusier, by placing buildings in a rational, functional manner, on 'pilotis', in functional, high density zones, one created cities more in tune with modern life. The ground was free, people traveled from the residential zone to the industrial zone for work, from the industrial zone to the recreational zone for sports, etc., all working like

a precision timepiece. The criticism presented by the younger architectural members of CIAM, those who formed Team 10 at the CIAM meeting at Aix-en-Provence, was that these sorts of designs were removed from the way people actually interacted. At Aix, urban reidentification, signalled by the work of Peter and Alison Smithson, centred more on the organic organization of space and less on geometrical layout of buildings. Their hierarchical plan, which had been developed in the Golden Lane project for London in 1952, “identified the task of their generation as the reidentification of man with his house, his community, his city”, according to Eric Mumford.¹⁷⁵

The themes related to habitat which emerged from CIAM concentrated on the advantages of compact planning as opposed to continuous scatter. They explored the interaction between humans and their environment so that the manipulation of Mankind’s environment was seen in a context of its effect on the world around him. For van Ginkel this became the credo from which she operated. For her modernism represented not only interaction within space, but also within the parameters of movement and time.

Through the 1960’s and into the 1970’s in projects from Bowring Park to Meadowvale, van Ginkel’s attempt to unify these elements of design was a reflection of planning impulses utilized by few in Canada. Suburban planning did often involve a variety of housing and transportation systems, but as author Paul Davidoff suggested,

High density, low density, green belts, mixed use, cluster developments, centralized or decentralized business centers are per se neither good or bad, but only take on value when seen in terms of their social, economic, psychological, physiological or aesthetic effects upon different users.¹⁷⁶

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¹⁷⁵ Mumford: 232.

¹⁷⁶ Paul Davidoff, “Advocacy and Pluralism in Planning,” in *Readings in Planning Theory*, Scott Campbell and Susan Fainstein (eds.), (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1996): 316.

The physiological and psychological were difficult concepts to grasp and then develop into a design perspective, but once understood, became explicit and achievable, as demonstrated in projects undertaken by the firm. To design for Mankind's interaction within his whole environment meant that the architect or planner had to be aware of what the human subject experienced through all his senses, what he felt, what he saw, how he reacted to light, air, noise and the complexities of walking or driving through space. Thus, for the planner, whether planning for the urban core, airport or city park, there had to be an interplay of activity with repose, public and private spaces, slow motion and speed considerations. Van Ginkel's attempts to produce these symbiotic relationships of space, time and movement, placed her uniquely outside the 'box' of mainstream modernism in Canada at the time. The concept of time, often coupled with movement, was, in fact two-fold: one based on our temporal concept of something occurring over a span of years, as in the plan for Meadowvale, and time which was experienced by movement through space. Van Ginkel explained it as "moving slowly, the eye has time to pick up details... The faster you move, the larger the scale of the elements which register."¹⁷⁷ The element of wholes was further articulated in "A Goal", written in 1979, in which she outlined the essential elements for achieving these inseparable aims:

Implicit in the 'recognition of needs' is an understanding of the past and the development of culture; the psychological, spiritual and intellectual condition of man; the functional requirements of his activities, singly and in various scales of social groups; the intangibles which transform existence into life.¹⁷⁸

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¹⁷⁷ Blanche Lemco van Ginkel, "Aesthetic Considerations," in Urban Problems: A Canadian Reader, Ralph R. Krueger (ed.), (Toronto: Holt, Rinehart, 1975): 49.

¹⁷⁸ Blanche Lemco van Ginkel, "A Goal," University of Toronto archives, ACC. No. B93-0042, box 001, File 1980.

These beliefs placed her outside of the design philosophy of the day which was to design for technology instead of with it. To design otherwise was to create built-in obsolescence and ignore the sense of community as an essential for building for the future.

