SEEN BUT IGNORED
Concordia University's Henry Foss Hall Building in Montréal

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Montréal's Henry Foss Hall Building (fig. 1),[2] erected between 1964 and 1966, is a major element of today's Concordia University campus and a rare example in Canada of a high-rise building to hold originally an entire university. For over forty years it has been an eye-catcher, a giant white block visible from quite a distance. In 1994 it went through an exterior cleaning procedure and in 2003 renovations were begun to rejuvenate the interior. Although for many years it was the focus of the university's downtown campus, its architecture never attracted attention among the general public. By 2008, the seventh, eighth, eleventh, and twelfth floors had been reorganized and modernized. The other floors of the twelve-storey building are to be renovated in the next few years.

FIG. 1. HALL BUILDING. | ANJA BORCK.

THE HALL BUILDING IN THE PUBLIC EYE

The west part of the foyer of the Hall Building is a busy area. Students like to sit there, to read papers, talk, and pass the time. Few of them are aware that the nine little concrete blocks and four elaborate heavy steel-granite tables are part of a memorial (fig. 2). In 1992 professor Valery Fabrikant shot dead four of his colleagues on the building's ninth floor. Engraved sentences on each of the tables commemorate the victims. The concrete blocks are iconic miniature copies of the building itself, the scene of the crime.[3]

The Fabrikant incident was one of two events that brought Concordia University and the Hall Building to the headlines.

FIG. 2. BLOCK FROM MEMORIAL INSTALLATION. | ANJA BORCK.

FIG. 3. NINTH FLOOR REMODELLED IN BRIGHT COLOURS AFTER THE "COMPUTER RIOT" HAD DESTROYED THAT PART OF THE BUILDING. | ANJA BORCK.

FIG. 4. DESTRUCTION OF THE NINTH FLOOR AFTER THE "COMPUTER RIOT." | CONCORDIA ARCHIVES.

The building was also the site of the so-called "computer riot" in 1969, which ended with a fire in the computer laboratories. It destroyed a large part of the facilities on the ninth floor and caused damage of over two million dollars (close to eight percent of the overall final cost of the building, which had opened three years earlier). It was the most important student revolt in Canadian history. Partly as a result of that protest, students can now actively participate in the University's politics; it has become a model for other Canadian universities. But there is no memorial to remind people of this past event.[4] The only visible record is a pop art coloured remodelling of the destroyed offices in the northeast corner on the ninth floor (fig. 3 and 4).[5]

While these two episodes in the life of the Hall Building are reasonably well publicized, its history lies hidden in archives and its architectural qualities are overlooked. Books about Québec's architecture have ignored it[6] as have most articles featuring Canada's new campuses.[7] Nevertheless, its obviously photogenic character found an audience through advertisements in architecture magazines distributed both in Canada and abroad (fig. 5).

It is in magazines that a few references to the building can be found. In *Montréal 66*, published by the City of Montréal in anticipation of Expo '67, journalist Réal Pelletier

FIG. 5. ADVERTISEMENT FOR SCHOKBETON IN *PROGRESSIVE ARCHITECTURE*, 1966.

FIG. 6. FORMER NORRIS BUILDING, NOW A YMCA. | GUILLAUME ST-JEAN.

informed the public, in his article "Sir George Williams University aura bientôt son gratte-ciel," about the services of the expanded university[8]. The Montreal Star printed a loose supplement for the building's inauguration on October 11th, 1966. In 1967 architect-artist Melvin Charney highlighted the Hall Building in a large photograph in his article "Les possibilités de la construction en béton préfabriqué dans la conception nouvelle des écoles,"[9] although he did not mention it in his discussion of new addition to Montréal universities using prefabricated techniques. The same happened in Norbert Schoenauer's article "The new city centre,"[10] where the published photograph of the building was not referenced in the text. The Hall Building was seen, but its architecture was strangely ignored.

FROM THE YMCA TO CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY

Sir George Williams University (SGWU) started as the evening education program of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), origins shared by various other universities in Canada and the United States.[11] Because it was located close to the business district and courses were taught after office hours, employees could complete their education and learn new skills to boost their careers. That was not possible in existing universities with only daytime classes.

The education program became independent from the YMCA's program in 1926 with the founding of the Sir George Williams College and it opened its courses to women.[12] In 1948 the SGW College attained full university status, although it did not acknowledge its academic status in its name until 1959. In 1956, it commissioned its first building for a sum of three million dollars. The site was adjacent to the YMCA building on Drummond Street. A local architectural firm, the well-established Ross, Peterson, Townsend and Fish, was asked to plan and oversee construction of the new building, which was later named Norris Building (fig. 6). The same firm had designed the YMCA next door. The Norris Building was

FIG. 7. TD BANK, MONTRÉAL, 1958. | GUILLAUME ST-JEAN.

FIG. 8. MCGILL BUILDING. | GUILLAUME ST-JEAN.

a modest structure. As befitting its low profile as a small university offering education to less privileged populations, the building blends unobtrusively into the street's façades. Driven by demand for its services, six years later the University was preparing for the next major step in its growth.

In the beginning of the 1960s, there were many examples of university expansion and foundation in Canada and the United States. They all struggled with the same problems in order to accommodate an estimated doubling of the student population every five years in the period between 1965 and 1975.[13] The rapid development of new technologies, such as videotaping, computers, and closed circuit TV, made it necessary to install technological equipment where formerly a blackboard would have been adequate. Nobody knew where this technological evolution was leading, but it was clear that new buildings had to be flexible enough to undergo major changes. The extent of this challenge is highlighted in the increasing number of articles in architectural magazines focusing on school, college, and university planning.

