

SACHA MILOJEVIC / Dreaming a Space for Books and Reading: Project for a George Bowering Library

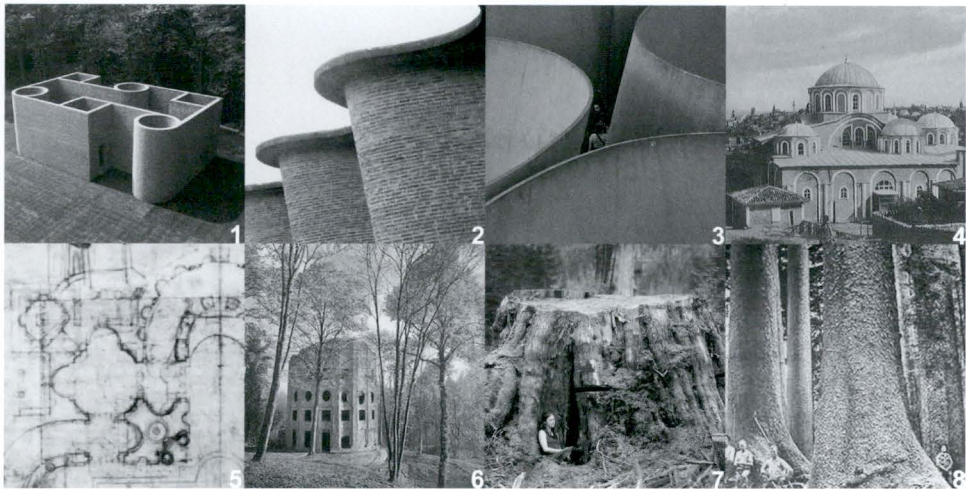
In the stand of trees just up out of the clearing occupied by the cylindrical Capilano University Library, one can dream of a small cluster of domestic-scaled reading rooms to house the library of George Bowering.

To evoke the strong geometries of prehistoric structures made of brick inside and out—the oldest, simplest, and most plastic of building components—is to evoke the authentic and the timeless. In the monumental brick forms of Per Kirkeby,¹ the exceptional brick churches of Eladio Dieste,² and Richard Serra's quasi-cylindrical masses, such as *Junction / Cycle* (2011),³ there is the sense of gravitas. The spatial character echoes the interstitiality of stands of old spruce and cedar and the spacing between the different-sized domes in the Kariye Camii⁴ and the volumes of Bramante's plan for Saint Peter's.⁵ In the forest the forms appear as ruins, fragmentary like François Racine de Monville's *Désert de Retz colonne brisée*⁶ or like the enormous hollowed out stumps⁷ scattered among the treed slopes of the North Shore of Vancouver.⁸

The tall vertical silos emulate the grand but protective forest experience. Accessing the interior through catenary arched apertures—like those found in nature—one is sheltered in the enveloping circular and basic shell form. Light filters in from many directions registering the times of day, the tall openings formed and placed to afford views to the surrounding trees. The reading room interior is ringed with a framework of cast bronze book shelves and fitted with bronze light fixtures, tables, and stools forming articulated jewel-like aedicules of space welcoming the book collection.

Uniting the spirit of nature and of the mind, a primal and contemplative place, above all, for the pleasure of reading.

Notes





The George Bowering Library sits in a small wooded area in the middle of the Capilano University campus between Lynn Creek and the Seymour River on the lower slopes of the North Shore mountains.





From the point of view of the Capilano University campus quad to the side of Richard Henriquez's University Library, the entrance gate of the George Bowering Library and the reading room towers are tucked into the edge of a stand of Douglas Fir and Hemlock.





On approach the George Bowering Library is intended, rather like a Morandi *natura morta*, to be read as a composition of vessels on a tray.





The upper reading room of the George Bowering Library is suffused with light through apertures carved from massive brick walls illuminating gleaming bookcases, pendant lamps, and circular reading tables all of polished bronze.



Sticks & Stones



George Bowering

The reprint of the 1962 *Sticks & Stones* (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1989).
Cover image by Gordon Payne.

"*Sticks & Stones*, with an ampersand, suggested to me at the time an Imagist sense primarily, a Williams and Pound interest in the image as the adequate symbol.... [T]he main notion was that you built poems out of actual things—and some poems in there carry that through, poems made of actual things." (GB to Roy Miki, 6)