Chapter 5: Writings: A Formulation of Ideas

Blanche van Ginkel, as a planner, was primarily concerned with way a functional approach to design could improve the social aspects of human life, be it the design of neighbourhoods, residences, recreational activities, or spaces for commerce. Over the twenty year period from 1957 to 1977 when the firm was actively engaged in planning, transportation and feasibility studies, Blanche van Ginkel produced at least ten articles which revealed her attitude and beliefs toward the built environment. She had been involved in architecture and planning for ten years when she returned to Montreal in 1957. She had been formulating, evaluating and rationalizing all that she had learned in the years spent in the modernist milieu and was now in a position to act on her convictions. These essays reflected her on-going responses to the Canadian city as it developed and exhibited a deeply personal and consistent philosophy which was manifested in her body of work. The articles, which will be analyzed, focussed on the built environment and its relationship to Mankind seen from a modernist stance and included concerns related to the pedestrian, the automobile, the form of the city and the landscape. In many instances, these themes overlap and are interwoven.

Contemporary life in the period after the war revolved around the growth of cities, the expansion of suburban housing, new modes of transportation and the ubiquitous nature of the automobile. Central to van Ginkel's perspective was the idea of Mankind as the starting point in any design solution. Mankind's contact and interaction with other people was the *raison d'être* for the city itself and a fitting beginning for an article written by van Ginkel in 1961.

In "Aesthetic Considerations in Community Planning" van Ginkel examined Mankind's responses to the world around him as experienced through his senses, his responses to his immediate environment. This aestheticism was not that of appreciation for beauty, but rather an understanding that what Mankind saw, what he smelled, the noises he heard or the silences he experienced, the sound of running water and how the paving stones felt under his feet, affected his sense of well-being and what his feelings were toward the place in which he existed. Within these sensory inputs, Mankind moved through this created space, walking slowly, or moving quickly, and this affected his anxiety level or added to his sense of peace. In order to address the elements of sense within space, she stated, "there needs to be identity at successively greater scales of organization --- groupings scaled to purpose and to movement, culminating at the centre, the heart of the city. Here is the focus of the city's activity and the culmination of life."

¹⁷⁹ Without this engagement, there was only an agglomeration of buildings in the city. Urban design based on community and its inherent essentials, was essential to building for the future.

The automobile and its relationship to the pedestrian and the landscape, was further developed in two related articles for a 1962 edition of Canadian Art, "The Automobile" and "The Landscape", and in an article written in 1966, "The Centre City Pedestrian". The problem of the automobile, in the minds of many, including planners, had never been fully addressed. It had been allowed to transform cities and the landscape, usurping land for its roadways and influencing the manner in which cities were designed in order to move it through streets. "The inefficiency of urban streets for moving auto

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¹⁷⁹ Blanche Lemco van Ginkel, "Aesthetic Considerations in Community Planning," Community Planning Review, 11:4 (April 1961): 30.

traffic was understood by engineers long ago The answer was the freeway,”¹⁸⁰ The automobile was given a more positive spin by van Ginkel, who, instead of thinking it a source of ugliness on the landscape, and as a contributor to the destruction of essential urban qualities, thought instead that it conditioned Mankind’s responses “via the eye”. The designer, accordingly, must accept the reality of the automobile and create forms in which Mankind can appreciate the beauty of the landscape presented to him by the speed of the automobile. The forces of movement, whether along a highway, or through a park, forces upon Mankind a new heightened visual feature he would not otherwise be able to enjoy. But, she admonishes, designing of roads through landscape even as flat as that in the prairies, can still be done with beauty and aesthetics in mind.

Consequently, the land must be adjusted, if only to provide a negotiable path. But the form of the earthworks can be beautiful in itself. And if they are designed as part of the total landscape composition, they can serve to emphasize the qualities of the natural terrain and even to heighten its visual characteristics....A road which is sympathetic to the terrain can enhance the landscape.¹⁸¹

The view expressed by van Ginkel reinforced her belief that even designing for a highway could be achieved by understanding the nature of the landscape and could be done with an artistic, aesthetic thrust *with* the automobile, instead of *counter* to it. In her view, then, the mark of the automobile and its related roadway, did not have to be boring or ugly, but could also be sculptural, as in the example of elevated roadways.

