

The Church of Sainte-Marguerite-Marie of Magog

A building half-way between tradition and modernism

From the nineteen-twenties onwards, major changes have occurred in architecture in Québec. Between 1920 and 1960, many new buildings were constructed which bear witness to the searching for new forms and styles. Several churches which were built at this time confirm the resolve to break with tradition. Some architects experimented with the formal and structural qualities of architecture and the new materials available, whilst others sought to free their creativity which had become set in the styles of the past by favouring a sculptural style of architecture.



Façade
Photo : CPRQ



Exterior
Photo : CPRQ

The Church of Sainte-Marguerite-Marie of Magog - half-way between modernism and tradition

Modernism in architecture does not always manifest itself as a break with the past. Sometimes it is affirmed through the choice of form, the use of new materials or the search for a new typology. The Church of Sainte-Marguerite-Marie of Magog was built in 1949 and demonstrates the coming of modernity in various ways.

The exterior is a combination of two styles. Its monumental symmetrical façade is in keeping with the architectural styles of the past, and the flat roof, the shape of the bell-towers and the windows are modern. Projecting pillars and rectangular windows punctuate the side elevations emphasising the height. The only ornamentation is the stone chainwork and the moulding around the windows.



Interior towards choir
Photo : CPRQ

A new way of gathering the congregation nearer to the choir

A continuity with the past can also be found in the nave and the choir. The ground plan is traditional, the nave is a longitudinal structure which opens on to the choir, and the coffered ceiling brings to mind the classical style of the past. Later, the centred plan became the favoured style. It had been used in Québec since the building of the Cathedral of Amos by Aristide Beaugrand-Champagne, restored in part by dom Bellot along with the cupola of Saint-Joseph's Oratory, and it was also employed by his disciples such as Adrien Drufrasne in Notre-Dame-du Cap de la Madeleine. However, the use of a number of abstract forms is indicative of the desire to integrate new features.



Interior towards façade
Photo : CPRQ

To bring the congregation closer to the choir is a recurring concern in contemporary Québécois architecture. To achieve this, the architects have developed new ideas for integrating. The walls of the nave and choir are treated in the same way and the flat ceiling continues from one section to the next without interruption. The fact that the intensity of the lighting is equal in both parts also contributes to this idea of bringing people closer. The absence of ornamentation in the choir and the simple iconography in the nave add to the sense of unity. Between the pilaster and the wall-plate there is a continuous decorative feature incorporating the marguerite flower in its design'. This motif is also used in the floor mosaic.

According to Claude Bergeron in *L'architecture des églises du Québec 1940-1985*, it is likely that the architects derived their inspiration from the works of Auguste Perret, a French architect, whose considered use of new materials such as concrete, contributed to the renewal of 20th century architecture.

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Text translated by Rachel Tunnicliffe

Bibliography:

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- Bergeron, Claude. *Architecture du XX^e siècle au Québec*. Québec, Éditions du Méridien, 1989.

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