

Further to a piece by Dr Dalrymple

By William Corden

I had the misfortune this week to visit our very own Vancouver Courthouse complex. Probably even worse than Boston's City hall, its interior is like Hitler's bunker, no natural light to speak of and brutalist décor inside.



The entire project takes up more than three city blocks and gives the impression of an impenetrable bunker from all sides. It has no architectural merit whatsoever.

Designed of course by that other pretender to the architect's throne, Arthur Erickson. I met him once and he had a very charming public persona.

He was allowed virtually free rein in the 70's and we have

many of his projects blighting the civic landscape; concrete overgrown with moss, maintenance almost impossible to complete without ninja type window cleaners and custom rigs costing many thousands of dollars to get at the nooks and crannies where nature's detritus accumulates.

Nobody was able to stop him at the time, with my suspicion being that he had some valuable photos in his back pocket in the days when being gay was a scandal (and Mr Erickson was openly gay.... he was also a financial trainwreck, but I digress)

He had such a strong beachhead that he was the go-to man for any university project and any new city hall buildings. He did UBC and SFU , both as ugly as can be.

So wherever we go now, some 50 years later, our vistas are polluted by his ugly, portland cement, lego style bunkers.

It's a historical disgrace and still there's not a single political committee to oversee design parameters. All decisions are made by inexperienced councilors or philistine government staffers.

Symmetry and grace don't even figure in the specifications, as Corbusier's school of "form follows function" still holds sway in the world of western architecture.

We have here in Vancouver an ersatz Colosseum, housing the library, a building which must be of the worst design in the entire downtown area because once you're inside you can't get out.

We have a proposal for a new art gallery (who knows where the money for that is coming from) that resembles a fodder barn from Saskatchewan and yet there's nobody to stop the foolhardy project going forward.

Take a look at some of the images of new buildings in the

Asian world; there they take into account the culture that shapes their day to day lives, they take into account the religious influence with domes, pagoda themes and icons.

In the west there's no such depth of thought, or concession everything is a pagan mile marker.