The automobile, the pedestrian and the urban circulation problem on a city’s streets were problems which she addressed in her attempts to adapt positive design

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¹⁸⁰ Boris Pushkarev and Jeffrey M. Zupan, Urban Space for Pedestrians, (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1975): 11.

¹⁸¹ Blanche van Ginkel, “The Landscape,” Canadian Art, 19: 1 (Jan/Feb. 1962): 54.

approaches to the inner city. The role of the pedestrian was one often neglected within the city proper. He was often squeezed into whatever space was left over between buildings and traffic. In "The Centre City Pedestrian", van Ginkel suggested a "classification of circulation ways [which] might be considered in terms of varying function and speeds, rather than as automobile versus pedestrian."¹⁸² Reiterating the theme of space and time, she expanded on the requirements needed by both pedestrian and automobile in order to satisfy Mankind's visual imagery on various levels. In explanation, she set out in ascending order five characterizations of speed used by both: a footpath or arcade accessible only to pedestrian; a market street or cul-de-sac in which both walker and car are tolerated; the third criteria for a street, such as Montreal's St. Catherine's Street where pedestrian and automobile operate equally within the space; a city through street where the pedestrian is tolerated; and finally, an expressway, only meant for automobiles. Her conclusion, therefore, was that streets and roadways need not be an either or design criteria, but both pedestrian and automobile could be incorporated in order to ensure that everyone is accommodated, what she termed the 'functional, spiritual and the aesthetic' complexities of design.

In other articles, van Ginkel addressed the problem of redevelopment in our present cities; how do you reinstate the human scale and how do you re-invent the modern city to incorporate those qualities which would satisfy Mankind centuries from now? She answered these questions in her most comprehensive examination of the central business district when she addressed the image of the city as a product of functioning, not of function.

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¹⁸² Blanche Lemco van Ginkel, "The Centre City Pedestrian," Architecture Canada, 43:8 (Aug. 1966): 36.

In "The Form of the Core", she challenged the static quality of current approach to central city images in the redevelopment of several American cities. By comparing qualities of older city centres, like the Piazza della Signoria in Florence, which she characterized as admirable urban design, with redevelopment plans for Ft. Worth, Baltimore and Philadelphia to name three, she was able to propose a number of important design features which would increase the livability of many North American cities.

Form, she stated produced the image of a city, not design; and "fragmentary projects cannot produce totality of the core".¹⁸³ The heart of her argument was a strategy which combined mixed land use, scale designed for the pedestrian, and higher densities, all of which would create more human contact, and offered "greater possibility for variety and visual impact". She cited the Philadelphia plan for its city centre as a perfect example of city redevelopment seen as a totality of design and where pedestrian circulation assumed a dominant role. Moving through spaces in the concentrated city core with connections to historic areas, places designated for meeting, strong containment, and a visual impact for visitors entering the city by automobile, all would impact favourably and create a successful city plan, she wrote. In conclusion, van Ginkel expressed how developing cities that reinstated the human scale gave Mankind an environment which was creative, and reinforced the good elements of design. A "culture achieves its highest level in community and expresses itself most intensely in the meeting places at the heart of the city", she wrote. "The function of the core is to increase intensity. Its form must have this strength of purpose."¹⁸⁴

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¹⁸³ Blanche Lemco van Ginkel, "The Form of the Core," *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, 27: 1 (Feb 1961): 57.

¹⁸⁴ Blanche Lemco van Ginkel, "Core": 69.

