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2005 09 12

Triangle House Part 2

The dog work begins. a.k.a. The fact-finding of 1292 College Street.



Designing for wealth: Powder Room - 10 Bellair, Toronto.

Spaces By Rohan Inc. and Chris Agombar Design

Think Toronto

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Designing for necessity: Bathroom 1292 College St., Toronto.

Spaces By Rohan Inc.

The bad: a vacant 1000 square foot triangular lot. I've lived in apartments bigger than this. In addition, if size and shape weren't problematic enough, the listing price of the property was \$86,000. That wasn't good news for a man whose main profession was household engineer.

In order to stand any chance at acquiring this harsh little land I needed to convince the property owner the price was too high. I demonstrated my understanding of their perception; the property had been used for a road sign. As such the rents normally paid to building owners by sign companies range upwards of \$2,000 per month. The mortgage payments on \$86,000 with a 25-year amortization are approximately \$800 per month depending on interest rates. Therefore with monthly income exceeding monthly payments the initial price for the site seemed like a deal. Unfortunately after 5 years no one was going to use it as a sign site. Something had to change. I then did a financial market analysis based on commercial and residential buildings at that location, assuming anyone was crazy or skilled enough to design a viable structure for the site. Anyway, by generating expected revenues and working backwards it was possible to estimate the amount of money necessary for construction and land acquisition. After studying my analysis the vendor realized the 'real' market value of the land was far less than they had first thought. The vendor lowered the price significantly whereby I could beg and borrow the money necessary to option the property.

Back then I surmised there were 4 basic expressions in architecture: 1) the architecture of survival, 2) the architecture of necessity, 3) the architecture of comfort, and 4) the architecture of wealth. 1292 College Street was to be architecture of necessity.

The site context: Working class, multi-ethnic, with a mix of stable and transitional families set against an industrial fringe, a confluence of heavy local and arterial vehicular traffic/3 streetcar lines/harsh atmospheric microclimate/no natural attenuation for sound or vibration against car traffic or street cars.

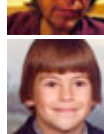
Now the dance of creation would begin. What would I design? Was I out of my mind? Was I creative enough? Was I skilled enough? Would I be reduced to simply problem solving the facts of the project in the hope that something creative might come of it or would I be able to craft a narrative using space and materials that would convey the fundamental and simple beauty of this little triangle in the city. That is to say, craft a building beyond the



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practical solutions, to maybe, just maybe, become a sublime expression of my love/devotion for ideas in architecture even though I could only afford the fundamental materials of a simple shelter of necessity.

Intangible desires are also important motivators in my work along with the knowledge that the process of achievement is as important as the goal to be achieved.

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