

with the history that we do have, and with the urban fabric which in many cases we are changing for the second and third time. In acknowledging all of this, our architecture can bring craft to any kind of building and harmony to the public place. The sense of achieving beauty, the knowledge of being able to give people a sense of place, and the excitement of creatively resolving the constraints of a site are among the opportunities that contemporary Canadian architecture offers, and which the best architects fulfil.

In one of his exhortations to young architects, Frank Lloyd Wright advises them to build as far from home as possible, for “the physician can bury his mistakes; the architect can only advise his client to plant vines.” It was typical of Wright — the solitary genius, the uncaptured, the fountainhead — that he should give such practical and realistic advice. Just do it, he says, and don’t worry about mistakes. There’s always Virginia creeper. Even Angkor Wat and Machu Picchu had to be hacked out of all-embracing *figus religiosa* roots — and they weren’t even mistakes. There’s an appealing and surprising forgiveness in the subtext to Wright’s warning. Life is long but “it is just as desirable to build a chicken-house as a cathedral.”

I thought of Wright as I looked at the Award- and Medal-winners for this book. There is no building that one can look at or be in that can’t be beautiful and graceful if the architect truly understands what it’s for, and that it should be self-explanatory to every human being. A structure like **Emery Yard** — a simple maintenance building for a municipality — takes on a polish and importance which is not *self*-importance, but is actually radiating an understanding about the nature of human work. It is up to the architect to have the craft to do what Wright suggests, if a craft implies that the craftsman knows what he wants to make before he makes it. Naturally, their being human, the margin for error can be just as great for architects as it can for other craftsmen. But if there isn’t error the rewards for humanity are great; for while it is true that “the sins of the architect are permanent sins” (Wright again), the blessings of an enduring building of harmonious proportions are also permanent.

Whenever I go to Rome — that city that makes you more sensitive to architecture than any other in the world — I stay near the Pantheon, so awesome in its circle-on-square construction, with its large eye in that domed, hemispherical roof. I feel as though I am staring outwards to the sky from the interior of a gigantic Cyclops. As the shaft of sunlight telling time or equinox falls on the walls or on the porphyry floor, I

In the utilitarian, there can be grace, and the projects for **Emery Yard** and the Earth Sciences Centre give not only a meaning to the surrounding area of the city, but also a texture to the purposes of a municipal maintenance building and a university research and teaching facility. The treatment in both cases reaches into urban reality and changes the mind-set about what “should” be. In both cases the attention to scale, materials and a certain element of surprise create a dialogue which is both engaging and reassuring.



Emery Yard

Julian Jacobs Architects

Client/Owner:

City of North York, Parks &
Recreation Dept.

Location:

26 Toryork Road, North York, Ont.

Completion Date:

1992

Construction Budget:

\$2,000,000

Architectural Team:

Julian Jacobs, Semy Gerantab,
Gail Weininger, Daniel Karpinski

Structural Engineers:

Anrep Associates

Mechanical/Electrical Engineers:

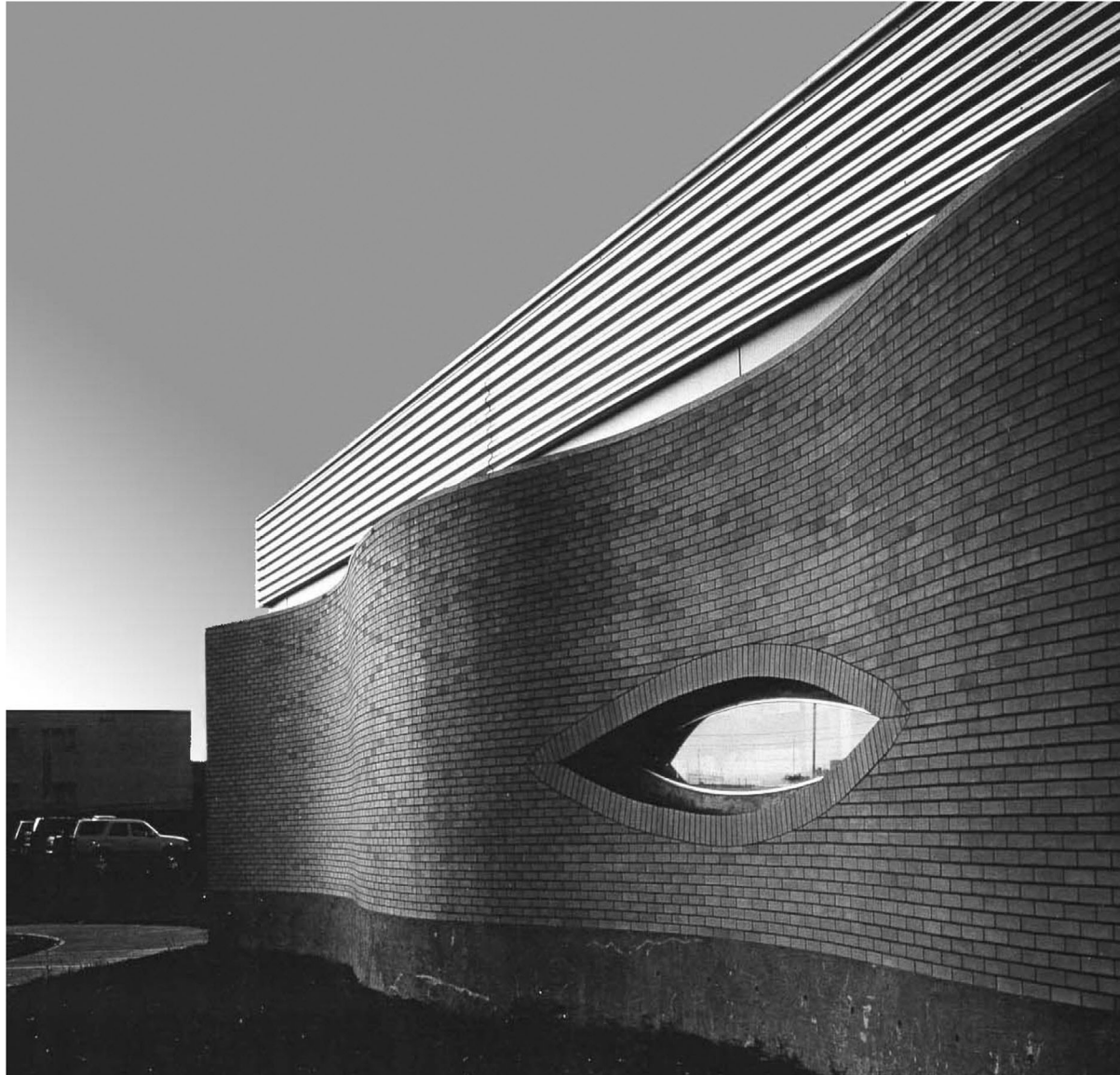
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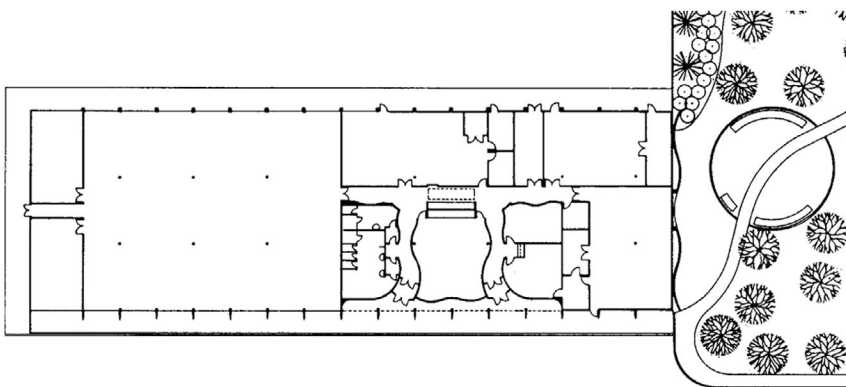
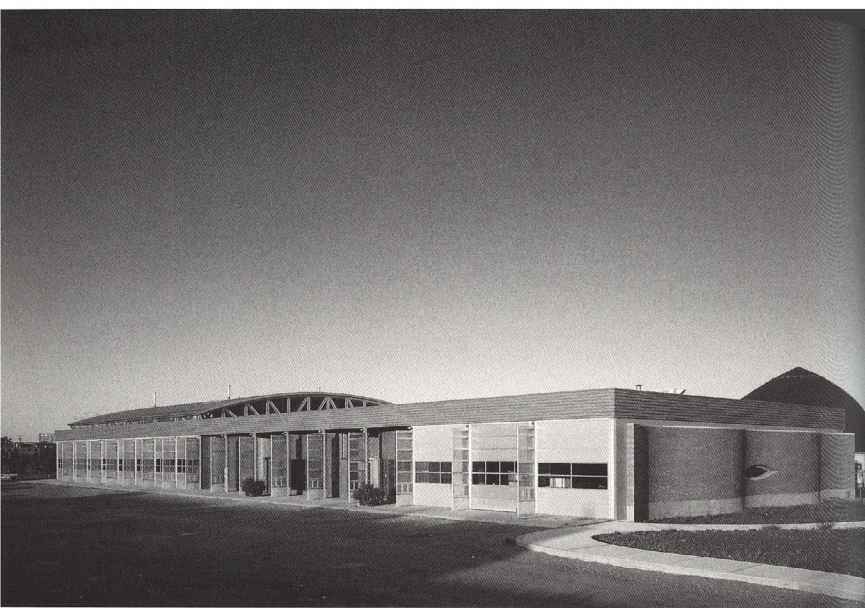
Builder:

Harbridge & Cross

Photography:

Steven Evans





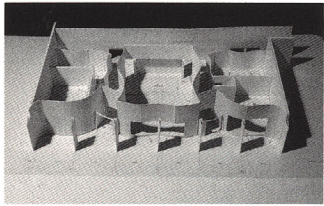
Project Description

The project provides a 20,000-square-foot single-storey municipal facility maintenance building for the Parks and Recreation Department, comprising workshops, garages, offices and amenities. The site, shared by a quonset hut and a brick structure, is a city dump (with soil venting requirements) at the edge of a suburban industrial district, bordering on a metropolitan thoroughfare.

The traditional maintenance building is a brown brick box, single-storey where it contains offices, amenities and workshops, with a higher rear portion for garages. A longitudinal corridor runs through the middle of the low section from the front entry to the garages. At Emery Yard, locating the entry on the side of the building creates a new, centralized organization within the traditional rectangular format. Retaining this economical format frees up the budget for architectural sculpture and detailing. The front wall, released of its conventional façade and entry roles, can become abstract sculpture: the hourglass shape, the brick "skin" effect, and the eye/aperture suggest a reclining nude. Future landscaping will contain, on five sinewy steel supports, individually coloured and styled letters spelling "EMERY": the nude's five suitors.

A primary dialectic, involving the rectangular building metaform of silver metallic components and the natural wood and brick curvilinear walls, is set up between a tectonic armature relating to a tough industrial site, and warm, organic elements relating to human users. A parallel counterpoint is created between the structural lattice and other building components, with the structure as "basso continuo." The structure's special role is conveyed through its pure yellow colour while other finishes are as close as possible to the "natural" states of materials.

The middle of the principal longitudinal elevation contains loggia, visitor and staff entries and windows. Inside, the wooden, anthropomorphic middle section of the building acts as a kind of belly, containing all the more human and amenity functions: office, meeting room, lockers/washrooms. This area is symmetrical about the building's heart, the multipurpose lunchroom, which itself takes a torso-like shape. The halls are skylit at their confluence, over an alcove containing water fountain, message centre and punch clock. The garage is vaulted by a curved silver plane, supported by bowstring trusses, floating at its edge on continuous, frameless glass.



Firm Description

Julian Jacobs Architects was formed in 1979 to provide a full service architecture/interior design facility. Since we view the built environment holistically, professionals trained in urban design, architecture, interior design and other related disciplines work together in the firm.

The working methods that lead to an architecture of quality demand pragmatism and thoroughness, leaving no gap in the seamless process of designing and building. Our intentions in design are balanced by serious attention to technology, management and construction. The continual exploration of all these aspects fosters an emergence of fresh ideas in the firm's projects; it avoids stereotype and stylistic tendencies. It is a *tabula rasa*, or clean slate, approach.

Foremost, we believe that a building must be *superbly functional*. Each aspect must be designed with the utmost care; every user function must be optimized. In a great building the functional approaches a level of art: its planning resolves the programmatic spaces and their relationships in a *transcendent* way; not only are its materials perfectly suited for their purpose, durable and low-maintenance, but the construction details are a considerable source of delight in themselves.

We believe that each programme and site contain the seeds, or "DNA molecule," of a language of architecture precisely appropriate to that programme and site, and that every project has the potential to advance its *Type*, to make a new prototype.

The ideal of beauty, rendered passé by the avant-garde earlier this century, is restored by the new spirit of *living architecture* we propose. The making of beautiful buildings is a tacit cultural obligation of the architect, an obligation from which one is not excused by the limitations of programme, budget, zoning or building codes. At one level, the aesthetic, a building must be judged on its merits as a work of art.

We prefer to work closely with the client or user, and to be carefully attentive to both stated needs and perhaps unstated aspirations. Excellent buildings are contingent upon the client's active role as an informed participant. For each user group, a building must possess a sense of authenticity and excitement; it must make a *vital* place which will resonate with meaning and purpose for its specific community over the years.