The points made in all of her writings were incorporated into her own projects and designs from Bowring Park to Midtown Manhattan. From the scale of work completed on a small scale city park to the greater proportions of a complex North American city, all her projects displayed commonalities: an expression of Mankind's position within the environment; an attention to the complexities of scale, form and movement; attention to pedestrian and vehicular interaction, and a totality of design. Van Ginkel's achievement in planning was attributable to her artistry as well as her humanity. A comment made about one modernist, Harvard director Joseph Hudnut could be applied to van Ginkel,

... some architects are born modern, some achieve modernity, and some have modernity thrust upon them. ... Achieving modernity was the superior way of coming to it, for it implied a commitment founded, not on argument, but on "experience."¹⁸⁵

Mrs. van Ginkel's philosophical stance was in keeping with the latter endeavours of modernists in the mid-twentieth century. Although modernism had been identified as an architectural style by the curators of a 1932 exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, in the view of Blanche van Ginkel and others like her, modernism was a broadly based philosophy which sought to employ science and technology to improve the life of Mankind. The ideas of the Modernists were neither static or limited to one national group of architects. From 1920 to 1960 architectural modernism was expressed by investigations which focussed on Mankind's social interaction, on attempts to design and build more habitable neighbourhoods and on the need to come to terms with the automobile.

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¹⁸⁵ Quote was a reflection on the career of Joseph Hudnut, modernist director of Harvard University. Jill Pearlman, "Joseph Hudnut's Other Modernism at the 'Harvard Bauhaus,'" *JSAH*, 56:4 (Dec. 1997): 453.

The evolution of the city was a key interest of modernist architects and planners. After the Second World War urban designers tried to incorporate Mankind's aspirations for a livable habitat, into a total environment where human beings would be able to experience both "the honky-tonk as well as the culture, squalor as well as grace."¹⁸⁶ For Blanche van Ginkel the satisfaction of providing this total environment symbolized by her design practice was her way of continuing to 'achieve modernity.' For her, human beings deserved the totality of what life had to offer.

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¹⁸⁶ H.P. Daniel van Ginkel, "Credo," TCA, 9: 7 (July 1964): 46.

CONCLUSION

In 1957, when Blanche van Ginkel returned to Montreal, change was in the air. Modernism was establishing a foothold, this by means of regionalist styles across the country in the west in British Columbia, or the prairies, and in eastern metropolises, such as Toronto and Montreal. Many contemporaries of van Ginkel, her fellow students from McGill and early protagonists were now academics in the architecture schools of McGill, the University of Toronto, the University of Manitoba and the University of British Columbia. They all advocated the 'less is more' dictum of Mies van der Rohe. Acceptance of English, Scandinavian, Dutch and German modernism had become established and promoted. New developments in cities, mainly urban renewal, were changing the face of cities at a dazzling pace. The expertise needed to accomplish major developments such as Place Ville Marie in Montreal, renewal projects like Regent Park in Toronto and wholehearted acceptance of glass and steel corporate monoliths ensured Canadians and Canadian cities of their place in the architectural history books. Suburban communities flourished in Toronto, Montreal and Ottawa, captivating the public's sense of finally being able to attain the 'American dream'.

No one was in a more central position to positively contribute to this dream of growth, prosperity and optimism than Blanche van Ginkel. But van Ginkel's influence, ideas, and philosophies suffered in this climate of growth. Therefore, the conclusion to be drawn is, at best, conflicted. Was van Ginkel influential in promoting substantial change in Canada? Were her modernist ideals accepted or rejected? The answers to these questions have to be qualified, as one can only conclude that Blanche van Ginkel did project her ideas into the massive reservoir of modernism that was developing in Canada

at the time. In many ways she stood out as prophetic in the stances and in the projects she undertook. In other ways van Ginkel's thoughts and beliefs were too early in the timeline, hers was too small a voice and she was too uncompromising in her positions to be a major player in Montreal. Nevertheless history will have already concluded that she was, in the end, correct in her beliefs. It is then necessary to examine both why and how she succeeded.

