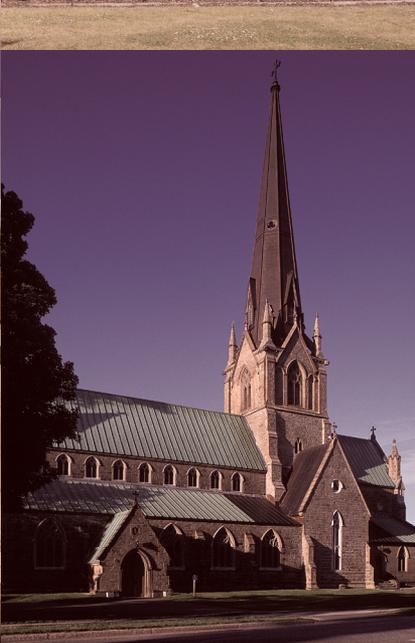
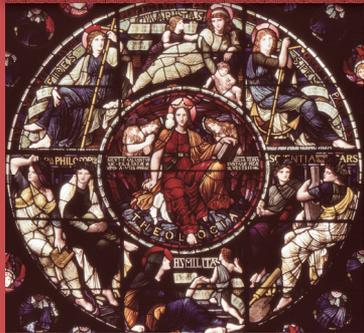


A MEDIEVAL LEGACY

The ongoing life of forms in
the built environment

Essays in honour of Professor Malcolm Thurlby



Edited by Jessica Mace

Patrimonium

Founded by the Canada Research Chair in Urban Heritage, *Patrimonium* Publishers is dedicated to the wider dissemination of research on the built landscape and its issues of preservation and development. Its mission is to make knowledge accessible to the largest possible public. *Patrimonium* thus offers researchers the opportunity to publish their work according to the highest academic standards while paying particular attention to the iconographic dimensions inherent in the historical, architectural, and urban analysis and interpretation of heritage.

The dominance of the social sciences over multidisciplinary, the increasing difficulties in the access and use photographic, cartographic, and architectural archives, as well as the challenges of publishing profitability imposed on researchers jeopardize entire areas of research in the humanities, particularly historical-interpretative research on the built landscape. *Patrimonium* wants to support its renewal and redeployment in order to allow everyone to better understand, in the long term, the material universe that surrounds us.

A MEDIEVAL LEGACY

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1. *Theology*, 1892-1893, University of Winnipeg, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. Photo: Candace Iron
2. St Patrick's Catholic Church, Stayner, Ontario, Canada. Photo: Candace Iron
3. Nativity, Notre-Dame de Gourdon, Burgundy, France. Photo: Malcolm Thurlby
4. Arbroath Abbey, Scotland. Photo: Richard Fawcett
5. Christ Church Cathedral, Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada. Photo: Peter Coffman
6. Church of St Mary and St David, Kilpeck, Herefordshire, England. Photo: Peter Coffman

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INTRODUCTION





Candice M.P. Bogdanski
and Jessica Mace

A medieval legacy:

The career of Professor Malcolm Thurlby

We have each known Malcolm since around 2007 when we both chose York University, in Toronto, to pursue graduate studies. Strangers to each other, and to Malcolm, we immediately felt welcomed and encouraged. We were taken under Malcolm's wing; Candice for the study of medieval architecture, and Jess for the study of architecture in Canada. As a result, between the two of us, we represent the broad spectrum of Malcolm's dual fields of expertise. We have been fortunate to have a champion like Malcolm in our corner throughout each step of our respective academic careers and offer this short text to help others better understand the fierce support and mentorship that form the cornerstone of Malcolm's supervisory practices.

Some knowledge of church architecture ought, surely, to be a part of every liberal education.

—Bishop of Fredericton,
John Medley (1804-1892)

Once upon a time, at Watford Grammar School for Boys, 15-year-old Malcolm Thurlby signed up for an elective art course on a whim, to complement his main focus on the sciences. Part of the course included a look at the history of local churches. Upon reluctantly opening the text book, *The parish churches of England* by Cox and Ford (1947), he saw for the first time, the twelfth-century Romanesque church at Kilpeck, Herefordshire (fig. 1). The image of the intricate sculpture of the south portal struck a chord and triggered a desire to further understand its secrets. The rest, as they say, is history.

