

The
Canadian Architect
Yearbook
1979
Awards of
Excellence

Architect: Rocco Maragna

Columbia Funeral Home, Toronto

Murray: There is, of course, a dominant quality which animates architect Maragna's design — a formal simplicity that is in the best sense both sophisticated and mannered yet serene and assured. His work exhibits a nice control too often absent from most recent attempts in this direction even by some very famous designers. Palladio is evidently alive and well and with something urbane and artistic to offer.

Iredale: Of all the mannerist post-modern schemes this is the most elegant. Loosening the bounds of the old modernist movement can be fun when the designer is fully in control of his historic allusions, materials and building techniques. With this project even Palladio should be happy. It elegantly displays its obvious sophistication with super articulated forms and such great little devices as those small windows that form a kind of negative column capital.

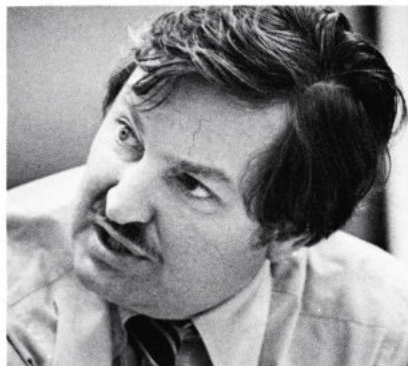
The symbolism of the spatial sequence as you pass through the building with its neatly arranged changes in level is pure theatre. As an old Calgary prairie boy, I was more at home with Long's mannerist designs because they used an indigenous Prairie theme rather than Renaissance. However, the sureness with which this one is carried through and the fact that the use seems appropriate to the style makes this the best of the post-modern mannerist schemes submitted.

Millar: Typical of each of Mr. Maragna's entries the funeral home exhibits a careful and sensitive but positive control of the emotional response to being in a particular place in particular personal circumstances. His medium is formalist in character and indicates a willful use of structure, enclosure and detail to contain one's perception of the place, its sympathy to the moment and sequences of ritual.

A variety of mannerisms have been successfully used to colour this perception in basically simple construction and modest volumes. Little of the site and the context of the building have been described so as to evaluate its pertinence to the adjacent street and buildings.

Project description

The program for this project was primarily dictated by Christian attitudes requiring spaces for ritual



Blake Millar

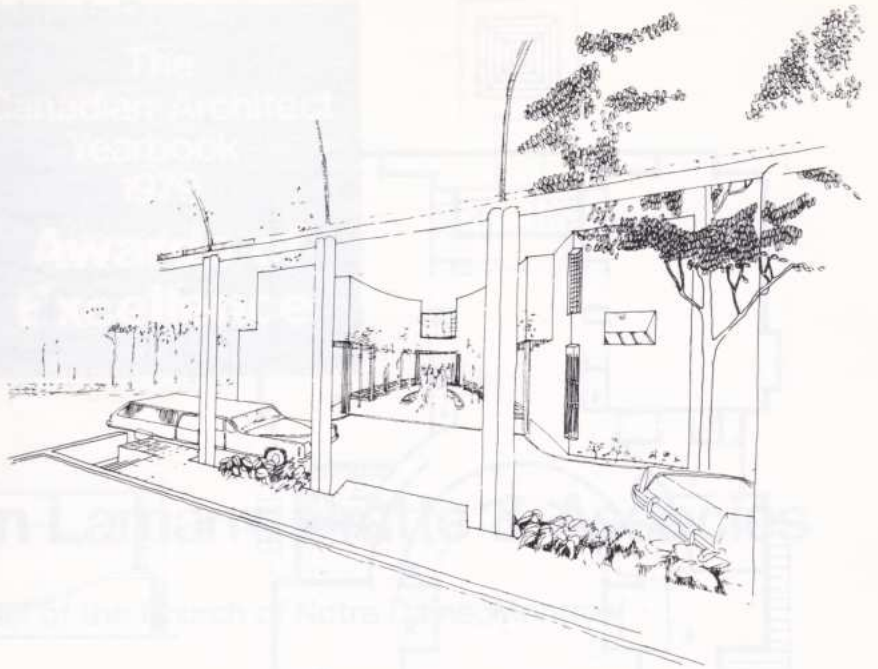
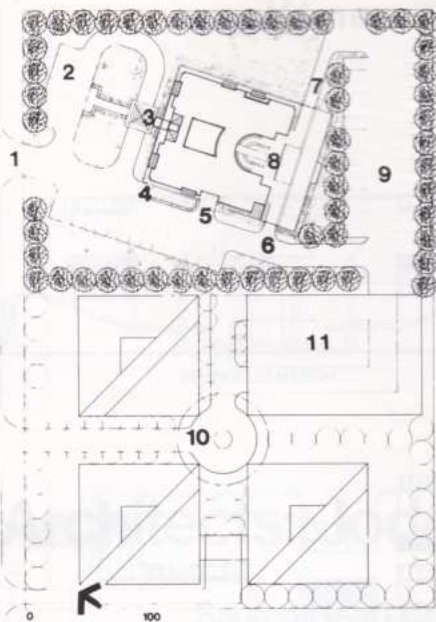
and contemplation. Located in northwest Toronto, the site comprises 1 ha (2.5 acres) for future office space and 0.6 ha (1.5 acres) for the funeral home. The building is skewed from the street grid, oriented on a north-south axis, establishing it as an institution of special significance. Uniform rows of trees will follow the orthogonal street grid forming a counterpoint to the skew.

