

## **241 Yonge Street - Notice of Intention to Designate a Property under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act**

**Date:** October 31, 2025

**To:** Planning and Housing Committee

**From:** Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning

**Ward:** 13 - Toronto Centre

### **SUMMARY**

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This report recommends that City Council state its intention to designate the property at 241 Yonge Street under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act for its cultural heritage value according to the Statement of Significance which includes a description of Heritage Attributes found in Attachment 1.

The subject property at 241 Yonge Street is located on the east side of Yonge Street mid-block between Shuter Street to the south and Sankofa Square to the north, in the Downtown Yonge East neighbourhood. A location map and current photograph of the heritage property are found in Attachment 2.

The property at 241 Yonge Street, formerly known as Art Metropole, contains a four-storey mixed-use commercial brick and stone building constructed in 1911 in the Edwardian Classicism style, following the designs of the architectural firm of Mitchell & White. It was purpose-built as the commercial property for the Art Metropole artist material supply company, first established in 1888 as one of the earliest companies of this type in Toronto. Art Metropole played a key supporting role in the artist community of early 20th century Toronto. Research into the products it supplied and who it supplied them to has contributed to a further understanding of that community. The first Art Metropole directly influenced the naming of the contemporary Art Metropole, the artist-run centre established in 1974 by the Canadian contemporary art group, General Idea, at 241 Yonge Street. Art Metropole was pivotal in the establishment of a national network of artist-run centres that connected the counterculture contemporary art movements of the 1970s and 80s. Today, the property continues to contribute to the historic commercial character of Yonge Street, south of Sankofa Square, where its style and typology reflect how the character of Yonge Street has been evolving for over a century.

Staff have determined that the property at 241 Yonge Street has cultural heritage value and meets 6 of the Ontario Regulation 9/06 criteria prescribed for municipal designation

under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act. A property may be designated under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act, if it meets two or more of the nine criteria.

The property was listed on the City's Heritage Register on November 21, 1973.

Development applications for a combined Official Plan and Zoning By-law amendment and a Site Plan Approval application were made with the City for the subject property. The property is subject to a Prescribed Event, for which City Clerk's issued a complete application notice on February 10, 2025. The property owner provided a waiver of the Prescribed Event and has agreed upon the timing of this report.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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The Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning recommends that:

1. City Council state its intention to designate the property at 241 Yonge Street under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act in accordance with the Statement of Significance for 241 Yonge Street (Reasons for Designation) attached as Attachment 1, to the report, October 31, 2025, from the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning.
2. If there are no objections to the designation, City Council authorize the City Solicitor to introduce the Bill in Council designating the property under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act.

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

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City Planning confirms there are no financial implications resulting from the recommendations included in this report in the current budget year or in future years.

The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the information as presented in the Financial Impact Section.

## **DECISION HISTORY**

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City Council included the subject property at the property at 241 Yonge Street on the City of Toronto's Heritage Register on November 21, 1973.

## **POLICY AND REGULATION CONSIDERATIONS**

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### **Provincial Plans and Policies**

The conservation of cultural heritage resources is an integral component of good planning, contributing to a sense of place, economic prosperity, and healthy and equitable communities. Heritage conservation in Ontario is identified as a provincial interest under the Planning Act. <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90p13>

Further, the policies and definitions of the Provincial Planning Statement (2024) identify the Ontario Heritage Act as the primary legislation through which heritage evaluation and heritage conservation will be implemented.

[Provincial Planning Statement, 2024 \(ontario.ca\)](https://www.ontario.ca/planning-statement-2024)

Ontario Regulation 9/06 sets out the criteria for evaluating properties to be designated under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act. The criteria are based on an evaluation of design/physical value, historical and associative value and contextual value. A property may be designated under Section 29 of the Act if it meets two or more of the provincial criteria for determining whether it is of cultural heritage value or interest.

<https://www.ontario.ca/laws/regulation/060009>

### **Official Plan**

The City of Toronto's Official Plan implements the provincial policy regime and provides policies to guide decision making within the City. It contains a number of policies related to properties on the City's Heritage Register and properties adjacent to them, as well as the protection of areas of archaeological potential. The Official Plan should be read as a whole to understand its comprehensive and integrative intent as a policy framework for priority setting and decision making. The Official Plan can be found here:

<https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/planning-development/official-plan-guidelines/official-plan/>

## **COMMENTS**

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### **Evaluation Analysis**

The following evaluation analysis is based on the comprehensive research conducted on the property at 241 Yonge Street (see Attachment 3) and provides the rationale for the recommendations found in this report.