That day not only shaped Malcolm Thurlby's career, but those of many others as well. People who would eventually work with him, study with him, hear him speak, or read his work, would all be inspired by his enthusiasm for the built environment, which has not waned since that fateful day. The impact of that young man's career may well have surprised him, as, over time, it would lead him not only to study English medieval sculpture, but medieval architecture more broadly. Upon his move to Canada, it would expand further still, extending both temporally and geographically to examine the Gothic Revival and architecture in Canada as a whole. Yet, far from dabbling in a topic here and there, as many scholars do, Professor Thurlby has attained an encyclopedic knowledge of each of these distinct fields of inquiry and is a recognized leader in each. Furthermore, his generosity in sharing this wealth of knowledge on each of these subjects is well known. This text will briefly outline the trajectory of Malcolm Thurlby's unique career, as well as the attributes that have contributed not only to his success, but also to



▲ Fig. 1. Kilpeck Church, Herefordshire, UK.
PHOTO: PETER COFFMAN

those who have had the good fortune of knowing and working with him.

It's time to get things started...

While, at first glance, Professor Malcolm Thurlby's fields of study may seem irreconcilably different, his research demonstrates that it is not helpful to see a rift between the medieval world and the modern world, but rather to search for and grasp the continuities and similarities. Visual links speaking to these connections can and do exist across time, or even over great distances, but require a keen eye and a resolve to recognize

and understand. Indeed, they are part of the same ongoing legacy. Although this idea is now gospel to all of Professor Thurlby's students, it is a lesson that he learned over the course of his career.

Following his awakening at Kilpeck, Thurlby pursued a B.A. in art history at the University of East Anglia. He then undertook his doctoral studies—looking at transitional sculpture in England between 1150 and 1240, also at the University of East Anglia—during which time he began his prolific teaching career, taking on courses at Morley College, the University of East Anglia, and the University of London. Following his move to Canada in 1976, he taught at Concordia University, Queen's University, the University of British Columbia, and the University of Winnipeg with a superhuman energy that would come to define his career. In 1984, Thurlby took up his tenure-track position in the Department of Art History and Visual Culture at York University in Toronto. He became full professor in 1998 and continues to teach undergraduate courses and supervise graduate students at York.

Trained as a medievalist when he arrived in Canada from Britain, Professor Thurlby was faced with a clear dearth of medieval artefacts to visit and study. Where others might have refused to see the potential and the beauty in the built environment of Canada, he took on its study with an enthusiasm that would become infectious to all who meet him.

Relatedly, Professor Thurlby urges his students to see what is important in their own art-historical landscape, as he has himself. This not only made it possible for him to apply his knowledge of the medieval built environment to its revivals in Canada, but in so doing, also gave his students the capacity to understand broader links between periods, as well as the ways in which the transmission of styles in the built environment transcends time and space. In the process, he opened up a space



▲ Fig. 2. Malcolm Thurlby giving a lecture from the pulpit at Christ Church Cathedral, Fredericton, NB. PHOTO: PETER COFFMAN

for dialogue between the two seemingly disparate camps and established his own form of medieval legacy. Indeed, this dual expertise would shape the course of study for the many generations of students that he mentored.

Although he has been settled at York University for many years, his influence is not limited to students at that institution, as he has taken on supervisory roles for students across Canada. He makes every effort to introduce those under his wing (even undergraduate students!) to the broader academic community, creating opportunities for them to build a strong foundation of scholarly connections in their fledgling careers. Professor Thurlby has followed the practices learned from

his own Ph.D. adviser, Eric Fernie, and carries this positive experience and collegiality forward. Certainly, he leads by example, through a vast collegial network of former students and colleagues that he has created and maintained across Canada, the UK, and beyond, to which the small sampling of authors in this book will attest.

