



ZERAFA, Boris (1933 – 2002)

Boris Zerafa led one of Canada's most prolific architectural practices during the second half of the 20th Century. He was a principal contributor to the distinctive skyline of major Canadian cities from Vancouver to Halifax and, together with his partners and associates, can be credited with more than 200 buildings completed over a period of four decades from 1961 until his retirement in 1998.

Born in Cairo, Egypt on 20 June 1933 to the descendant of a Maltese émigré and his Italian wife, he was sent to England at the age of sixteen to obtain his English matriculation and to study at the Kingston University School of Architecture where he graduated in 1953, becoming the fourth generation architect in an established family tradition. After arriving in Canada in 1957 he joined the Toronto office of Peter Dickinson the following year and contributed to the plans of several significant modernist landmarks. The untimely death of Dickinson in October 1961 led Zerafa and his colleagues Peter Webb, Rene Menkes and Warwick Housden to form a new firm in Toronto. Zerafa became the most visible and influential member of the partnership and can be seen as both the leader and the main driving force behind the firm's remarkable record. From the initial success of small but innovative projects such as Lothian Mews (winner of a Massey Medal for Architecture in 1964) to the design of major landmarks including Royal Bank Plaza, Toronto (1976) and the Sun Life Centre, Toronto (1981-83), the firm grew rapidly to become one of the largest architectural practices in Canada and the third largest in North America.

Fluent in four languages, Zerafa had an ability to be charming, diplomatic, eloquent and, at times, forceful. He possessed a cultivated passion for music and a keen interest in contemporary art which led him to initiate the successful integration of sculpture into many of his projects incorporating the work of internationally renowned artists such as Gerald Gladstone (for the CN Tower Plaza), Jesus Rafael Soto (for the Royal Bank Plaza atrium), and Sorel Etrog (for the Sun Life Plaza).

Never one to indulge in repetitious or formulaic solutions, Zerafa has been singularly responsible

for bringing his progressive interpretation of modernism to Canadian architecture in a manner which has proved to be both meaningful and enduring.

List of Major Works by Boris Zerafa, Partner-in-Charge, Webb Zerafa Menkes Housden, Architects

Toronto:

Lothian Mews 1964 (demol. 1984)
Richmond-Adelaide Centre 1967
390 Bay Street Office Tower 1973
Cumberland Court 1973
Hazelton Lanes (retail and residential), 1974-77
Royal Bank Headquarters 1973-76
College Park Office and Condominium Complex (with Allward & Gouinlock, J. Bogdan and others) 1977-82
CN Tower (in joint venture with John Andrews) 1974-76
York Centre (now Aetna Centre) 1973
Sun Life Assurance Headquarters 1982-84
A.E. LePage Office Building 1982
Cambridge Suites Hotel, Victoria St. at Richmond St., 1990
Yonge-Richmond Office Tower 1990
IBM Education & Customer Support Facility 1991

Halifax:

Waterfront Park Office Complex (Edward Cornwallis Building) 1988

Calgary:

City Hall, 1985
Petro-Canada Towers 1981-84
Bow Valley Square (4 Phases: 1972, 1975, 1980, 1982)

Vancouver:

Bank of British Columbia 1984-85
Manufacturers Life Building 1982-83
Hong Kong Bank Tower 1987

USA:

Four Seasons Hotel, Boston 1985

England:

Four Seasons - Inn on the Park Hotel, London 1968

Saudi Arabia:

King Abdulaziz University, Jeddah 1980-90