With a funding of twenty million from the Provincial Government and projected capital of six million from the University, the ambitious project of the Hall Building could be launched.[14] The planning started in 1962, and inauguration was in 1966.

For political and economic reasons the SGWU merged in 1974 with Loyola College seven kilometres further west and the combined board decided on a new name for their common future: Concordia, inspired by Montréal's motto "*Concordia salus*," which means "well-being through harmony." Over the years, further expansions were necessary; several old structures in the neighbourhood were rented or bought and new ones erected on both campuses. Since 2003 the Groupe Cardinal Hardy (architects) has been working on the realization of the Quartier Concordia to unify and harmonize an area of six city blocks of Concordia's downtown campus.

THE DESIGNING ARCHITECTS

The motivation of SGWU in hiring the firm Ross, Fish, Duschenes and Barrett as architects for the new project was, according to David Fish, son of one of the firm's partners, the longstanding good relationship between the University and the architects.[15] In the past they had been responsible for several buildings for the YMCA, including the Norris Building.

Ross, Fish, Duschenes and Barrett was a well-known local enterprise established in 1904 under the name Ross and MacFarlane. In 1913 it had eighty employees, and was one of Canada's largest architectural firms, known as Ross and Macdonald. The company continued working under the different names of the partners. In 1950, John K. Ross (1915-1978) and the former chief draftsman John Fish (1903-1978) shared the company with Rolf Duschenes (1918--) and John Alexander Barrett (1921-1996). They operated under their names from 1958 until 1976. The firm worked with salaried architects and draftsmen. Talented younger colleagues would design the projects, overseen by one of the four seniors. As North American custom has it, all buildings, however, were designated by the company's name.[16]

The plans for the Henry F. Hall Building were created in 1964 by Irish architect James A.M.K. O'Beirne (born in 1931). He had graduated from University College, Dublin, in 1956. In that same year he travelled to Montréal and was hired by Ross, Patterson, Townsend and Fish. It was the beginning of a building boom in Canada which gave many young architects a good career start. James O'Beirne worked for two years mostly doing design works for

the early stages of contracts. The first building of his own design and under his responsibility was the elegant Montréal headquarters of the Toronto Dominion Bank on Victoria Square in 1958 (fig. 7). Three characteristics can be observed here, that will later play a role also in the Hall Building. The first is transparency at street-level by opening the walls with ceiling-high windows on the two main façades; the transparent ground floor was a popular feature of modernist architecture. The second is the optical division of the ground floor from the high-rise structure, in this case done by a set-back mezzanine; it creates the impression that the whole upper building is floating on top of the base. The third is the concern to fit the contemporary modern building into the historic surrounding. The TD Bank had bought a corner-lot beside the McGill Building, a downtown landmark, built by Robert Ernest Bostrom in 1912 (fig. 8). James O'Beirne brought the two buildings into harmony by carefully considering the older building's proportion and design. The windows of his building, for instance, sit between vertical stone rails, and a contrasting metal panel with a geometric relief structure sits below each window, taking inspiration from its neighbour where we see the same features in an older style.

In 1960, James O'Beirne returned to work in Ireland, observing the European construction scene. In 1962, he received an offer from his old company in Montréal to head the team for the Montréal SGWU project, which he accepted. He came back to Canada and stayed until 1967, when he left for good to start his own firm in Ireland.[17]

THE HALL BUILDING'S CONCEPT

The vigorous growth since the opening of the Norris Building in 1956 had forced SGWU to rent office space all over the neighbourhood which resulted in disconnected faculties and handicapped cooperation. The University decided to create a much larger new home to accommodate all faculties and allow room for some future development. It was decided to keep the location close to the business district to facilitate attendance at day and night classes for part-time students. Acquiring a spacious university campus was financially out of the question. The option left was to stack one faculty on top of the other, creating a high-rise building with a room organization closer to that of a downtown high school or college than to a standard university campus.[18] The city proposed a central site split on two different lots.[19] The University, though, decided on a block close to the old Norris Building on Burnside Street West, later renamed Boulevard de Maisonneuve. At that time residential developments of the nineteenth century had overbuilt Burnside Street for several blocks. To complete the street as part of a regular grid plan, several occupied lots had to be expropriated and cleared.[20] This basic change in the district enabled the University to purchase a large property to allow one densely used building. SGWU started planning its nearly block-size building on the north side of the street in 1962, while demolition started along the road.[21] So far, SGWU was still seen as a close offspring of the YMCA. This was going to change: the design of the exterior had to produce an independent identity, proclaiming the unique and open spirit of a maturing university.

FIG. 9. HALL BUILDING AND SURROUNDINGS. | GUILLAUME ST-JEAN.

As dominant as the building looks, the occupied space is in fact small (fig. 9). The footprint, measuring approximately sixty-six by seventy-eight metres, had to contain everything a university needs: faculty facilities, offices, classrooms, and auditoriums holding between one hundred and six hundred and fifty seats, laboratories, libraries, exhibition space, a three hundred and fifty-seat theatre, garage space, and also some kind of public area. Only a physical education facility was left out in the planning.[22] As a comparison, the twenty year

FIG. 10. HALL BUILDING FAÇADE DESIGN, 1964. | WATERCOLOUR BY JAMES A.M.K. O'BEIRNE.

