

January 10, 2011

To whom it may concern,

It is my pleasure to write a letter in support of Andrew Reeves, owner and principle architect of LineBox Studio inc.

Ottawa is a city of conservative tastes. Despite some excellent *avant garde* work in the post-war period, the last four decades of residential design has been marked largely by ersatz historicism and only timid excursions into Modernism. More recently, as intensification of the urban core has picked up steam, this has begun to change. Many of the most accomplished projects from this recent work have been designed by Andrew. Working with skillfully controlled massing of simple geometric forms, an appreciation of the significance of light in a northern city and an eclectic contemporary palette of industrial and natural materials, he is contributing to Ottawa's budding renaissance of contemporary design. Not unimportantly, his work also recognizes the unique "sense of place" it inhabits.

His Lighthouse Residence, for example, makes adroit use of an irregular lot in an established neighbourhood to create a house that is both engaged with its tight urban location but also focused from the interior on the remnants of a treed landscape. This lively family home of multiple levels rotates around a totemic glass walled stairway, all enclosed in a series of almost severe geometric volumes softened by rich cedar siding.

Many of his houses, such as the Fold House, serve as welcome modern counterpoints to older residential landscapes by filling in gaps with well composed if simple volumes animated with an artful layering of secondary expressed geometric forms. The ubiquitous, and all too often intrusive garage, becomes part of this canvas on which splashes of richly stained pine boards play off the house's dominate neutral toned stucco.

Inside, space flows both horizontally and vertically with a two-storey bay window and high clerestory-like windows to tease in the important if sometimes fickle light while at the same time guarding privacy. As with the Lighthouse Residence, Andrew uses crisp minimalist detail and colour offset with such exclamation points as the dark ebony staircase. Less may be more, precisely because it serves to highlight the visual complexity of natural material, sparingly used.

If Andrew is interested in perfecting a simple modernist language for engaged urbanites, there is also a place for both whimsy and experimentation in his work. His Engraving House, a 2009 *Ottawa Housing Design Award winner for both best green renovation and best housing detail, is a 1901 house transformed using elements of this language but with a twist. Working with the artist-owner, Andrew used the fly ash concrete cladding as a canvas on which is inscribed the artist's own abstracted nature scenes. Most recently, his Mini-Craven House, a 564 sq ft. house on a 14'x70' lot in Toronto's 'Tiny Town' neighborhood represents a lively take on that city's recent and historic tradition of super small houses. (An ongoing blog documented the design and construction of the house.)*

Canadians once excelled at producing cutting edge modernist homes which, with the help of CMHC's model homes programs, also pushed the energy efficiency envelope. Young architects such as Andrew Reeves who are willing to focus their practices around a sustainable Modernist architecture, deserve recognition and promotion.

Sincerely yours,



Rhys Phillips

Rhys Phillips, Hon FRAIC