Despite the efforts van Ginkel made in attempting to incorporate new elements of design into projects, she was not always successful in convincing the larger planning community or the public to her way of thinking. One answer may lie, perhaps, in the size of the firm which for the most part, remained small, only expanding as the need arose. Conceivably another answer was linked to a lack of self-promotion. Possibly the realities of massive suburban expansion, mega-projects such as Place Ville Marie, and little government interest in housing or controls to contain sprawl, outweighed the need for thoughtful alternatives. It may never be known which projects Van Ginkel Associates wanted but never got; it is known that when there was no work, they, like Corbu and Frank Lloyd Wright before them, worked on subjects which they felt needed study. Their design for the Université du Québec à Trois Rivières in 1971, development plans for a four-story apartment complex on St-Sulpice Road in Montreal (1964) and an infill proposal, "entre deux rues" also in Montreal (1971-72) were three such examples.¹⁸⁷

Many of her and the firm's failures in projects can simply be attributed to having a broad perspective on events and history at a time when that broad perspective was new, too outside of many people's experiences and, therefore, frightening. There is an adage which says, 'fight the fights you can win'. For Blanche van Ginkel the fights and the

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¹⁸⁷ See files A53, A25 and A59, CCA Archives Fonds AR27, Series A.

stakes were too important to even consider that her viewpoint and goals were unattainable. She had impressive credentials: she was a Canadian woman with a degree in architecture from a Canadian university; she had known and worked for the leading modernists of the era; she knew what made cities viable and livable; she had not only a North American, but also a European perspective on cities, and the newly emerging concept of new towns. Hers was, consequently, not a failure in conception, but was a failure to recognize that Canada was still conservative in its outlook. When Blanche van Ginkel arrived at Harvard, she had commented on how open the atmosphere was in comparison to what she had grown up with in Montreal. She had seen first-hand the rebuilding of Europe. One must imply that she believed Canada had also changed in the twenty intervening years since her departure. She did not recognize that, basically, Canada was still hesitant to embrace, wholeheartedly, borrowed styles. Although they aspired to modernism as a style, Canadians were afraid of all-encompassing change in its architectural choices and ideas.

Part of van Ginkel's manner of work in Europe had been to come together with similar-minded architects. This they had done in meetings of CIAM and the 'family' gatherings of TEAM 10. Thus, she and her husband organized meetings in their home with local modernists in order to promote discussion and exchange ideas about current projects. But, even here, they found little response from those attending and these interchanges met eventually with failure.¹⁸⁸

Practicalities of escalating costs and the rigidity of municipal and governmental strictures led to a realization that many barriers to project success could not be surmounted. One such example was the firm's attempts to promote what they knew to be

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¹⁸⁸ Author taped interview with Blanche van Ginkel, June, 2001.

a better neighbourhood form than the one envisioned by the developer. Their battle against existing zoning by-laws, meant to maintain low density and promote housing on large lots in the development, again ended in failure and eventual rejection of many of their ideas. In addition, Meadowvale (and, later, the mid-town Manhattan designs) reflected the need to reduce automobile usage in habitable cores at a time when Canada was not ready or willing to abandon its relationship with the car. Distances were too great between cities and, for those living in satellite suburban communities, the automobile was integral to middle-class aspirations. Alternatively, European dependence on public transportation, bicycles and locally provided services such as shops and recreational areas located in the communities, were anathema to modern Canadian life.

Van Ginkel may have also found that the humanistic aspirations of much of modernism's ideals were not applicable, at the time, within Canada. Suburban communities were promoted and accepted as middle-class in their aspirations, and by attempting to incorporate various housing types for different social and age levels, van Ginkel ran counter to Canadian sensibilities. Democracy was not ready to be relinquished to principles of socialism, no matter how innocuous.

Van Ginkel's success was measured, therefore, in terms of lasting goals. Her planning was a success by indirection and was undertaken with the support of good friends, chance political events and mostly good luck.

Mrs. van Ginkel was successful in projecting her beliefs, for the most part, by small interventions which produced large change and sometimes produced far-reaching and lasting consequences which may still be seen today, fifty years later. One case in point was her attempt to save the old city of Montreal from destruction by intervening to

stop an expressway ramp construction which would have destroyed the site. She recognized the value of preserving the historical core of Montreal primarily not as a heritage gesture, but in the modernist belief that city design must acknowledge the whole city, its visual as well as its historical focus. Rehabilitation and preservation were integral to the overall worth of the city.

