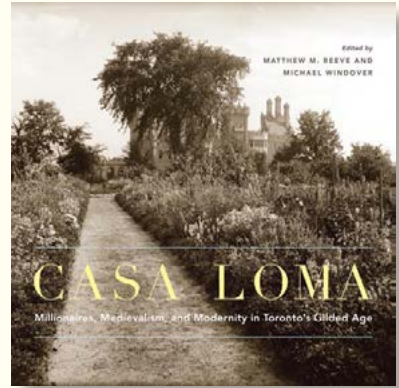


network. Clark argues that the presence of illegible inscriptions on jars, such as pseudoscript or abstracted Kufic, evoked an aura of specialized knowledge and connections to Arabic sources. While the courtly apothecary shares similarities with urban pharmacies as centres of gossip and information sharing, its proximity to other aristocratic spaces such as the studioli underscored the intersections of wealth, power, and knowledge to visitors. The metaphor of the pharmacy was often used in the art of memory texts, both stimulating the mind through sensory and visual inputs. The application of knowledge in the pharmacy required recalling messages, speeches, and codes, or referencing classical authors and renowned images—similar to practices crucial for a prince or courtier's success.

Weaving together archival and visual evidence that argues for the non-linear migration of motifs and forms, *Courtly Mediators* is a captivating and rigorous study. Clark eloquently outlines the ways in which engagement with Ottoman and Mamluk objects impacted the formation of Italian court identities, thereby reorienting the readers' understanding of courts as dynamic and fluid spaces, which were continuously adapting and responding to evolving people, practices, and objects. Yet Clark's contribution is not exclusive to courtly negotiations. The conclusion compellingly recounts how Valencian floor tiles commissioned by Alfonso I d'Aragona gained popularity among Neapolitan aristocrats. These tile designs soon flourished in local workshops, became embedded in regional churches, and, in some cases, were translated across different media into doodles on paper. *Courtly Mediators* thus invites a reassessment of how transfers and exchanges could occur beyond the interactions of artists and patrons, underscoring instead the tangible—sometimes immaterial—encounters that activated a visual culture of translations and transmutations.

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Matthew M. Reeve and Michael Windover, eds.
Casa Loma: Millionaires, Medievalism, and Modernity in Toronto's Gilded Age
Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2023
336 pp., 150 b/w illus.
\$49.95 (hardcover)
ISBN 9780228014560

/Katie Filek/

A dwelling, a castle, a node within empire, at once incredibly modern and overwhelmingly nostalgic: Casa Loma, the looming building set atop Toronto's Davenport Ridge, is at once many things. In *Casa Loma: Millionaires, Medievalism, and Modernity in Toronto's Gilded Age*, edited by Matthew M. Reeve and Michael Windover, the book's contributors delve into the history of this early twentieth landmark to both emphasize and unwrap the building's multiple identities—both as they were built into its fabric and as they have unfolded over time. The volume offers a history that is at once minutely focused and methodologically expansive. A monograph on an individual building (a well-known one at that, already with a firm place in Toronto's collective imagination) holds the dangerous potential of either appealing to too narrow an audience or of lapsing into uncritical nostalgia—yet this book avoids those pitfalls. While some chapters could be pushed further in their analysis, the editors' clear efforts to connect the Davenport mansion to far-reaching questions of imperialism and identity and contextualize it within Toronto's own social and economic history make *Casa Loma* a valuable contribution to architectural historiography in Canada. At the same time, it is significant as the first scholarly volume to focus on Casa Loma as a work of architecture in itself—building on an

¹ See Jonathan Hay, *Sensuous Surfaces: The Decorative Object in Early Modern China* (London: Reaktion Books, Limited, 2020).

article by Peter Coffman and writing by Alla Myzelev—and as a contribution to the growing yet still relatively small field of scholarship on Toronto’s architecture and urban history.

The project for Casa Loma was initiated in 1905, a sprawling, crenelated mansion set in an elite neighbourhood north of Toronto’s downtown. As the result of a dream held by Sir Henry Pellatt (1859–1939)—the Canadian-born financier, industrialist, and developer who was largely responsible for bringing hydroelectricity to the city of Toronto—the building and grounds were drawn up by prolific Toronto architect E.J. Lennox (1854–1933) and built from 1905–14 as a residence for Pellatt and his family. As Reeve and Windover note in their introduction, the lavish building is most often invoked as both symptom and symbol of the period’s boom-and-bust economy: parts of the project were never completed, as the Pellatts fell into financial difficulties, and the building was eventually auctioned off by the city in 1924. The book sets out to complicate the narratives about Casa Loma by examining its embeddedness within Toronto, Canada, and the British Empire at the time of its construction, and by addressing its use and meaning long after it left Pellatt’s ownership.

To this end, the volume brings together accounts by architects, architectural and art historians, and curators, arranged more or less chronologically in chapters that span a period from the late 1800s to today. Following an introduction by Reeve and Windover—themselves scholars of art and architectural history at Queen’s and Carleton universities, respectively—an opening chapter by heritage architects Sean Blank and David Winterton lays out the social, political, and urban context of Toronto in which Casa Loma emerged. This includes an overview of real estate practices in Toronto and of projects for similarly elite houses in the Davenport neighbourhood—although none as grand as Casa Loma in size, cost, or ambition. Subsequent chapters by architectural historian Sharon Vattay highlight the work of architect E.J. Lennox more broadly and then the architectural project for Casa Loma, and its realization, from 1905–13. Two chapters at the book’s centre are authored by Reeve, and one by Windover; these chapters connect Casa Loma to much broader geographical and chronological contexts, starting from

close examinations of the building’s details. Finally, a suite of three concluding chapters, two by art historian Joan Coutu and one by Marcela Torres—until recently the curator of Casa Loma—outline the life of the building from the 1920s to today as it moved from dwelling to hotel and finally to heritage attraction and event venue.