FIG. 11. SCREEN WALL ON THE BACK SIDE OF THE HALL BUILDING. | ANJA BORCK.

older central building of the Université de Montréal by Ernest Cormier occupied eight times that area for similar facilities.

To fit in all the required rooms, it was clear from the beginning that the building had to reach the maximum floor-space in relation to the lot-size allowed under the building code of the time. It would clearly tower over all older, adjacent buildings of the once fashionable upper-middle class neighbourhood.[23] The architect expressed his concerns about the huge difference in scale of his new project and the surroundings at a meeting with the City of Montréal planning authorities. However, in the early 1960s, the city planners realized that the old dwellings were reaching the end of their lifespan and a future move towards much larger buildings was desired.[24] But there was a countermotion. The preservation movement, which started in Montréal in the early 1970s, succeeded in conserving many of the old houses or at least their exterior, and new bylaws restricted building density to much lower levels.

However, in a preparatory watercolour (fig. 10), James O'Beirne set the Hall Building into the given surrounding, working on a convincing fit. Three streets bordered the property. On the back side of the slightly elongated property, the architect planned a small plaza, which he connected over a fashionable concrete screen with the building to bind them (fig. 11). With free space all around the building, he was able to treat the Hall Building as a solitary structure, creating some distance from the old neighbourhood. The building covered the whole available terrain except the area of the plaza, which made the footprint nearly a square. Building for the maximum density on this large footprint resulted in the building's iconic cubic form. The missing space for a campus was compensated for by the small plaza and a wider sidewalk around the front entrance area for which the building's ground floor was recessed. Initially columns were planned to support the outreaching floors, but to gain extra space, the more expensive solution of cantilevering was later developed.

CONTEMPORARY CONCRETE DESIGN

In the mid-1960s, publications for architects and builders touted the huge potential of reinforced concrete. It became the preferred material for functional public buildings, especially in the educational sector. But concrete posed a problem: Ada Huxtable, architecture critic for the *New York Times*, stated in 1960 that "the nature and quality of concrete surface, the infinite possibilities of precasting in plastic molds, of site-casting in reusable forms—in short, the development of a complete concrete structural aesthetic other than shells and vaults—still provide an open field."[25]

Despite the struggle over aesthetics, the great benefit of precast concrete, aside from its low cost, was the timesaving aspect on the construction site while warranting consistent quality. Pieces with defects could be set aside at the factory resulting in material of a uniform quality. At the Police Administration Building in Philadelphia by Geddes, Brecher, Qualls and Cunningham, finished in 1963, it took just a few days to complete the façade. Cranes were used to put three-storey-high prefabricated wall panels into place along the irregular curving façade. The Police Administration Building (fig. 12) became widely publicized in major architectural magazines, such as *Canadian Architect* and *Progressive Architecture*.

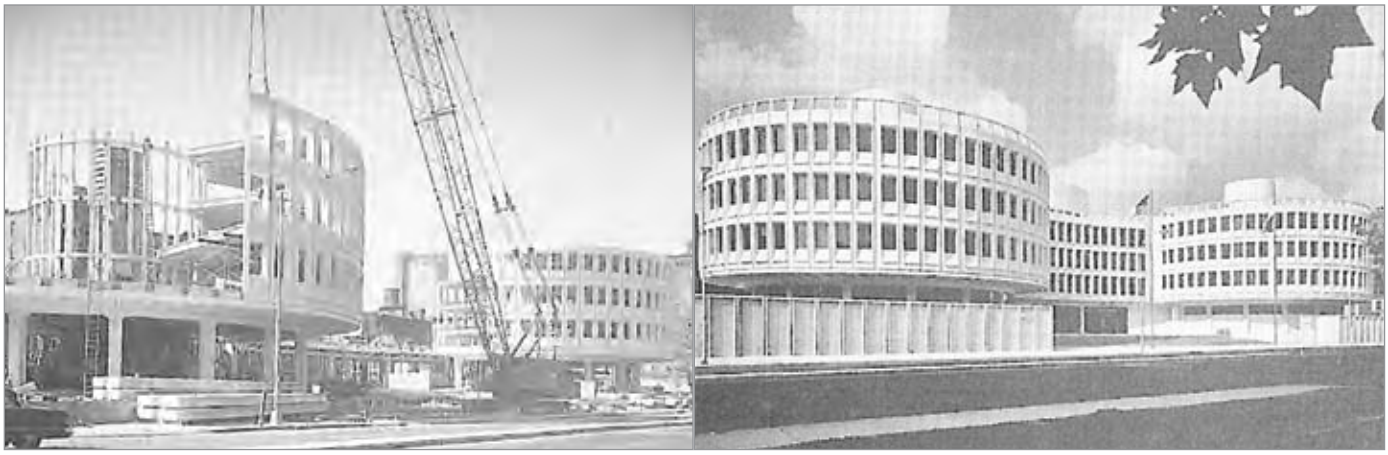

FIG. 12. PHILADELPHIA POLICE ADMINISTRATION. | PRECAST/PRESTRESSED CONCRETE INSTITUTE.

FIG. 13. MODEL BY ROSS, FISH, DUSCHENES AND BARRETT, C. 1963. | CONCORDIA ARCHIVES.

FIG. 14. FAÇADE DETAIL. | ANJA BORCK.

The façade design of the Hall Building posed obvious difficulty. The different functions inside required a variety of lighting: some facilities needed fewer windows than others, and it was seen as necessary that the university facilities interrelate in specific ways. The architect tried to group windows and wall sections into a geometric pattern (as shown in fig. 13), but was unable to fully satisfy the room requirements with an acceptable optic as long as its style was modeled after the design concepts of the modern movement. Little money could be spent on the façade because the now support-free cantilevering and also additional earthquake security measurements had increased construction costs.

