

A GAY SCHOOL FOR CHILDREN

We must look upon the school firstly as a place of learning and, secondly, as a "house" for children and not adults. The young child has not developed a refined aesthetic taste. This is evident in his own early artistic expression when in his uninhibited and frustration-free way he draws things as he knows and sees them in simple, basic forms. Knowing this, we should present him with a variety of colours, textures, space enclosures and moods in order to feed the sensations his active mind demands.

At Lansdowne, we wanted to create a gay building, a happy school for children. We hoped that by creating a school of unconventional shape and using bright colours and appointments with a certain flair that we might stimulate the children and the school staff as well. The floating roof effect, the splayed pylons were intended to excite the imagination of the child.

The black brick, bright red glass panels, coloured doors and white frames present basic colours and sharp contrasts. It was not our intention to present design " gimmicks" but to construct basic design elements and colours in such variety that a child would not copy any particular one but rather would draw upon many elements for stimulation.

The school has to be a functional and economical unit but it can be gay and attractive to the pupil at the same time. At Lansdowne School, as a child walks through a classroom corridor, he ranges as brightly blue, grey, yellow and orange. Colours were not used without purpose. Bright orange closes the view at the connection between one part of the school and another. Ivory, blue and grey on the corridor walls are arranged in a progression so that, even when a pupil cannot see an exit, the lighter colour will always lead him to it. The light yellow on the op-

posite corridor wall provided a neutrality which gave more impact to those colours which had a meaning. Doors within these ever-changing walls were of strongly contrasting colours so that each section of wall was within itself a simple composition.

The school designer must try to know and understand children and their specific requirements. Even more than with adults, first impressions must be good. The child's first impressions will be good only if the design is honest. A school must look like a school and not like a factory.

The child should have a desire to go each morning to that gay building full of exciting things. A school gives the designer an excuse to let his hair down, to put the wonderful world of children, to laugh at convention and forget about the tried and tried principles of design, tired principles which will arouse no criticism.

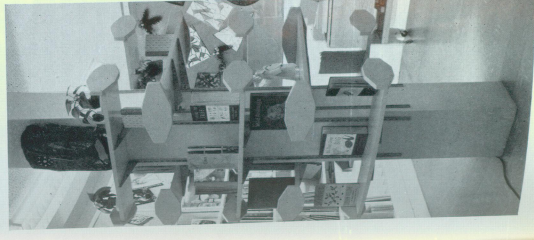
I certainly am not advocating any relaxation in good proportions, rhythms or colour co-ordination, nor the slightest disregard for construction standards and detailing. It is the method in which these are applied which we must utilize to stimulate and not to stifle.

At Lansdowne, we attempted to take some of the ordinary elements of a school and make them extraordinary. The smoke stack for the school heating system is freestanding and has candy-cane. The canopy around it like a candy-cane. The same roof over the main entrance has the same form as the rest of the school and is supported by miniature pylons of the same shape as those supporting the main roof. This helps to bring the scale of the main classroom unit within the concept of the child.

The brick walls enclosing the rectangular gymnasium unit alternate in panels of black and grey. In this large area was forbidden character of this large area was broken down into smaller components

over the gymnasium to help bring the two units together as a whole. The basic elements of shape were the circular classroom section and the rectangular gymnasium unit. The main elements of composition were the roof profile, brick colour, and glazing modules.

Within the school itself certain moods were created. The general office area had to be given a feeling of importance. This



opposite: Lansdowne Public School, Toronto. Architect: Toronto Board of Education Staff Designer: Peter Pennington. (Photos: Antiter)
left: Unusual desks for a pie-shaped art room in the school
below: Corner of the library showing typical interior décor

area must mean something to the child and not be just another room in the school, yet it must not frighten the child with forbidding severity. He must feel that it still is a part of his school.

This different mood is created by changes in texture, and the use of softer colours, and by another type of lighting. But the child was not forgotten in this adult part of the school. Part of our attempt to achieve this was to make the main foyer circular, like most of the school, to give it a feeling of familiarity. And we made the office counter in two levels so that even the smallest child could still be seen and heard. There is an interpenetration of space between the vestibule, foyer, exterior, general office and corridors. The child is not enclosed in a secret chamber. He feels that he has a chance to run if he wants to.

The circular shape of the building provided both opportunity and challenge. While the front of the classroom has every appearance of being traditional, the splayed wall at the rear of the room provides an unusual shape for other classrooms and teacher storage space and colourful project counters.

Within the larger special purpose classrooms, the splayed walls provided good opportunity for the space enclosures and moods required for teaching art, music or science. In the home economics rooms, kitchen areas, dressmaking, laundry, grooming and other areas could be readily defined as separate spaces within one room.

Lansdowne Public School is an attempt to break with the restrictions of the schools of early twentieth century. Instead of providing the teaching profession with a monumental architectural monument, it was conceived with a desire to give the teacher an exciting educational environment.

PETER PENNINGTON

ARCHITECTURE AND SCULPTURE

The distinction between architecture and sculpture is that one you live in and the other you live with. Or, as Le Corbusier did, one can design a sculptured building by fusing both art forms. One could reduce Le Corbusier's Ronchamp to a scale model and place it on a stand in a museum with the title *Dedicated to God* and many would accept it as a piece of sculpture. Here, we are combining to live in and to live with.

This point of view can be carried into a sculptured form so that there is an architectural similarity. Sculptured form can be designed to be like an architectural form. A piece of sculpture can be organic, inorganic, classical or literal. However, when a sculptured form is used as part of a building, there should be an integral relationship between the two.

There is hardly a material that a sculptor uses which could not be used on a building, to construct a building with, or vice versa. As well as this integral relationship of materials, there should be a sympathetic relationship between the designs. The fundamentals of design are constant. The principles of design applicable to architecture are also applicable to sculpture.

The sculptor when designing for a building must consider such elements as proportion, equalization of shapes, alignment within a sculptured form, alignments. He must ask: "Are the shapes I have employed sympathetically related to the slab, to the voids, wall planes and other shapes of the building? Are the alignments of my sculptured form consistent with the structure? If the building is essentially linear, should the sculpture be linear, too? If the building is monolithic, should the sculpture be also?"

If the sculptor is sensitive, he might consider an extreme alternative by introducing the right linear concept with volumes related to this monolithic structure. It is impossible to divorce the basic principles of the elements of design from the architectural or sculptured form.

LIONEL THOMAS