Teaching by example

Alongside his expansive scholarly network and research credentials, one of the key elements that makes Professor Thurlby a great educator is his willingness to share this knowledge with any interested party, whether it be a new crop of undergraduates or an observer of his fieldwork in action. In particular, he has the unique ability to distill complex art historical terms and the language of architectural history into understandable and long-lasting lessons. If we asked you to think of the model consummate professor, who is engaging, entertaining, knowledgeable, and supportive, then you will begin to understand Professor Thurlby's lecturing style and pedagogical values (fig. 2). Certainly, his graduate students, who have themselves become university educators, have drawn inspiration from Professor Thurlby in the classroom, while his undergraduate students gain an understanding of art history that is meaningful and memorable.

Even if not invested in these topics, anyone who has met him has shared in his gusto for life in one form or another, whether through a discussion of fine food and drink, his passion for *footie* (soccer for any North American readers), or his penchant for popular culture—Monty Python, the Muppets, the Zombies, and musician Roy Wood top the list in this category. Indeed, Malcolm often finds ways to infuse his lectures with this lexicon of references. Whether it is likening Bernini's reliefs of the Cornaro family in the Cornaro Chapel in



▲ Fig. 3. Cornaro Chapel sculpture, Gianlorenzo Bernini, Santa Maria della Vittoria, Rome, Italy.
PHOTO: MALCOLM THURLBY

Santa Maria della Vittoria in Rome (fig. 3) to the cantankerous Statler and Waldorf of the Muppets in their private box at the Muppet Theater or providing colourful context to a medieval town hall in Europe by describing in detail the meal that he and his wife Carol shared at the café around the corner, lasting connections are made and important lessons gleaned (even if just to inspire a love of travel). Some are so useful and so brilliantly illustrate a concept that we, the authors, use them in our own teaching to this day, for instance, the comparison of medieval bosses to Julia Child's use of parsley—in a medieval building the boss, like parsley, hides possible errors, distracting and thus perfecting an otherwise imperfect recipe of parts.



▲ Fig. 4. Malcolm Thurlby teaching on the roof of Christ Church Cathedral, Victoria, BC. PHOTO: JESSICA MACE

In addition to frames of reference from the spheres of fine dining and pop culture, Professor Thurlby is sure to find local referents to help illustrate history. For instance, he makes European architectural history accessible and applicable to his Canadian students by finding local parallels, whether it be recognizing the inspiration of Greek temples in a grandiose bank façade or connecting the visual language of medieval buildings to a Gothic Revival parish church in southern Ontario. These types of associations spark not just a deeper understanding of the materials, but curiosity and enthusiasm as well.

It is this joy-de-vivre that continually brings students back to his classes, that steadily attracts his collaborators, and that wins over heritage committees. In effect, he has humanized the study of history and the built environment, making it personal and relatable, and bringing it into the present.

“Reading” objects

Part of this relatability is that Professor Thurlby has never lost sight of the *visual* aspect of visual culture and is able to make these helpful connections with ease. This stems from his policy of starting any examination of art or architectural history with the object itself and then supplementing first-hand observations with textual materials, not the other way around. He emphasizes the value of visiting buildings to document their fabric as well as their surroundings whenever possible (and when not, it is very likely that he has images to share!) (fig. 4). Buildings are not just illustrative of particular stylistic movements or structural principles; rather, they are visual records that are of equal importance to primary textual evidence, which can often be scarce when examining the origins of a particular site. What is not shown in a textbook image, for example, may be of crucial

importance to discovering something new. For this reason, more often than not, Professor Thurlby teaches and publishes using his own photographs, while further supplementing the standard views of artworks and buildings with those that are “just around the corner” and that might help to reveal the mystery. Obtaining that “daring Thurlby shot” is not just an exercise in gaining an unusual raking angle, for example, but rather allows him to transport his audience to these historical environments, making these spaces and objects come to life in the lecture hall and conference room, as well as on the printed page (fig. 5). Professor Thurlby encourages everyone to trust their own eyes and their camera, in order to reach their own conclusions and build their own visual database, in both their minds and in physical form. While not all of us share his eidetic memory and ability to recall, for instance, the precise roll mould of an arch in an obscure church, a photographic documentary approach is incredibly useful, resonating with students looking for hands-on research.