Schokbeton, a Dutch concrete company with a new facility just outside the city,[26] offered an alternative for the façade with high-quality low-priced prefabricated wall panels. The only condition was that all units had to be of the same design. James O'Beirne may have had prior knowledge of Schokbeton's portfolio, because Schokbeton had worked in Dublin on the well-known American Embassy[27] while he was in Ireland. The architect discarded his initial design and created complex, three-dimensional sculptured concrete panels using a variety of materials and surface structures (fig. 14). The light requirements were solved through inlays that could freely change from full windows to half windows to concrete boards. Starting in the early 1960s, Marcel Breuer and Minoru Yamasaki had already worked with prefabricated repetitive concrete windows as the only element of a façade design (fig. 15), and the shell of the already mentioned Philadelphia Police Administration building from 1963 (fig. 12) may also have been inspirational to O'Beirne. In contrast to these buildings with load-bearing walls, the panels of the Hall Building were concrete curtain-wall claddings as used for

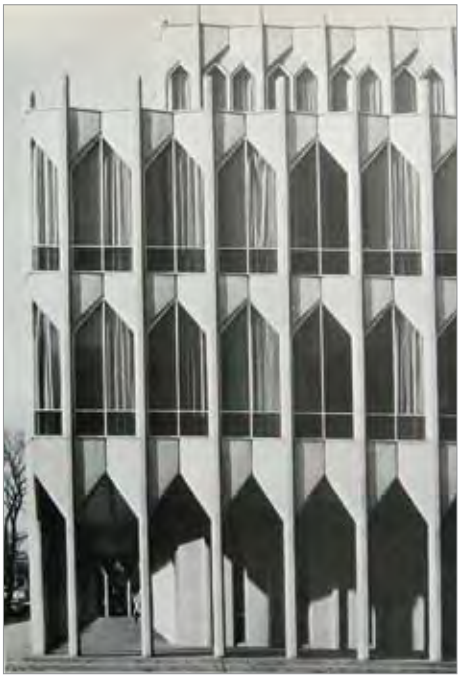

FIG. 15. COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY, DETROIT, 1960. | MORRIS, *PRECAST CONCRETE IN ARCHITECTURE*, P. 462.

FIG. 16. PREFABRICATED CONCRETE CURTAIN WALL OF REMARKABLE ELEGANCE. | ANJA BORCK.

the first time in 1959 by Ieoh Ming Pei for the Hilton Hotel in Denver.[28]

Despite the repetitive modules over a large area, the SGWU façade appears dynamic (fig. 16). Walls that move like folded paper in a vertical zigzag back and forth, paired windows, and projecting window frames with rounded corners give volume to the surface and additionally produce attractive shadow effects on sunny days. That concrete could be shaped very freely in other than angular forms was well-known but seldom applied to the design of prefabricated panels.[29]

Many components of James O'Beirne's façade design can be traced back to earlier ideas of well-known architects. The zigzag-wall for instance is very similar to Minoru Yamasaki's wall treatment at the College of Education in Detroit. O'Beirne's skill was to combine various components to produce a customized solution for the formerly unsolved problem of very specific light requirements with uniform and standardized components. Nevertheless, the façade was consistent all around the building, demonstrating approachability from all directions and symbolizing its openness to a diverse array of students.

However, some saw in James O'Beirne's exterior design for the Hall Building a break in style between the quasi-transparent ground floor and the massive top part of the building, less apparent in the finished building than during the planning phase. O'Beirne was aware of this problem and sought a solution to relieve optical weight over some sort of optical illusion: he chose black cladding for the ventilation system between the cantilever slab and the floors above. From a distance, the upper white structure seems to float over the rest, an effect similar to that of his earlier bank building. The chair of SGWU's Fine Arts Department, Alfred Pinsky, was not satisfied with that visual trick and insisted on a more substantial base for the optically heavy top. He introduced the fieldstone for the sidewalls of the foyer (fig. 17), an unusual look in high-rise buildings.[30] The combination of fieldstone with moulded concrete, though, was not uncommon. Probably unrelated to what was happening in Montréal, Marcel Breuer included fieldstones in his precast concrete architecture, for instance in the low-rise Mary College in Bismarck, North Dakota (built 1965-1968).

The suitability of fieldstone in Montréal may go beyond the visual effect. It is a traditional local material that can be found in most of the city's few remaining buildings of the eighteenth century, associated closely with the early history of Montréal. It was already used in contemporary local architecture by Hazen Sise and Guy Desbarats in the nearby Beaver Lake Pavilion (1958) on Mount Royal as a regional reference to a neighbouring eighteenth-century farmhouse.[31] In

FIG. 17. FIELDSTONE WALL AT HALL BUILDING. | GUILLAUME ST-JEAN.

FIG. 18. SPIRAL STAIRCASE TODAY OFF-LIMIT TO THE PUBLIC. | MICHAEL DRUMMOND.

a deeper sense the fieldstone attaches thereby the university to the past of its site and it has certain legitimacy with the institute's relatively long history.

A DENSE STRUCTURE AND COMPLICATED SPACE ORGANIZATION

The route from the "sidewalk-campus" to the classrooms and offices of the higher floors leads through a foyer behind the southern glass wall, and a spacious mezzanine. The foyer has some surprising features: for example, a Scharoun-inspired low-hanging rounded ceiling section which holds the higher rows of the main auditorium behind it.[32] The architect would have liked to see the curved wall of the foyer highlighted with artwork, which he indicated in his watercolour. This never happened; the wall stayed unadorned.

