

ARCTIC ADAPT ATIONS



***Arctic Adaptations: Nunavut at 15* to represent Canada at the 14th International Architecture Exhibition – la Biennale di Venezia**

Toronto, May 15, 2014 – Arctic Adaptations: Nunavut at 15 is Canada's national exhibition at the 14th International Architecture Exhibition - la Biennale di Venezia. It is organized and curated by Lateral Office of Toronto.

Arctic Adaptations: Nunavut at 15 surveys a recent architectural past, a current urbanizing present, and a projective near future of adaptive architecture in Nunavut. Nunavut, which means “our land”, is Canada's newest, largest, and most northerly territory. It separated from the Northwest Territories on April 1, 1999 following a hard-fought land claims agreement established in 1993. Today, there are almost 33,000 people living in 25 communities across two million square kilometres, making Nunavut one of the least densely populated regions in the world. These communities, located above the tree line and with no roads connecting them, range in population from 120 in the smallest hamlet to 7,000 in Nunavut's capital city of Iqaluit. The climate, geography, and people of Nunavut, as well as the wider Canadian Arctic, challenge the viability of a universalizing modernity.

Following the age of polar exploration in the 20th century, modern architecture encroached on this remote and vast region of Canada in the name of sovereignty, aboriginal affairs management, or trade, among others. However, the indigenous Inuit people have inhabited the Canadian Arctic for millennia as a traditionally semi-nomadic people. Inuit relations with Canada have been fraught with acts of neglect, resistance, and negotiation. Throughout the last 100 years, architecture, infrastructure, and settlements have been the tools for these acts. People have been re-located; trading posts, military infrastructure, and research stations have been built; and small settlements are now emerging as Arctic cities. Some have described this rapid confrontation with modernity as a transition “from igloos to internet” compressed into forty years. This abruptness has revealed powerful traits among its people—adaptation and resilience—qualities which modern architecture has often lacked.

Few places exemplify the ability to adapt in the face of modernity better than Nunavut. Coinciding with the 15th anniversary of the establishment of the territory, which changed Canada's map, *Arctic Adaptations* explores modernism's legacy within the contextual particularities of the North. The exhibition documents architectural history in this remarkable but relatively unknown region of Canada, describes the contemporary realities of life in its communities, and examines a projected role for architecture moving forward. It argues that modern Inuit cultures continue to evolve and merge the traditional and the contemporary in unique and innovative ways, and questions whether architecture, which has largely failed this region—both technically and socially—can be equally innovative and adaptive.

As Nunavut celebrates its 15th anniversary in 2014, *Arctic Adaptations* simultaneously reflects on this rapid modernization and presents innovative architecture proposals by five design teams. Each team is made up of a Canadian school of architecture, a Canadian architecture office with extensive northern experience, and a Nunavut-based organization. Each team's proposal examines one theme—housing, health, education, arts, or recreation—and is rooted in Nunavut's distinct land, climate and culture. They reflect local traditions of migration, mobility and seasonality and respond to regional as well as local realities, including climate change, economic transformations, and a young and rapidly growing population.

Arctic Adaptations includes animated architectural models of each proposal. Each of Nunavut's 25 communities are represented with a topographic model and photograph. Specially commissioned soapstone carvings document important modernist buildings in Nunavut from the past 100 years.

Arctic Adaptations responds directly to the theme of the 14th International Architecture Exhibition: *Absorbing Modernity: 1914-2014*. Modernity is often fearful of the specificities of place and the premise of 'the local'. Yet Nunavut—a place with little to no daylight in certain seasons, temperatures averaging below freezing, no roads between communities, and a people that live out on the land—seems to resist modernism's universalizing tendency. This unique exhibition seeks to reveal acts of architectural resistance and identify an unrecognized modern Canadian North. Proposals focus on the fundamentals of human habitation in the North and offer ideas of how architectural design can enhance daily life.

Arctic Adaptations: Nunavut at 15 will be at the Canada Pavilion at the 14th International Architecture Exhibition - la Biennale di Venezia from June 7 - November 23, 2014.