All of this speaks to a clarity of purpose that connects us to his first experiences with Kilpeck; if a 15-year-old can see something special in medieval sculpture, anyone can. Fully subscribing to this belief, Professor Thurlby is always open to new visual interpretations, even from inexperienced students; for instance, he regularly tells a story from his early teaching experience in England, relating that when visiting medieval buildings, his students would often notice details and ask questions about aspects that he had yet to consider. Far from dismissing this perspective as reflecting the naiveté of a young professional, he continues to be amazed by students in his classes at York University who notice something in his slides that he has never seen before. In this way, he is not just a storehouse of knowledge; he is also open to learning from his students and to creating a pedagogical dialogue that values everyone’s interpretations.

Learning how to look, see, and read the fabric of buildings and sculptures is central to Professor Thurlby’s teaching as well as to his own research. In this way, he removes the study of art and architectural history from its ivory tower, imparting a democratic message of equitable access, namely that anyone who is willing can understand these objects with the right tools.

Collecting and sharing

Given that visual literacy is of such importance to his teaching and research practices, it is perhaps no great surprise that he developed an interest in photography to complement them. Lamenting the lack of suitable photographs of his objects of study, Thurlby began documenting the built environment—methodically and some may say nearly obsessively—beginning from the time of his first introduction to the subject at grammar school. That is, he began photographing his sculptural and architectural subjects, “collecting images” to use his own words, and amassing an extensive visual library spanning various regions and periods. These photographs, meticulously catalogued on slides and memory cards, and now, in digital files, are the foundation of his teaching and publications. Field work and photography are of vital importance to Professor Thurlby’s practice, serving as lessons carefully passed on to each of his protégés (fig. 6). Visit as many buildings as you can; always use a tripod; take multiple exposures of each shot; grey days are best for even light; lights off for interior church photography; and stop for nothing... except perhaps for a Mars chocolate bar.

Yet, despite the amount of time and labour that he put into this field work, he has never been territorial about his visual library, regularly sharing the photographs with anyone looking for just the right image. The number of times that

Professor Thurlby's images have been used by others in their publications is seemingly endless. When we reflect upon the times that he has sent images following a casual conversation on any number of lecture topics, or upon hearing him offer suggestions to conference presenters that he has never met, we feel inspired. From his example, we have learned about the importance of an open academic community that supports, rather than restricts, pedagogical and research practices.

Just as he found his career path at a young age, he likewise learned this scholarly generosity early on. When he took up the study of Romanesque architecture as a secondary school student, he quickly recognized that his youth posed restrictions in terms of time and travel, so he contacted George Zarnecki (1915-2008), the renowned medieval art historian and pioneer in the study of English Romanesque sculpture. Rather than rebuffing this teen's interest, as many would do, Professor Zarnecki invited young Malcolm to visit him, sharing books, resources, and encouragement. This unprecedented act of scholarly openness clearly shaped Malcolm's thinking and helps to explain his unwavering outlook on academic support and transparency.

This generosity likewise contributes to Professor Thurlby's overall *modus operandi* of reading objects; if people cannot see these objects in person or look at photographs of them, how can knowledge grow? Again, this lesson, learned early in life, became second nature to Thurlby, even if it makes him somewhat of an outlier in the academic community at large.

Spreading knowledge

Professor Thurlby emphasizes the critical reading of images and texts and quite literally has given us much to read from his own pen. He has



▲ Fig. 5. Malcolm Thurlby getting the perfect shot.
PHOTO: JESSICA MACE



▲ Fig. 6. Malcolm Thurlby leading a "firing squad."
PHOTO: JESSICA MACE

produced a staggering number of publications in a variety of forums. At the time of this writing, he has published over 200 items, with no signs of slowing down. From books and peer-reviewed articles, to encyclopedia entries to magazines and websites, he is always concerned with making his knowledge accessible to as broad an audience as



▲ Fig. 7. Malcolm Thurlby “preaching” to an audience at St Andrew’s Presbyterian, Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON.
PHOTO: JESSICA MACE

possible. Like his conviction that anyone who wants to can read and understand an object, it is his belief that research should be accessible to any who seeks it, and that knowledge should not be jealously guarded by academics. His list of citations attests to the impact that this practiced readability has had, in combination with the rigor that stems from his keen observational skills. Those who make use of his research directly, or who simply acknowledge Professor Thurlby’s influence or even thank him for his advice, represent a veritable who’s who of national and international researchers (in English and in French), from emerging to established scholars.