Casa Loma covers impressive ground, originating from a single tangible premise to add depth to existing accounts of the building. Reeve and Windover’s chapters are particularly illustrative in demonstrating how the study of a specific building can illuminate larger socio-historical concerns. The two editors set up an expansive analysis in their introduction by positioning Henry Pellatt as the story’s protagonist and not the building’s architect, E.J. Lennox, thus welcoming analyses of finance, politics, and meanings that go beyond traditional architectural-historical accounts. Windover’s chapter “Performing Place: Ornamentalism at Casa Loma” examines the design of Casa Loma’s architecture, landscape, and interiors to argue that these illustrated Pellatt’s own political allegiances to the British empire and his desires for social ascension along a British model. Such allegiances were notable at a moment when many in Canada were searching to define the young nation’s identity. As such, Windover argues, the building and grounds were designed primarily for the performance of imperialist nationalism, noting how ornament worked to actively reinforce an Edwardian-era imperial system and to position Casa Loma as a site of spectacle in which British aristocratic traditions were replicated on Toronto’s soil. He elaborates that this look to the past was “a productive if conservative embrace of traditional things circulating in the modern world, a longing to ‘return home’ through allusion, collection, and contemporary construction” (164)—thus further situating Casa Loma as a thoroughly modern phenomenon, highlighting the building’s layered identity and adding nuance, as promised, to any facile narratives around its conception. Reeve similarly connects details of Casa Loma to a longer historical *durée* in his chapters “The Casa Loma Collections and the Sale of 1924” and “A Modern Castle: Medievalism, Chivalry, and Empire at Casa Loma.” The latter importantly emphasizes how references to Europe’s medieval architecture were

employed to fabricate a sense of European history across the settler colonial nation, actively countering existing Indigenous histories and claims to the territory. These are themes that urgently require further attention in the study of Canada's built environment; Reeve's chapter offers an important, if site specific, contribution to addressing interactions of architecture and settler-colonial practices in Canada.

The volume's greatest contribution lies in its examinations across time and space. Some chapters adopt an expansive, highly analytical approach while others remain closer to Casa Loma itself without connecting the building to broader themes in architectural history. This variety of approaches points to the fact that *Casa Loma* comes across as a book with a range of purposes: a deeply researched scholarly investigation, a descriptive narrative of the building's history, or—as in Marcella Torres's concluding chapter—a demonstration of how a historically significant building can continue to operate within current heritage management structures. The building's many identities thus spill over into the book itself. Yet while some chapters adopt a more focused framework, each is insightful in its own regard and illustrates a different phase of Casa Loma's lifetime. This attention to the entirety of the building's life is itself a significant methodological contribution. While informative in their comprehensiveness, the contributing authors also highlight how professionals from various fields might be brought together to discuss Canada's built heritage, and how these conversations can extend the meaning of historically significant buildings in the present. Joan Coutu's intriguing chapter, for example, addresses the extensive hotel addition that was planned for Casa Loma in the 1920s yet never built, and the related influence of American capital in Toronto in that period. Coutu thus highlights important interactions of economy, politics, ego, and meaning in a phase of the building's life that has no material presence today. Blank and Winterton's chapter "Houses on the Ridge: Casa Loma's Neighbours and the Elite Architecture of Davenport Ridge," meanwhile, works together with Torres's chapter on Casa Loma as a heritage attraction to show how the building was, and continues to be, embedded in the city of Toronto's social and economic fabric.

The chapters, taken together, demonstrate how a close examination of one individual building can open up much broader histories, a type of microhistory approach missing from many existing volumes on Canada's architectural history. And yet, this focus does not prevent *Casa Loma's* contributors from ranging across multiple geographic and sociopolitical regions of analysis. The contributors evidently recognize the role of Canada as a nation-state and the related ideologies underpinning Casa Loma's history. By moving fluidly between urban, national, and transnational historical contexts, the book examines questions of architecture and cultural identity while not prioritizing one framework over another. In doing so, it avoids taking the nation-state either as a unifying banner for architecture spread across Canada's many regions—a premise that can perhaps only be pushed so far, given differences in geoclimatic and sociocultural historical conditions—or as a stable ontology itself, to be held together by its architecture. In its close focus on Casa Loma, this volume offers a valuable counterpoint to texts that have aimed to address architectural history across the entire country, such as Alan Gowans' formative study *Looking at Architecture in Canada* (1958) and Harold Kalman's *A History of Canadian Architecture* (1994) or more recent volumes, such as *Canadian Modern Architecture: A Fifty Year Retrospective, from 1967 to the Present* (2019), edited by Elsa Lam and Graham Livesey.

While at times disparate, the varying chapters together emphasize Casa Loma's multifaceted identity, thereby supporting the book's stated ambitions of complicating existing narratives around the building. The resulting volume is comprehensive, yet leaves one feeling that each section could be taken further—and that might be precisely the point. The volume is overall a welcome contribution to the field of architectural history in Canada, one that will appeal to scholars, to those interested in Toronto's history, and to broader audiences alike—and that will hopefully inspire other studies of architecture in Canada to look widely across space and time.

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