In the centre of the foyer runs a somewhat short escalator up to the mezzanine. The inauguration of the building on October 14th, 1966 took place here, proudly featuring the mechanized stairs. On the mezzanine floor are escalators for vertical transportation. A staircase on the eastmost side of the foyer, a structure of exposed concrete, leads down to the small D.B. Clarke Theatre, which has an impressive entrance with its own small underground foyer and restrooms.

Forgotten today is a small, hidden passage compressed between the tapering eastern wall of the auditorium and the outside wall, with a wooden, free hanging spiral staircase by which the mezzanine could be reached (fig. 18). This gallery space, which is no longer open to the public, also gave access to a lounge where social events took place.

The mezzanine offers a much wider area than one might expect. It was the location of Montréal's first university art gallery. The gallery moved across the street into a new library building in 1992. On the east side of this level, stained glass windows by Montréal artist and fine arts professor Jean McEwen (1923-1999) are mounted. Coloured glass pieces layered like watercolours form abstract figures of light and dark hues on three separate window panels (fig. 19). It is the only artwork from the time of origin left in the entire building and quite significant in the opus of McEwen. Unfortunately it is now cut in two sections by an office.

Each floor of the building is highly customized with complicated interrelating spaces, taking advantage of the variability offered by a steel-concrete frame structure. The A-A section (fig. 20) and the floor plans show only a few features repeating on all floors: the escalators and the four emergency staircases. In several parts of the building, floors and ceilings have been removed to allow auditoriums with raked seating. The central seventh floor (fig. 21) was designed

FIG. 19. STAINED-GLASS WINDOWS, PHOTO-MONTAGE SHOWING THE ORIGINAL TRIPTYCH. | ANJA BORCK.

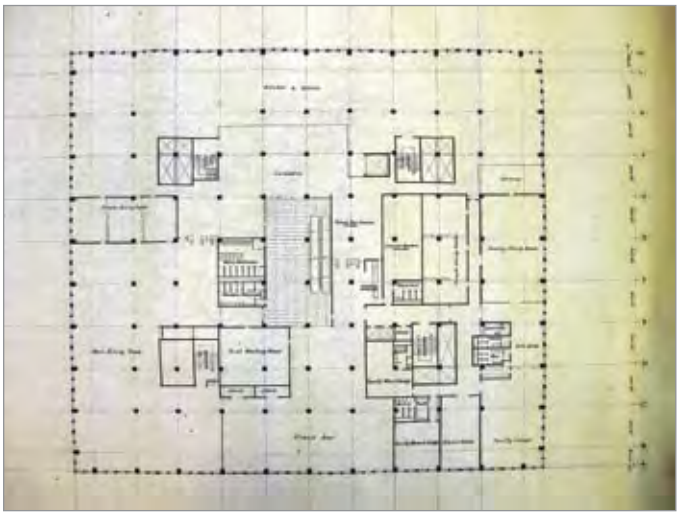

FIG. 20. PLAN SKETCH, SECTION A-A, MARCH 1963. | CONCORDIA ARCHIVES.

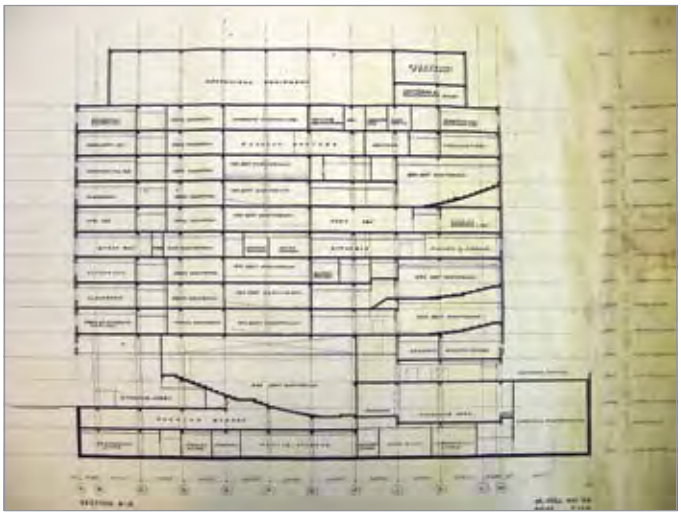

FIG. 21. PLAN SKETCH, 7th FLOOR, MARCH 1963. | CONCORDIA ARCHIVES.

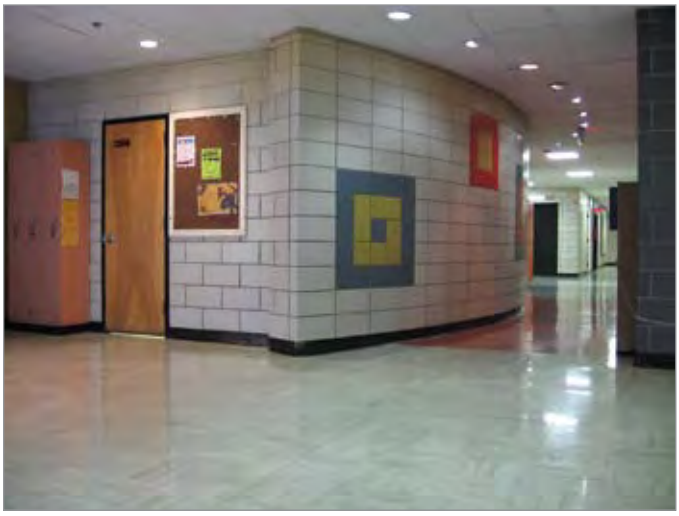

FIG. 22. ORIGINAL WALL DESIGN, 9th FLOOR. | ANJA BORCK.