A broadly accessible publication, called Many Norths: Spatial Practices in a Shifting Territory, will accompany *Arctic Adaptations*. After the exhibition returns from Venice it will tour Canada extensively in 2015-17.

Official Canadian participation in the 14th International Architecture Exhibition - la Biennale di Venezia is coordinated and supported by the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada and the Canada Council for the Arts. The Commissioner of *Arctic Adaptations: Nunavut at 15* is the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada. The Presenting Sponsor of *Arctic Adaptations: Nunavut at 15* is Manulife Financial.

For more information on *Arctic Adaptations* and its sponsors and partners, please go to: <http://www.arcticadaptations.ca>

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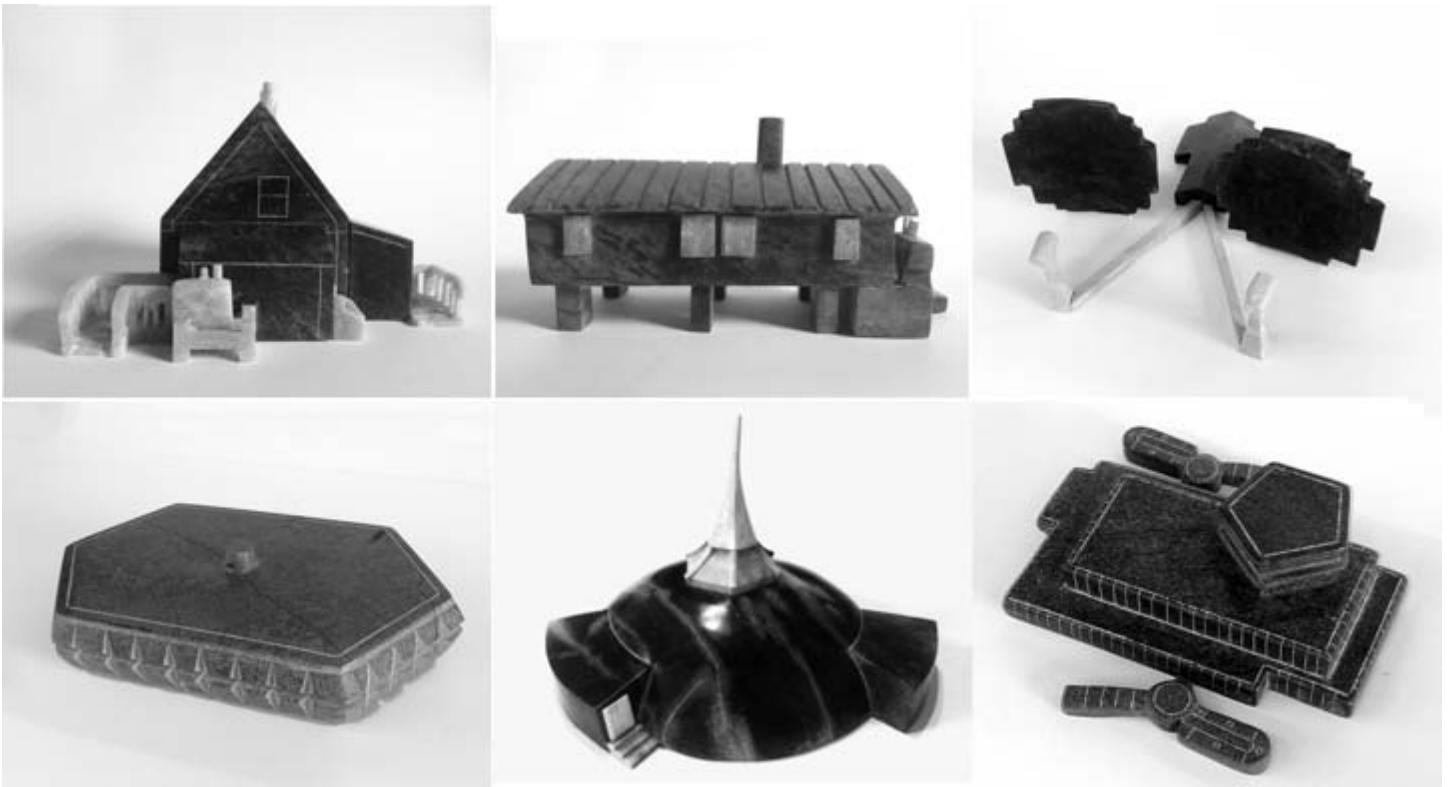
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Press Material:

To download images and for more information on the Canada Pavilion at the 14th International Architecture Exhibition please visit <http://www.arcticadaptations.ca/press/>



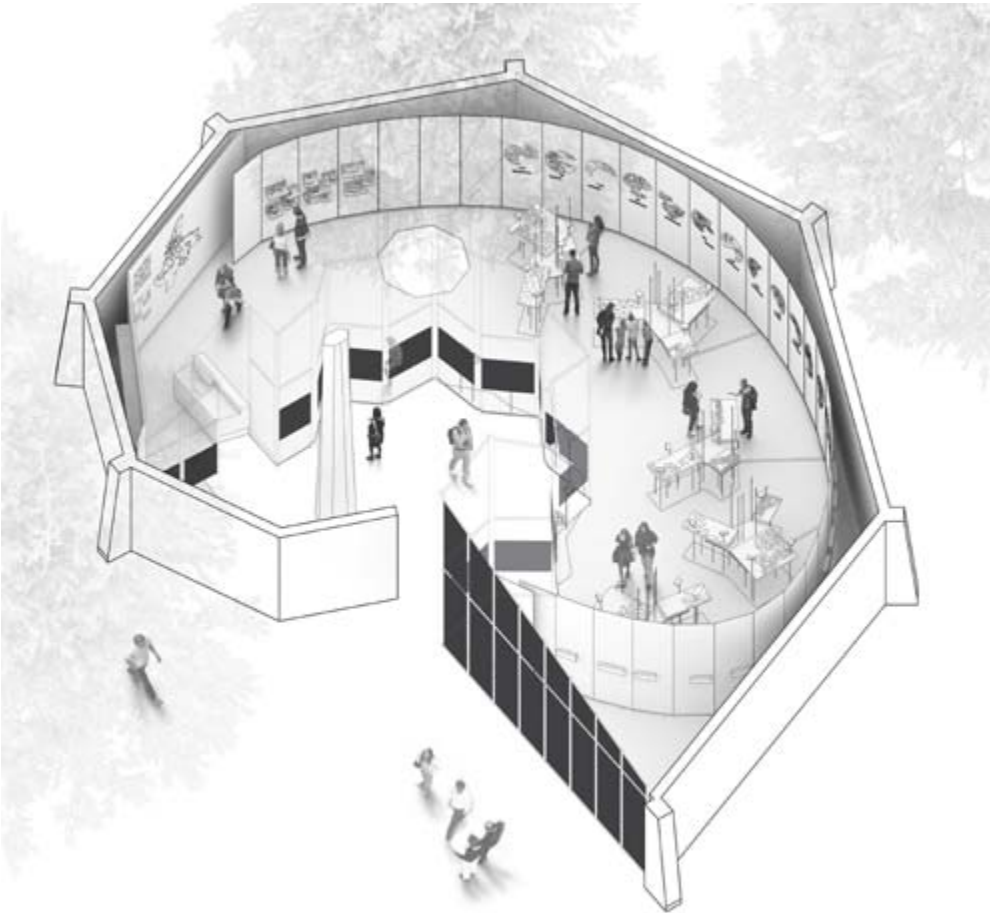
Gordon Robertson Educational Centre, Papineau Gerin-Lajoie LeBlanc, 1973, Iqaluit, NU, Canada. Photograph courtesy of Guy Gerin-Lajoie.



A series of twelve carvings were commissioned from local Inuit artists to document key Nunavut buildings and typologies from the 20th century; image courtesy of Lateral Office



Arctic Bay; photo by Bobby Kilabuk, 2014



Rendering of *Arctic Adaptations: Nunavut at 15* in the Canadian Pavilion
image courtesy of Lateral Office