Relatives and guests, parking in reserved spaces directly in front of the building, approach the home through a semi-circular opening which leads to the courtyard, located at the intersection of the cross' axis. A terrace, pergola and arcade in the courtyard, enclosed and open to the sky, are provided for meditation and contemplation.

The ground and second floors, each 836 m² (9,000 sq. ft.), are for veneration of the deceased. The visitation rooms, surrounded by service walls, have only a small amount of light concentrated over the casket niche. The lower level is used for deliveries, storage, preparation and parking for the hearse and limousines.

Exterior materials are brick and glass blocks with accents of wrought ironwork. Interior materials include slate on floors, sandblasted concrete, carpet and wood. The walkway, drive and courtyard are of patterned paving brick.

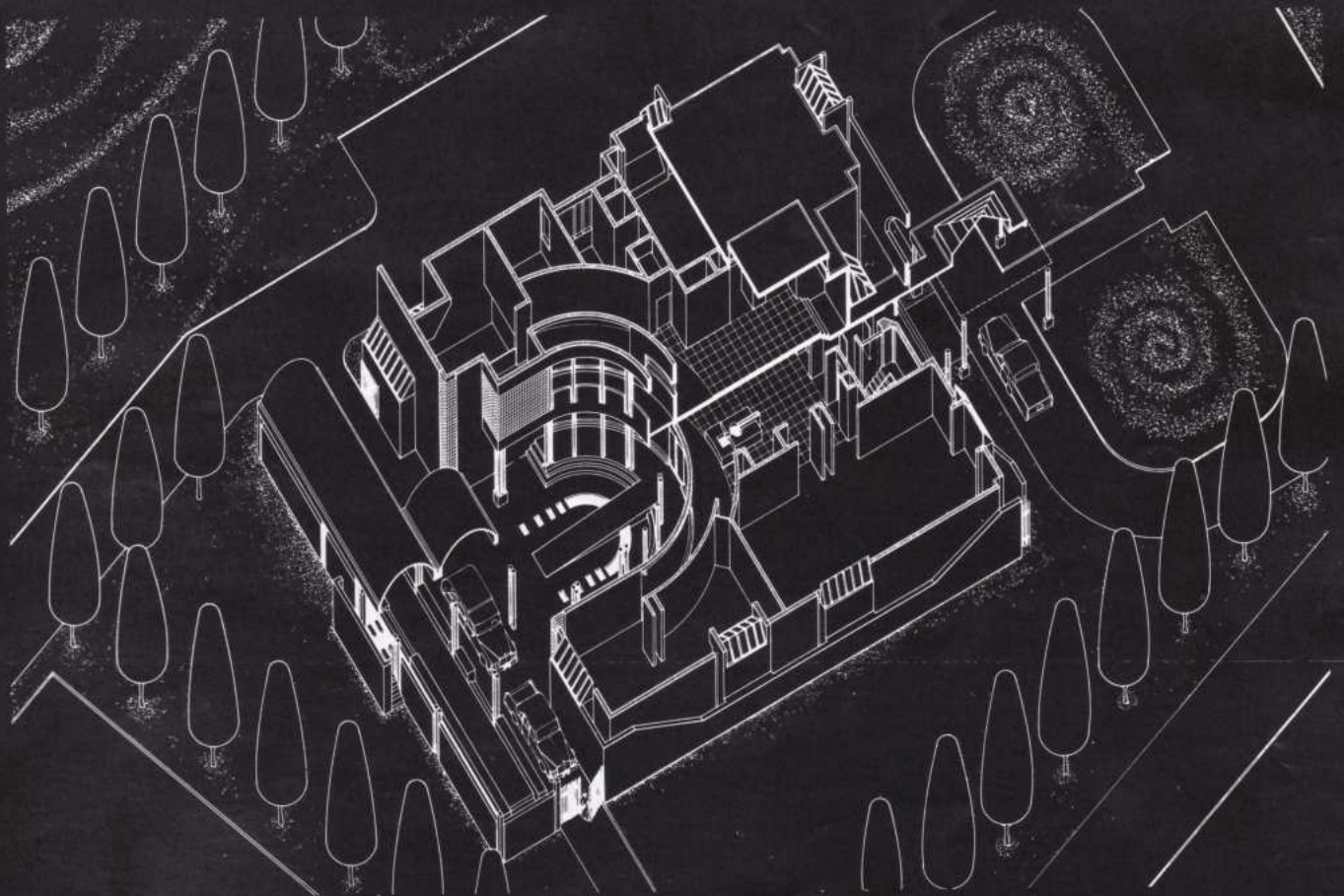
The project team comprised Miltos Catomeris, Luigi Larocca and Craig Lowery. Landscape architect was Paul Marsala.