FIG. 23. ORIGINAL DISPLAY CASES AND EAMES' PLASTIC ARMCHAIRS. | ANJA BORCK.

FIG. 24. CONCORDIA GUY-METRO BUILDING. | GUILLAUME ST-JEAN.

FIG. 25. PROPOSED REMODELLING. | KPMB AND FSA, NORM LI (RENDERING).

FIG. 26. INTERIOR CORRIDOR AFTER THE RENOVATION. | GUILLAUME ST-JEAN.

as an open canteen and bistro area with kitchen and shops, following the idea of Le Corbusier's "*services communs de ravitaillement*" in the middle of the *Unité d'Habitation* in Marseille.[33]

Restricted to a low budget for interior decoration, beautification measures are not numerous and reflect the taste of 1960s. Some murals were produced but are likely hidden today behind additional walls. The colourful tiles that curve around the corridors' corners are still in excellent condition (fig. 22). From the original furniture several pieces survived, such as the display cases along corridor walls. In the 1980s upholstered sofas had to be replaced. The university chose solid plastic armchairs out of the early production line (1948) of Charles and Ray Eames, which have reached a certain cult-status today (fig. 23). With little maintenance these features can serve many more years and keep the history of the building alive.

However, we may question whether the initial effort to tailor this building so exactly to the needs of all the faculties involved was the right solution, when it was obvious that growth would not cease once the building was completed. A central library was already on the university wish list while the Hall Building was under construction. Throughout the different floors of the edifice, it is clear that the changes that occurred over time did not unconditionally benefit its users. Many offices have no daylight, while rooms with outside windows are used for storage for no apparent reason.[34] The windowless corridors create problems with orientation and the escalators are not reliable for fast movement inside the building. Finding space for additional elevators has caused numerous headaches because of the complicated inner structure.

Nevertheless, the overall infrastructure with its many different-sized auditoriums and classrooms still serves the institution's needs well to this day. The sufficiently open concept of the building structure allows even major modifications on a broad scale, and the quality of the structural materials has so far resisted the ravages of time both inside and outside.

THE QUESTION OF RECOGNITION

After over forty years the Hall Building still provokes controversy. Montréal's international style found a much higher acceptance than this academic edifice of the same period. It stands next to the business district with its universally recognized high-rise towers and alongside the main trend of those years, although with its prefabricated cladding it had more foresight than other buildings which continued the ideas of the 1920s and 1930s. Certain details of its concept are not understood by many observers. This includes the fieldstone walls on a tall structure, which is somewhat uncharacteristic for North America.[35]

The University improved the building's exterior appearance by having the surface cleaned in 1994 to bring it back to its light colour, and repaired broken windows. While other Concordia buildings of this style, for instance the Guy-Metro Building, may be remodelled and harmonized with the new complexes on Guy and St. Catherine Street with glass curtain walls (fig. 24 and 25), the Hall Building's façade is for now not in question. Nevertheless the public attitude towards this building is at best ambivalent. Prefabricated concrete panel architecture dominates in the surroundings of the Hall Building with all the insipidity this method is capable of producing. In the 1960s as in the 1970s, buildings in the neighbourhood adopted grey, dull and repetitive façades often combined with mirror-glass windows. They are so unappealing that a second look seems superfluous. Because of the similar building style the same criticism is too easily levelled at the much more refined exterior of the Hall Building. It introduced this style to the neighbourhood with a very complex and competently designed model, but none of the contemporary or later buildings around it took up the challenge to create something of similar refinement.

Criticism of the interior of the Hall Building was common from early on, for example as expressed by author Margaret Atwood in her short article "What I Remember Most" about her years teaching at SGWU in 1967 and 1968: "I found the building impersonal and my windowless cubbyhole of an office claustrophobic."[36] Compared to the cosiness of the Norris Building, the Henry F. Hall Building was gigantic, the corridors seemingly endless, but space was nevertheless immediately scarce. Money was spent on additional room rather than on better quality offices or embellishments because student numbers were constantly on the rise. Other public universities were not better off. In less than two years after the inauguration day, the wide corridor space had to be modified into workplaces for the growing faculty and staff. With the merger of SGWU with Loyola College in 1974 came the next incentive for modifications, this time also on an administrative level. Over the next several years laboratories and libraries which had asked for reduced daylight moved out of the building into new locations and left their customized facilities behind to be reused in some other way. One might wonder that, despite the extensive changes, the building could still function as well as it did. Only after the library building was finished in 1992 and the nearby Engineering and Visual Arts (EV) building was planne, a makeover of the interior seemed inevitable; started in 2003, it is in progress (fig. 26). However, restoring floors closer to the original arrangement by removing the additional offices and restoring the corridors to their original width would have better protected the integrity between the exterior and the interior design than the ongoing radical makeover.[37]

Why, we should ask, is the Hall Building, if it is so prominent and of such high quality, so widely overlooked by all the experts in the literature, even those who focus on Montréal architecture? The answer may lie in the circumstances of those years: the city was in the middle of an incredible transformation period with projects of enormous scale being undertaken by architects of international reputation. Under the ambitious mayor Jean Drapeau (1916-1999; mayor 1954-1957 and 1960-1986) and in preparation for the World's Fair of 1967, a large purge in the city of its so-called eyesores took place[38] to allow the creation of the new "superblocks"[39] with basically no limits in size. According to Laurent Lamy, Montréal spent in 1964 around two hundred and fifty million dollars on building projects; this was the same amount of money that New York spent, with its population six times larger.[40] The Hall Building, with overall expenses of around twenty-five million, could not compete in this race between more and more spectacular high-rise offices, nor could it inspire the imagination of the public like Expo '67. When the excitement of the 1960s was over, the Hall Building was already long established and already insufficient.

