

THOMPSON, BERWICK & PRATT ARCHITECTS
1553 ROBSON STREET, VANCOUVER 5, BRITISH COLUMBIA. MUTUAL 4-3335

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July 26, 1962

Mr. Allan R. Fleming
Vice-President
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401 Wellington Street West
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Dear Allan:

Luckily for me I had finished my homework on the matter of silver-smiths when your frantic wire arrived this morning. Anyway, thank you for your forbearance in the long delay I have caused you. I won't go into the reasons now, suffice it to say I have studied these submissions at considerable length and have the following comments to make about them.

I think you have been most resourceful in uncovering this much information and am sure there is more than enough contained here to ensure really excellent work for the Masseys.

Why are Canadians so bad? They range from really atrocious in the best tradition of Birks, to just dull Canadians who could not be excited by silver if they were boiling in it.

David Mellor - Slick but dull -- spiritless poshness, bureaucrats modern; in fact not even very good design in many cases; glossed by presentation.

Gerald Whiles -- Arbitrary design -- the poor object doesn't have much say in the matter.

Laws and Stevens -- Strange bedfellows. I don't agree with their idea of significant work being borne out of youthful enthusiasm, especially theirs.

Keith Tyssen -- Some reasonable things, but on the whole pretty heavy handed and lumpy.

Lessons -- Just a bad designer.

John Donald -- Here is one I would put in a category with your original three. There is not much information included on this man, but his work has a kind of somber elegance. It seems to be thoughtfully conceived, with a type of originality that only comes from considering the object at hand very conscientiously. This to me seems to combine creativeness with a sense of tradition.

Brian Marshall -- Here is an arrogant artist if there ever were one, as evidenced by both his writing and his work. However, he is also clever and competent. Because of this combination of qualities I feel he would be a very hit or miss choice -- more likely to miss.

(It is always amazing to me how invariably the comments and the work are a match for one another.)

I am in full agreement with your first three choices, with two exceptions. (a) The order of them, and (b) The inclusion of John Donald as one of the first choices.

Of the three you picked, I would be inclined to favour Eric Clements, because, even though he does exhibit a certain Georgian flavour, he has a kind of potter's sense of form. The various parts of an object are beautifully related to one another. They develop naturally, usually with complete freedom from a "stylistic" conscience. I think this man "senses" what he is doing and, possibly like Donald, could feel and fumble his way into some pretty nice work for the College.

Frankly, Allan, I think of the word "style" when I see either Benney's or Welch's work. I think you know what I mean. The creation of "style" I ascribe to a process conducted in the bright white light of day, while the qualities I am crediting Clements and Donald with are twofold: (a) An academic appreciation and awareness of "style", and something else, (b) slightly tinged with mysticism -- in the sense you think of Hamada and pottery.

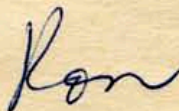
At this point of course we are brought up short by your and my evaluation of these qualities, and the varying respect either of us has for one or the other of them.

At least I think we can narrow things down to these four men. More information should be obtained on John Donald, and in all four cases now we should probably know exactly how they would operate under the conditions of such a commission in regard to time, cost, liaison, etc.

I will be having a meeting with the Masseys in Toronto on September 11 and this would be a good time to present the work and credentials of these four people to them. I think a decision could be reached then that would enable us to proceed. As far as Eaton's are concerned, I agree with you that in this case they are a fifth wheel. I will also take this up with the Masseys on the 11th.

Thanks again for your patience, Allan, and please thank Molly for her vain efforts in keeping me going on this matter.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'R. J. Thom', written in a cursive style.

RJT/nt

R. J. Thom