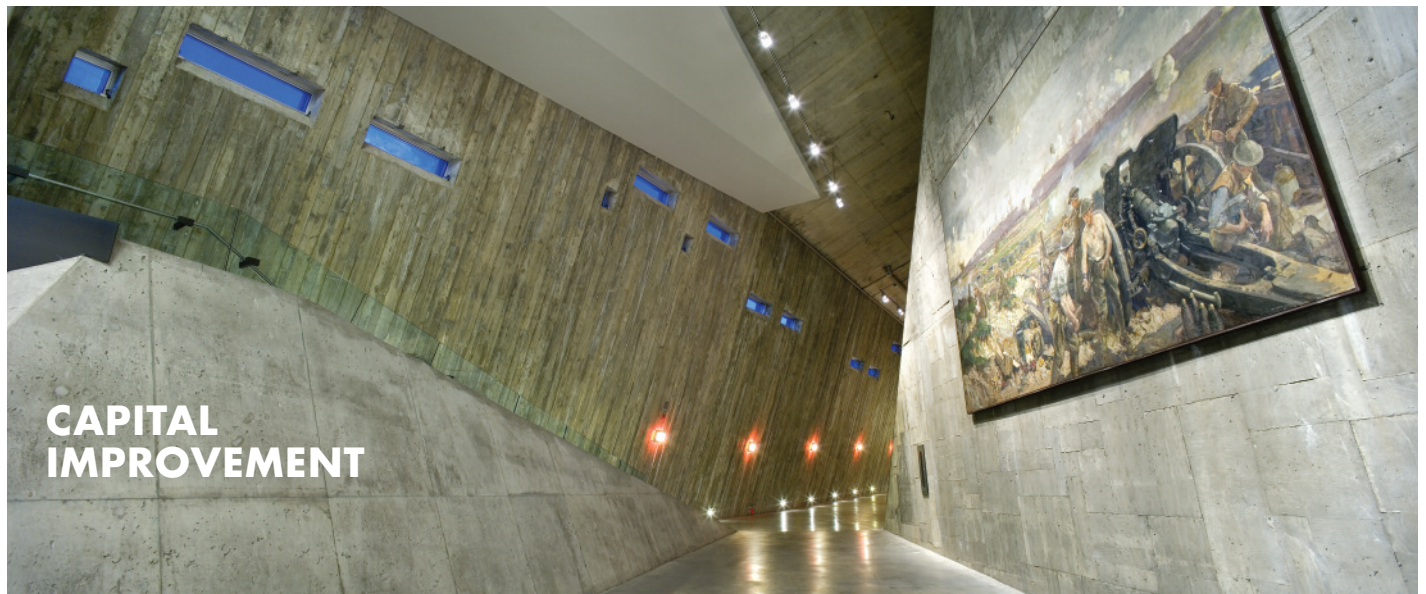


CANADIAN ARCHITECT

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CANADIAN WAR MUSEUM
GLADSTONE HOTEL AND OTHER INTERIORS



CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT

THE NEW CANADIAN WAR MUSEUM REVITALIZES OTTAWA'S LEBRETON FLATS, ACKNOWLEDGES THE PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS AND PROVIDES A WELCOME ADDITION TO THE INSTITUTIONAL IMPORTANCE OF THE NATION'S CAPITAL.

PROJECT CANADIAN WAR MUSEUM, OTTAWA, ONTARIO
ARCHITECTS MORIYAMA & TESHIMA ARCHITECTS, GRIFFITHS RANKIN COOK
ARCHITECTS IN JOINT VENTURE
TEXT PAUL O'BRIEN KERICUK

Since the debut four months ago of the new Canadian War Museum, much has been written of its architecture. The design is characterized by volumes that both grow into and out of the earth like a geological formation, the leaning walls of its passageways, the fenestration that bears a bilingual Morse code admonishment—"Lest We Forget," the self-seeding roof draped by riverside flora, the Regeneration Hall that tenuously aligns with Parliament's Peace Tower in the distance, and the registration of a sunbeam upon the tomb of the unknown soldier inside Memorial Hall each Remembrance Day.

Designed by Toronto's Moriyama & Teshima Architects in association with Ottawa's Griffiths Rankin Cook Architects, the Museum contains numerous spatially rich moments such as Regeneration Hall, the eponymous space of Raymond Moriyama's "regeneration" leitmotif. With the end of the initial fanfare surrounding the unveiling of this 440,000-square-foot structure executed at a cost of \$137 million, two major questions arise: what is the cultural subtext of the Canadian War Museum, and in what manner does such a vast institution help to shape not only nationalistic sentiment but its city?

The Museum's promotional literature begins, "Educate. Preserve. Remember...this mandate will help ensure that the memory and meaning of Canada's military past will never be forgotten." But how does this building help its visitors to remember and to preserve memory? Can any architecture really do this and what does it mean to forge a collective memory, specifically in a Canadian context where so many of its citizens, now visitors to the Museum, are implicated as "the enemy" within its exhibits?

The new War Museum is neither "memorial" nor "monument," but rather "landmark." The term "landmark" denotes the imminent passage beyond a boundary that serves as a catalyst for repositioning a course of action and applies to at least three fundamental attributes of the Museum: its relation to other national buildings, its technical execution, and its phys-

ical relation to its local, urban site in a manner that complements its metaphorical links to the nation.

Reconsidering the manner in which the War Museum would join other national institutions choreographed along the Ottawa River's banks, the architects assessed the placement of the new Museum within the context of several distinct nearby sites. Comprising the necklace of the National Capital's Ceremonial Route, this part of the city is a patriotic pilgrimage comprised of conventional architectural monuments. Parliament Hill rises to command the most conspicuous site upon a bluff; the National Gallery presents a massive crystalline tower over the skyline; the low-lying Museum of Civilization locates its undulating, monumental form to create a riverside clearing for itself; Place du Portage, a monument to bureaucratic inevitability, appropriately creates a near-impenetrable staggered wall on the Route's Quebec edge. Moving in and out of the serrated edges of this Route, the delicately folded, 80-foot copper-clad "tower" of the War Museum slides in and out of view, often imperceptibly from other vantage points in Ottawa. In relation to its national and institutional peer group, it's hard to consider this building as a "monument" in the conventional sense. The Museum cannot truly fulfill its paradoxical challenge to collectively underscore modern Canadianness and cohesively house Canadian war memory in the context of the National Ceremonial Route. It rightly does not attempt to present

an expected, monumental impression.

Much of the credit for the War Museum's technical innovations rests with the structural engineer, Michael Allen of Ottawa's Adjeleian Allen Rubell Ltd., and the building envelope engineer, Ashok Malhotra, of Ottawa's Halsall Associates Ltd. Allen's approach utilized three different 3-D modeling computer technologies (including XSteel used by the fabricator, Walters Steel) that permitted the fabrication of the exposed, two-hinge, steel frame structure of the Museum's Regeneration Hall. This achievement earned him Architectural Category Winner for the Ontario Steel Design Awards and honorary membership in the Ontario Association of Architects. Allen's structure yielded the Hall's eccentric formal character that allows it to enigmatically advance and recede from view upon the skyline. Malhotra's work with the design team enabled the construction of the Museum's 30-degree canting walls—the building's iconic feature at close view. It was also Malhotra's expertise that yielded the 30-foot-tall, site-cast concrete walls that retain the architects' desire for the rough board-formed surfaces to appear on both the Museum's exterior and interior while providing proper insulation and drainage. The concrete for the walls employs a high percentage.