Some years later, completely new issues in architecture came to the fore which put the recent construction boom in a negative light. The calculated end of the lifespan of a building had until then justified its demolition. Many developers had abused the opportunity to erase whatever was old and unprofitable. Such practice had an immense impact on Montréal and on that part of the city. Within less than ten years, the once very prominent university core was surrounded by a forest of tall apartment blocks and office edifices. Rapid change stimulated the preservation movement, which especially gained momentum after the demolition of the

Van Horne mansion in 1972, home of the Canadian Pacific Railway builder, William Van Horne. The movement counteracted further destruction and much of what was left of the city's old buildings was protected. The enthusiasm for and pride in Montréal's latest architectural adventures had vanished.

Today our perspective is changing. A rediscovery of the heyday of the Québec metropolis with exhibitions and publications about the 1960s and Expo '67 has started.[41] However, less prominent landmarks are still disappearing, without much noise. Many are demolished; others are externally or internally remodelled and lose their architectural integrity. Only a few will survive the times unaltered, hopefully those that are recognized as artistically important. The Hall Building deserves to be considered in that category.

NOTES

1. Acknowledgement: I want to acknowledge with particular thanks my mentor, Dr. Jean Belisle, who encouraged me to undertake this work and to seek to have it published. Thanks to the Canadian Centre for Architecture (CCA) and Concordia University for the TD Financial Bank Group-CCA Collection Research Grant, and to Alexis Sornin from the CCA for offering me the opportunity to present my project to colleagues; to architect David Fish, who worked on the Hall Building as a student in 1963 and contributed his knowledge of the building and of the history of his firm. Special thanks to James A.M.K. O'Beirne, the architect of the building, for sharing his memories. My further gratitude goes to the Concordia University Archives and Nancy Marrelli for so agreeably fulfilling all my requests. Finally, this paper benefited from Joan Mansfield's patience in reading it several times and her help in polishing my written English.

2. Henry Foss Hall was the SGWU principal from 1957 until 1962.

3. The installation consists of four tables, nine concrete blocks, a steel-light-installation and plants. It is a collaboration of three former students of Concordia, Eduardo Aquino (architect and artist), Johanne Sloan (art historian), Kathryn Walter (artist), and was inaugurated in 1996 to commemorate the four professors who were murdered: Matthew Douglass, Michael Hogben, Aaron Saber, and Phoivos Ziogas. According to Dr. Johanne Sloan, the installation was initially planned to be outside the building on the sidewalk. The University expressed the wish to have greenery included in the artwork, which the artists did not fully approve, especially when the location was moved inside the building. The pots with *ficus* plants are officially part of the installation as a symbol of renewal; however, their inclusion into the artwork is debatable.

4. The riot gave rise to publicity the university was not happy about. In the history of Sir George Williams University, written by its ex-president Douglass Burns Clarke (1977, *Decades of Decisions*, Montréal, Concordia University, p. 138), the riot is mentioned very briefly: "All this student activism came to an ugly climax in February 1969 with the occupation and destruction of the computer centre [...] Although very few students were actively involved in this crisis, the sheer violence of it seemed to have discharged the pressures that were building up at the time. Afterwards, students' activism waned."

5. The riot gave rise to three publications: Eber, Dorothy, 1969, *The Computer Centre Party: Canada Meets Black Power*, Montréal, Tundra Books; Forsythe, Dennis, 1971, *Let the Niggers Burn!: the Sir George Williams University Affair and its Caribbean Aftermath*, Montréal, Black Rose Books / Our Generation Press; and Pruden, Keith, *The Georgian Spirit in Crisis: the Causes of the Computer Centre Riot*, 2005, master thesis, Concordia University.

6. It is not mentioned in: *Architecture du 20e siècle au Québec* (Bergeron, Claude, 1989, Québec, Musée de la civilisation), *Architecture contemporaine au Québec 1960-1970* (Lamy, Laurent, 1983, Montréal, Éditions de l'Hexagone), *Montréal en Évolution* (Marsan, Jean-Claude, 1994, Montréal, Fides), *Architecture et urbanisme au Québec* (Charney, Melvin et Marcel Bélanger, 1971, Montréal, Presses de l'Université de Montréal, Conférences J.-A. De Sève), *Discovering Modern Montréal and the Estérel Resort in Québec* (Brussels, DOCOMOMO [Documentation and Conservation of Buildings, Sites and Neighbourhoods of the Modern Movement], 2007), there are no entries in Claude Bergeron's bibliography of periodical on Canadian architecture (1986, *Index des périodiques d'architecture canadiens : 1940-1980*, Québec, Presses de l'Université Laval), nor can it be found in Loren Lerner and Mary F. Williamson's 1991 bibliography (*Art and Architecture in Canada: a Bibliography and Guide to the Literature*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press).

