



Moshe Safdie's Habitat 67, Montréal. Photo: Alexandre Guilbeault.



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lä, winner of the prestigious 2015 Finlandia Prize, and the University of British Columbia's Brock Commons Student Residence in Vancouver, which at 18 storeys (53m or approximately 175 feet) is set to become the world's tallest wooden building.¹

A classic adage by Mies van der Rohe states that form follows function – a phenomenon which can also be observed throughout Finnish and Canadian architectural design. The clear arrangement of space is given precedent over ornamentation in fulfilment of the most fundamental task of architecture to meet the spatial needs of its users as efficiently as possible. Beyond simply getting the job done, good architecture contributes to both the functionality in the larger cityscape as well as to the cultural narratives of cities themselves. The architecture of a place tells much of how it functions and contributes greatly to how it feels.

Vernacular architecture in particular offers the subtle beauty of practical solutions built to last. The resilience of weathered farmyard fences, the

scattered arrangements of homesteads, a hunting shack in the woods – these fundamental rural building types offer a look into a similar agrarian past, each nation with their own regional nuances. In her article "Toronto City Hall: How Finnish Architecture Rebranded a city" for *The Globe and Mail*, Lisa Rochon describes the Finnish aesthetic as "one that privileges craft, innovation and the pleasure of pure graphic form."²

The reliance on strong, simple forms is a theme that continues across time, in both Canadian and Finnish architecture. Neither Finnish nor Canadian architecture is known for being particularly decorative. While both nations have examples fitting into broader international trends such as Romanticism, arguably our most emblematic architecture is based in local/national culture and has discernable form. Clear shapes are the focus of some of Finland's no-fuss landmarks such as the Helsinki Cathedral by Carl Ludvig Engel (c.1852) and the Parliament Building by Johan Sigfrid Sirén (c.1931). The works of Alvar Aalto and Reima and Raili Pietilä hold inter-

¹ "New UBC student residence to be among world's tallest wood buildings," UBC Media Release, last modified October 1, 2015, <http://news.ubc.ca/2015/10/01/new-ubc-student-residence-to-be-among-worlds-tallest-wood-buildings/>.

² Lisa Rochon "Toronto City Hall: How Finnish Architecture Rebranded a City," *The Globe and Mail*, September 17, 2010, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/toronto-city-hall-how-finnish-architecture-rebranded-a-city/article4328993/>.