Beyond written works, at the time of this writing, Professor Thurlby has achieved a remarkable benchmark of over 250 (and counting) public talks, conference papers, sessions chaired, and conferences organized. His role in the latter two activities has been rarely about the opportunity to present his own research—concerning which he always has a new topic to discuss—but rather, he actively creates these kinds of opportunities for young scholars to gain experience and involvement

with the broader academic community. He regularly suggests ideas for research-creation, not just for his own students, but also for other students and those working in the field. One such recurring opportunity was established by him in 1980, namely the Canadian Conference for Medieval Art Historians, which welcomes both medieval and revival topics from scholars at all stages of their careers. Alongside his good friend Professor John Osborne, whom he met at the second CCMAH meeting, Professor Thurlby put energy in establishing this conference, which continues to be organized at various Canadian institutions. It is unique in that it gives many burgeoning art historians a chance to present their ideas and to meet leading experts in their fields in a friendly environment that fosters long-lasting connections. He likewise had a hand in the early days of the Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada, which, to this day, remains the foremost organization for the scholarly study of the built environment in Canada, with the only peer-reviewed journal on the subject (to which he is a frequent contributor). He even created the somewhat informal Gothic Summit as a space for those working on topics in Gothic architecture to establish a community where they can share their research in an open and supportive environment. He encourages his students to present often and to publish early and provides support through practice runs and by reading drafts. In these ways, Professor Thurlby has further cast off the formalities that characterize much of academia, providing a desirable alternative that has allowed so many of his students to flourish in their fields.

Relatedly, keen to remove art history from its silo—or refusing to ever see it as separate from the real world in the first place—he is often involved in heritage efforts, particularly in the vicinity of his hometown of Brantford, Ontario. Recently, for example, he was part of a successful effort to

save the little known 1854 Gothic Revival town hall in Paris, Ontario, near his home in Brantford, Ontario. He also frequently lectures at innumerable small parish churches across Canada and the UK, for local audiences, situating their tiny building within the broader scope of architectural history (fig. 7). That a scholar of international repute takes such enthusiastic interest in and explains so lucidly what might be deemed insignificant to others makes a big impact. It helps people to understand their environment in new ways and to take even greater pride in it. Overall, in both his teaching practice and beyond, he aims to use his knowledge for practical purposes and to spread his love of the built environment.

Indeed, perhaps what best characterizes Professor Thurlby's career is his enthusiastic passion for art and architectural history (fig. 8). Those who know him have heard his sage advice that “if you're not having fun, find something else.” This not only provides a touch of levity – particularly for stressed students, but also reminds us, at any stage of our careers, that what matters most is enjoying what you do. In art and architectural history, this means diving into the process and above all else appreciating and never losing a sense of awe when contemplating the products of human creativity throughout history. While his research methods are rigorous, his publications thorough, and his lectures detail oriented, all aspects of Professor Thurlby's work are nonetheless imbued with this distinct element of joy. This sense of wonder also helps to explain why he is such a prolific pedagogue and publisher. When hearing him speak, or reading his work, it is impossible not to feel his excitement about the subject matter. His activities demonstrate that there are always new and different avenues for investigation, and a cornerstone of his philosophy is to explore the whatever topic fuels his incredibly varied interests. He has taught us that in research and writing, it is perfectly

acceptable—and often infinitely more productive — to abandon ideas that are not working for others that are more salient, to remain open to letting the objects themselves guide our interests, and to have fun every step of the way.

Conclusion

Given the breadth of Professor Thurlby's areas of study and his extensive sphere of influence, it may come as no surprise that the contributors of this book come from a wide array of backgrounds and interests. As a result, this book puts forth a broad range of topics, covering places from rural England to metropolitan Shanghai, and art forms from medieval church measurements to nineteenth-century architectural photography to contemporary Irish sculpture; anything less would be a disservice to his epic career and boundless sense of curiosity. Further speaking to his range of influence, the authors consist of former students, colleagues, collaborators, and dear friends.