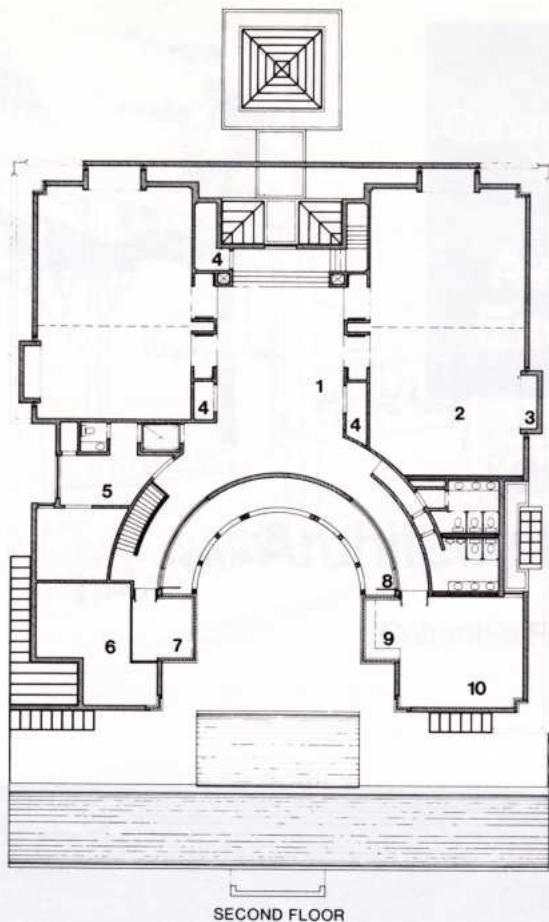
SITE PLAN

- 1 entry
- 2 family parking
- 3 porte-cochere
- 4 ramp to service
- 5 service entrance
- 6 gate into drive

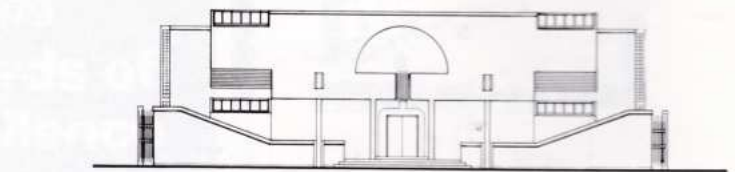
- 7 gate out from drive
- 8 courtyard
- 9 visitor parking
- 10 future office
- 11 future office parking garage



