



Ontario Association
of Architects

ZEIDLER, Eberhard Heinrich (1926 – 2022)

Eberhard (Eb) Zeidler defined Canadian architecture during the latter half of the 20th century, notably with iconic buildings that include Ontario Place, Eaton Centre, and the Health Sciences Centre for McMaster University. His work balanced a strong technical ability with a humanist sensibility that straddled meaningful architectural discourse with popular culture. With over 1,000 buildings to his credit, Zeidler's built legacy represents a deep understanding of buildings and cities as places for people.

Born in Braunsdorf, Germany in 1926, Zeidler emigrated to Canada in 1951. He practised with Peterborough-based practice Blackwell and Craig, which relocated to Toronto in 1963 and became Craig, Zeidler & Strong. The firm currently continues under the name Zeidler Architecture.

Zeidler began his training at the postwar revival of the Bauhaus school in Dessau, with subsequent work with Bauhaus professor Emanuel Lindner. His enduring interest in technological themes remained with him throughout his career and is most evident in projects created during the late 1960s and early 1970s: Ontario Place in Toronto (designed with landscape architect Michael Hough, 1968–71), the new Health Sciences Centre for McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario (1972), and the Eaton Centre in Toronto (with Bregman and Hamann Architects, 1974–81).

Perhaps Zeidler's most career-defining project is Ontario Place, an iconic and futuristic recreational complex comprising modernist pavilions projected over Lake Ontario, including five interconnected mast-hung pavilions. Zeidler worked with landscape architect Michael Hough who designed integrated canals, walkways, and wooded areas that entrenched this iconic cultural landscape for generations.

Zeidler's design for the Eaton Centre represents a definitive moment in city-building and postmodern architectural discourse, a project resulting from an extensive urban redevelopment that planned to demolish several historic buildings on its downtown site, including Toronto's 19th-century Old City Hall. Zeidler called for preserving several of these buildings, extending the new development over a long, sloping block connected by existing subway

stations at each end. The structure's design was modelled on Milan's Victor Emmanuel Galleria, yielding an expansive interior space that remains one of Toronto's seminal civic destinations.

Other notable Zeidler works include the master plan for the Yerba Buena Gardens in San Francisco (1980–84); Queen's Quay Terminal, Toronto (1979–83); Canada Place for Expo '86, Vancouver; Walter C. Mackenzie Health Sciences Centre in Edmonton (1975–86); the New Patient Tower at the Hospital for Sick Children (1993), and the Princess Margaret Hospital (1995), both in Toronto.

Some of his philosophical views on city-building and pioneering design are considered to be ahead of his time. Zeidler's work in healthcare shifted hospitals from machines to healing environments that nurture both body and spirit. His adaptive reuse projects set the stage for more sustainable use of historic fabric. Zeidler wrote a book entitled *Healing the Hospital*, which outlined his people-centred solutions to hospital design and spoke of light-filled atriums and access to nature to aid in healing. The Sick Children's and Princess Margaret Hospitals, and the Mackenzie Health Sciences, exemplify Zeidler's strategy of linking health and architecture.

Zeidler and his wife Jane supported various causes, including donating money to the University of Toronto and establishing the Eberhard Zeidler Scholarship and the Eberhard Zeidler Library and Zeidler Family Reading Room at the John H. Daniels Faculty of Architecture, Landscape and Design.

Zeidler became an officer of the Order of Canada in 1984, received the Order of Ontario that same year, and received the RAIC Gold Medal in 1986. He received an honorary Doctor of Architecture from the University of Toronto in 1989. Other honours include the Queen Elizabeth II Golden Jubilee Medal, the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal, and the inaugural OAA Lifetime Design Achievement Award.

Eb Zeidler will be remembered and studied for generations as a generous, big-hearted force of nature who brought his passion for architecture, urbanism, and respect for human experience to all his endeavours.