The first part of this book explores art in conversation with the built environment; namely, murals in a small Romanesque church; nineteenth-century architectural photography; and turn-of-the-century stained glass. John Osborne, Peter Coffman, and Shirley Ann Brown, respectively, remind us that these art forms are all interconnected, providing rich fields of inquiry. Roger Stalley, Ron Baxter, Barry Magrill, and Dominic Marner explore the iconography of sculptures of various kinds in the second part of the book, ranging from the understandings of the Cross of the Scriptures at Clonmacnoise in Ireland to the significance of the contemporary Dublin Spire; and, in the English Romanesque world, from material concerns in sculpture in the Chalk Belt to the application and understanding of figural sculpture on the small church at Barfreston.



▲ Fig. 8. Malcolm Thurlby. PHOTO: PETER COFFMAN

Next, Eric Fernie and Hugh McCague break down into measurements both the small church at Chithurst, Sussex and the great Durham Cathedral. Richard Fawcett then takes us on a survey of church towers across Scotland, while Stuart Harrison examines in depth the western bays at Lincoln Cathedral. Whereas part three dissects and measures medieval churches, the fourth part of the book takes a holistic look at medieval buildings: Melbourne Church, Derbyshire; three Austrian double-nave churches; and the tiny Odda's Chapel, Deerhurst. Here, Jennifer S. Alexander, Richard A. Sundt, and Michael Hare with Richard Bryant explore and expose these heretofore little-studied places.

For the fifth and sixth parts, we again turn our attention away from the medieval world, although its lessons and ideas linger on. Luc Noppen and Candace Iron journey through Gothic Revival churches in the Canadian provinces of Quebec and Ontario, and Harold Kalman takes us all the way to Shanghai to demonstrate the

wide spread of Gothic principles and tastes. Lastly, Matthew M. Reeve and Jamie S. Scott each dive into the diverse world of architecture in twenty- and twenty-first-century Canada with a look at the eccentric Toronto mansion, Casa Loma, followed by an overview of mosque architecture from coast to coast. Each of the diverse case studies across the six parts of this book touch on or intersect with aspects of Professor Thurlby's research interests in one way or another.

Kilpeck instilled in Professor Thurlby a sense of appreciation and delight in visual culture on which he built his legacy. As he is prone to say, the study of art and architectural history is perhaps not saving any lives, but it can help us to think critically about the world around us, and it is damn fun. This book was assembled in that very spirit. We similarly encourage you, the readers of this book, to look closely at the world around you, to appreciate it to the fullest, and above all, to enjoy the ride, as Professor Thurlby has proved possible throughout his career.

With contributions from: Jennifer S. Alexander, Ron Baxter, Candice M.P. Bogdanski, Shirley Ann Brown, Richard Bryant, Peter Coffman, Richard Fawcett, Eric Fernie, Michael Hare, Stuart Harrison, Candace Iron, Harold Kalman, Jessica Mace, Barry Magrill, Dominic Marner, Hugh G. McCague, Luc Noppen, John Osborne, Matthew M. Reeve, Jamie S. Scott, Roger Stalley, and Richard A. Sundt.



Architecture in medieval Europe made use of a variety of art forms. In these buildings—most notably in churches—architecture, painting, sculpture, stained glass, and more, came together harmoniously to produce a coherent whole. These arts have continued, or have been revived variously over the centuries far beyond the confines of Europe. This demonstrates that, aside from tangible visual and material culture, the legacy of the Middle Ages likewise consists of a tradition of comprehensive teaching and learning that has been carefully handed down and studied throughout the ages.

As such, this book acts as a fitting tribute to Professor Malcolm Thurlby (1948–) of York University, Toronto, who has exemplified these principles throughout his career, in education as well as in each of the dual spheres of research of visual culture in the medieval and modern worlds. The authors in this book therefore examine not only medieval topics, but also more recent interpretations of these practices, principles, and lessons across the globe, from the nineteenth century through to the present day. Offered in honour of a distinguished scholar, educator, colleague, mentor, and friend, this book explores this ongoing medieval legacy.

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