Another project not completed as originally conceived by the van Ginkels, but which had a lasting impact, was EXPO '67. The creative concept was new and original and acknowledged Mankind's relationship to the environment; something which had never been attempted at an international exposition. The project's perception of Mankind in relation to his fellow human beings and his relation to his environment was a fundamental modernist philosophical position and one that had never been attempted on such a large public scale. Man and His World sought to focus on the commonality of Mankind's achievements around the world. Its guiding principles focussed not on the splendour of individual national pavilions vying to outdo one another in size and magnificence, but on Mankind's recognition of the world around him. This was reflected in the subjects proposed: Man the Producer, Man and the City, Man the Explorer, Man and the Oceans, Man and the Polar Regions and Man and the Universe. 'Terre des Hommes' extolled Mankind's achievements in science, culture and the field of ideas and far outreached previous world's fairs in scope.

Designing for the pedestrian in the city was counter to people's love of the automobile, but was, nevertheless, attempted by van Ginkel in the new town development near Toronto and her New York project. And, like pedestrian areas built in cities around North America, it was not entirely successful but was ahead of its time. Her mid-town

Manhattan study, completed in the 1971, attempted to introduce fresh air and green space into the urban environment, an idea which is more popular today as cities attempt to again address problems of air pollution and human interaction. Cities are only now involved in the re-use of its industrial buildings, popularized in the loft craze seen in many cities in Canada, and in construction of new neighbourhoods centred around low-rise town houses in areas despoiled by early attempts at urban renewal.

Perhaps the most convincing argument for her success is the number of projects in which her firm was called upon to participate in across Canada, and around the world. The firm has tackled projects from new towns to downtowns, airport projects in Brazil, Venezuela and Jamaica; various projects in the Canadian north; and a variety of transportation studies. Van Ginkel's prominence was recognized by the number of commissions on which she was asked to serve on in cities like Ottawa where she participated in the Spark's Street Mall Urban Design Competition, and studies for the National Capital Commission. Her thoughts on the subjects of architectural education and her belief in architecture as a manifestation of who we are as a people, have helped shape architectural thought in academic and public forums for over 50 years. Her writings in professional journals, such as the Journal of the American Institute of Planners, Journal of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada, Canadian Architect, and Architecture d'Aujourd'hui, to name just a few, assured that her views were seen by the professional community. These articles guaranteed her a forum in which to voice her concerns and provided an alternative to mainstream populist ideas.

Blanche van Ginkel was a producer of large change by small interventions and in her attempt to bring modernism to Canada, her career illustrates the interdependencies at

work in the urban environment. As her work showed, this was an environment which could be affected both by grand ideas and by small actions.

Figure 1a. Blanche Lemco. Dancer's Studio.

(JRAIC, Feb. 1942) (top)

Figure 1b. Richard Neutra, Model house, Vienna, 1932.

(Hines: 108) (bottom)

Figure 2. Southampton High Street, blitzed aftermath.
(Kilby: 149)

Figure 3. William Crabtree. Peter Jones Department Store.
(AR, Jan 1990)

**Figure 4. Erich Mendelsohn. Schocken Department Store.
(Benton: 12)**

Figure 5. CIAM, Bridgewater, England, 1947.
Blanche Lemco (seated fifth from right)
(Mumford: 176)

**Figure 6. Blanche Lemco. 'Maternelle' tile work on
L'Unité d'Habitation, Marseille, France.
(Le Corbusier et la Méditerranée: 109)**

Figure 7a. Ventilator design by Blanche Lemco. (top)
Figure 7b. Ventilator shaft, engineer design. (bottom)
(Allen: 117 and 85, respectively)

LES 4 FONCTIONS	TITRE I																			TITRE II	
	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21									
	HABITER	1																			
	TRAVILLER	2																			
	CULTIVER LE CORPS ET L'ESPRIT	3																			
	CIRCULER	4																			
DIVERS	5																				