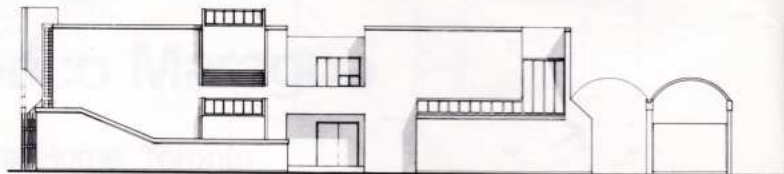
Columbia Funeral Home



SECOND FLOOR



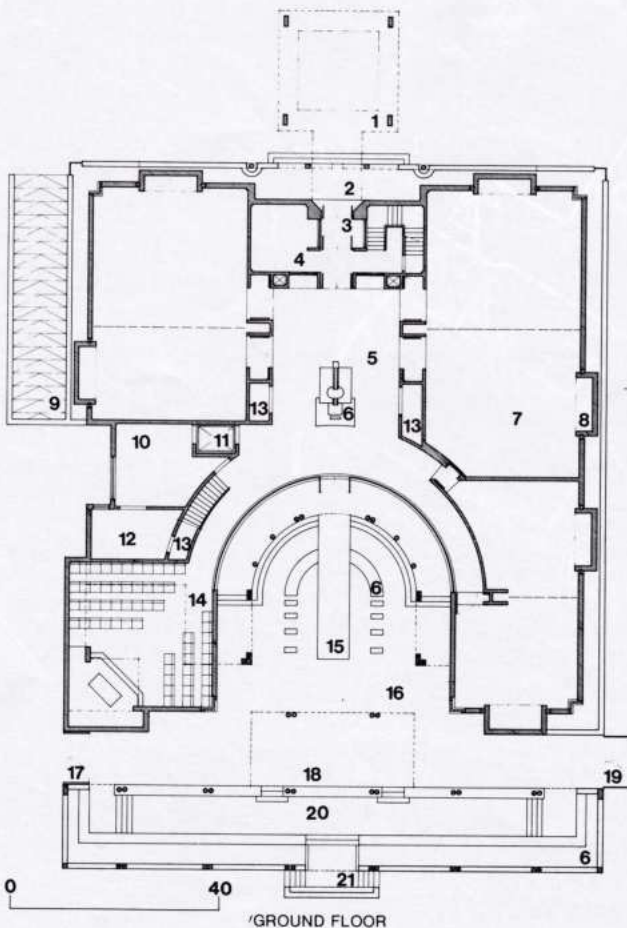
NORTH ELEVATION



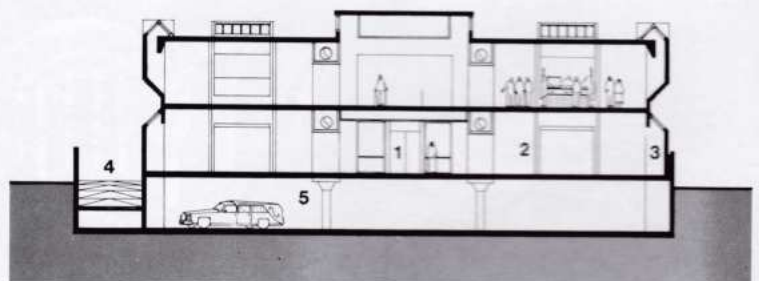
WEST ELEVATION

SECOND FLOOR

- 1 lobby
- 2 visitation room
- 3 casket niche
- 4 storage
- 5 administration
- 6 upper part of chapel
- 7 organ loft
- 8 balcony
- 9 coffee bar
- 10 lounge



GROUND FLOOR



CROSS SECTION

CROSS SECTION

- 1 lobby
- 2 visitation room
- 3 casket niche
- 4 ramp
- 5 service level

GROUND FLOOR

- 1 portecochere
- 2 porch
- 3 vestibule
- 4 waiting area
- 5 lobby
- 6 water
- 7 visitation room
- 8 casket niche
- 9 ramp down
- 10 receiving
- 11 elevator
- 12 flower storage
- 13 storage
- 14 chapel
- 15 ramp
- 16 courtyard
- 17 gateway in
- 18 drive
- 19 gateway out
- 20 pergola
- 21 link to garden