7. *The Canadian Architect* from May 1964 published fourteen pages about new and planned university buildings in Toronto, Winnipeg, Sudbury, Montréal (McGill), Burnaby, Hamilton, Waterloo, Scarborough, and Ottawa.

8. "Montréal 66," *Le Devoir*, April 1966 issue, p. 19-21.

9. *Architecture – Bâtiment – Construction*, March 1967, p. 43-49.

10. *Architectural Design*, July 1967, p. 320.

11. Cleveland State University in Ohio and the Golden Gate University in California are examples, as well as the Khaki University program of the Canadian Forces set up in Britain during the wartimes of the twentieth century.

12. Coeducation in colleges and universities was by then standard, even if male students far outweighed female students. By 1925 female students were a third of the student body while in 1920, five years earlier, only seven hundred and one of four thousand and seven students in Canada—less than one in four—were women (Statistics Canada).

13. Sheffield, Edward F., 1959, *Staffing the Universities and Colleges of Canada*, Ottawa, Canadian Universities Foundation, October, p. 4; and 1960, *Financing Higher Education in Canada, No. 1: Financial Needs of Canadian Universities and Colleges*, Ottawa, Canadian Universities Foundation, p. 5.

14. Clarke, p. 63.

15. Interview with David Fish by Anja Borck on September 4th, 2007. Henry F. Hall building file, Ready Reference files, Concordia University Archives.

16. Collaborations with independent architects like Peter Dickenson—who designed the CIBC Building in Montréal but died during the work, which was then completed by Ross, Patterson, Townsend and Heughan—are an exception to that rule.

17. All information about James A.M.K. O'Beirne is taken from his letter to Anja Borck dated December 4th, 2007. Henry F. Hall building file, Ready Reference files, Concordia University Archives.

18. It was compared with the projects published in *Progressive Architecture*, May 1961, p. 142-155: "The School in the Urban Environment." Laurent Lamy (p. 49-50) observed a similar trend.
19. Clarke, p. 62.
20. The City of Montréal's archives hold documents about the expropriation going back to the year 1955 for the widening of the Burnside Street and opening from Drummond to Guy (file 104404/25 and further). By August 1962 expropriations were made to build the Metro south between MacKay and Bishop (file 3113 1102.11-3/1).
21. The first demolition permits were issued in January 1962, starting on the east end of Burnside Street, while the architects, Ross, Fish, Duschenes and Barrett, contracted James O'Beirne as head of the Hall Building project, by then called the Burnside Building.
22. Clarke, p. 62. It was a restriction set by the government as a condition to receive financial support of about twenty million dollars.
23. Fish, Michael, 1975, *A Sense of Neighbourhood in Montréal's Downtown*, Montréal, M. Fish, p. 13. Also: The Montréal insurance map for that time shows very dense development in the surrounding district.
24. Letter from James O'Beirne to Anja Borck dated December 4th, 2007.
25. Cited after Ada Huxtable's article "Historical Survey" in *Progressive Architecture*, October 1960, p. 144.
26. According to the company's webpage, [www.schokbeton.com], the facility opened in 1962.
27. *Architecture – Bâtiment – Construction*, March 1967, p. 48.
28. Morris, Anthony and Edwin James, 1978, *Precast Concrete in Architecture*, London, Godwin, p. 158.
29. An earlier, simpler example of rounded windows was realized at the Imperial Oil Building in Don Mills, Ontario, by John B. Parkin Associates. (*Canadian Architect*, March 1963, p. 41-46.)
30. According to David Fish's account (September 4th, 2007 interview).
31. An observation brought to me by Dr. Cynthia Hammond, Concordia University.
32. Hans Scharoun's Philharmonie in Berlin opened in 1963. The foyer underneath the famous concert hall openly reflects the raked seats of the structure above.
33. According to the plan in Giedeon, Sigfried, 1982, *Space, Time and Architecture*, Cambridge (MA), Harvard University Press, p. 547.
34. These are my own observations during visits of the building in 2008. Rooms with daylight were used to store furniture and boxes.
35. Morris (1978, p. 154) criticizes the "illogical American combination of heavyweight precast cladding panels and steel frame construction for skyscraper design." But, because this combination is so common, the more suitable solution to give a heavy upper part an adequate strong bottom disturbs local taste.
36. Jones, Ginny and Joel McCormick (ed.), 1977, *The Illustrated Companion History of Sir George Williams University, Comprehending Excerpts of The Georgian Spirit by Henry F. Hall, and Decades of Decisions by Douglass Burns Clarke*, Montréal, Concordia University, p. 25.
37. This concern of losing interior and exterior integrity was further discussed at the Conserving the Modern in Canada Conference in 2005, using the example of Laval University (*Conserving the Modern in Canada. Buildings, Ensembles, and Sites: 1945-2005*, Conference Proceedings, 2005, Peterborough (ON), Trent University, p. 67-76).
38. International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), 1996, *Monuments and Sites Canada*, Colombo, Sri Lanka, National Committee of ICOMOS, p. 4. In preparation for Expo '67 in Montréal the city set an example of razing down what was considered unsightly.
39. Charney, Melvin, 1980, "The Montrealness of Montréal," *Architectural Review*, May, p. 299-302. He refers to the new large scale superblocks that were significantly transforming the city.
40. Lamy, p. 15.
41. For instance the exhibition at the Canadian Centre for Architecture in collaboration with the Museum of Fine Arts, "The '60s: Montréal Thinks Big" in 2005. Articles in architectural magazines such as in *Canadian Architect*, August 2007, "Learning from Expo," by Annemarie Adams.