Figure 8. Example of CIAM grid.
(Gold: 206)

**Figure 9. Blanche Lemco, Robert Geddes, George Qualls and
Romula Giurgola. Levittown grid, CIAM 9, 1953.
(Rassegna, Dec. 1992)**

**Figure 10. Frank Lloyd Wright. Cloverleaf Housing Project.
Pittsfield, MA.
(Albrecht: 18)**

**Figure 11. Walter Gropius and Marcel Breuer.
New Kensington, PA.
(Albrecht: 17)**

**Figure 12. George Howe, Oscar Stonorov and
Louis Kahn. Carver Court Housing Project.
(Albrecht: 9)**

**Figure 13. Richard Neutra. Channel Heights Housing Development.
(Albrecht: 21)**

Figure 14. Map of St. John's, Newfoundland showing location of Bowring Park.
(AAA, 1996)

Figure 15. Rudolph Cochius. Design of Bowring Park.
 (Bowring Park Archives)

Figure 16. Location of footbridge.
(TCA, July 1960)

**Figure 17. Van Ginkel footbridge.
(TCA: 43)**

**Figure 18. Ove Arup & Partners. Penguin pool, Regent's Park.
(Curtis: 328)**

**Figure 19. Van Ginkel Associates. Passive and active areas of Bowring Park.
(CCA. ARCON 1996: 0024-009))**

Figure 20. Don Mills, Toronto.
(Filion and Bunting: 449)

Figure 21. Vällingby, Sweden.
(Smith: 94)

Figure 22a. Single-family homes. (top)
Figure 22b. Low-rise apartments. (middle)
Figure 22c. High-rise apartments. (bottom)
(Smith: 105)

Figure 23. Fraserview, BC.
(JRAIC, Sept. 1952)

**Figure 24. Radburn, NJ.
(Auger: no page number)**

**Figure 25. Van Ginkel. Representation of Meadowvale development
along the 'spine'.
(Habitat, June 1962)**

Five one mile units. Population 30,000

**Figure 26a. MARS plan of 1940 (future metropolis, 1-mile unit)
(top) (Gold: 148)**

**Figure 26b. MARS plan of 1940 (future metropolis, 5 1-mile units)
(bottom) (Gold: 150)**

Figure 27. Doxiadis's representation of how city develops.

(Habitat, June 1962)

**Figure 28a. Van Ginkel sketchbook depicting layout of neighbourhoods.
(CCA 027 ARC 005)**

**Figure 28b Author sketch depicting how new town would develop over time.
(Drawing after van Ginkel sketchbook: CCA 027 ARC 005)**

**Figure 29. Van Ginkel: Roadways along spine and at top of neighbourhood.
(CCA 027 ARC 005)**

Figure 30. Meadowvale neighbourhood unit with low-, medium- and high density section bounded by Derry Rd., Millcreek Drive and Winston Churchill Blvd. (City of Mississauga Land Use Map, 2000)

Figure 31. Presentation Model of EXPO '67.
(Lambert, 85)

Figure 32. Van Ginkel Associates Urban site choices.
(CCA 27-A21-12)

Figure 33. Habitat by Moshe Safdie.
(Safdie: ii)

Figure 34. Map of Midtown Manhattan.
(AAA, 1999)

**Figure 35. Existing and proposed through traffic
for midtown Manhattan.
(AF, Oct. 1971)**

**Figure 36. Employment density shifts for
midtown Manhattan.
(AF, Oct. 1971)**

**Figure 37. Van Ginkel Associates. Pedestrian street concept.
(CCA 27-A52-14)**

Figure 38. Proposed minibus routes midtown Manhattan.
(TCA, Dec. 1972)

Figure 39. Ginkelvan.
(TCA, Dec. 1972)

**Figure 40. Conceptual drawing of minibus and
and widened sidewalks.
(CCA 27-A52-14)**

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