The property at 241 Yonge Street meets the following 6 out of 9 criteria:

**The property has design value and physical value because it is a representative example of a style and type**

The property at 241 Yonge Street has design and physical value because it is a representative example of the Edwardian Classicism style applied to a commercial building type. Edwardian Classicism emerged in reaction against the highly decorative and eclectic designs typical of the High Victorian styles, such as Queen Anne, that were popular in Canada during the 1860s and 70s. By the late 19th century, the pendulum started to swing, and architects returned to find inspiration from the classical styles. The Art Metropole building exemplifies Edwardian Classicism through the symmetrical organization of its main façade that attends to balanced proportions and ordered form (especially its three-part division), the classical references in its design, and its sculptural but self-contained ornamentation that contributes an elegantly composed presence to the streetscape.

**The property has design value or physical value because it displays a high degree of artistic merit**

The property has additional design value because it displays a high degree of artistic merit through the design cohesion of its main façade that is comprised of finely detailed, decorative elements executed with quality materials. These include the smooth ashlar limestone moulded into architrave surrounds, the pattern in the multi-pane curtain wall glazing created by the muntin bars and decorative mullions, featuring the cast iron spandrel panels with repeating "AM" crest and festoon, and the prominent fourth storey copper cornice that surmounts the full height semicircular Diocletian window and is detailed with denticulation, egg and dart moulding, and a lion head motif. Similar elements were formerly repeated, in variations, in the original cast-iron storefront that has since been altered.

**The property has historical value or associative value because it has direct associations with a person, activity, and organization that is significant to a community**

The property has historical or associative value because it has direct associations with the contemporary Canadian art group General Idea. General Idea (1969–1994) remain some of the most influential artists to have emerged from Canada and together, Felix Partz (1945–1994), Jorge Zontal (1944–1994) and AA Bronson (b. 1946) created a groundbreaking practice that spanned twenty-five years. 241 Yonge Street was the location of General Idea's second studio and office space in Toronto, it was where they published FILE Magazine, and it was the inaugural site of the artist-run centre they founded in 1974: Art Metropole. The history of 241 Yonge Street as the purpose-built storefront for the original Art Metropole artist supply company and the prominent appearance of its façade were both influential in General Idea's decision to select this location. The name of the 19th century art supply company directly inspired the naming of the contemporary artist-run centre. The original architect drawings of the building's main façade featured in the advertising and correspondence graphics for the centre for the duration of its occupation there, until 1978. General Idea and Art Metropole were both significant to the establishment of a national artist-run centre network that connected like-minded, counterculture contemporary artists across the country who

were operating outside of traditional art institutions and exploring unconventional art mediums in the 1970s and 80s.

**The property has historical value or associative value because it yields, or has the potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of a community or culture**

The Art Metropole building has historical or associative value because it has the potential to yield information that contributes to an understanding of the Toronto art scene and the supply of artist materials to support Canadian artists in the late 19th to early 20th century. Art Metropole was established in 1888 as one of the earliest artist material supply companies in Toronto. The company operated out of several locations across the city over the years, yet its location at 241 Yonge Street was the first and only building purpose-built for them in 1911 and is likely the only remaining building associated with their operations. The building and its historic function fulfilled an important role in the wholesale and distribution of materials like paints, canvases, and water-colour papers that were, by necessity, imported from Europe because there were initially very few Canadian based manufacturing companies for these products. Existing research into the brands and types of products advertised and sold by Art Metropole has contributed to an understanding of the painting practices and methods of Canadian artists, including celebrated artists such as David Milne (1888-1953), Tom Thomson (1877-1917), and J.E.H. MacDonald (1873-1932).

**The property has contextual value because it is important in maintaining and supporting the character of an area**

Situated on the east side of Yonge Street, just north of Queen Street and south of Sankofa Square, 241 Yonge Street is important in maintaining and supporting the historic commercial character of Toronto's iconic Yonge Street. Constructed as a commercial property in 1911, the design and typology of the Art Metropole building illustrates how the development of Yonge Street's commercial character has been evolving for over one hundred years. The subject property is one of a collection of several low-rise commercial buildings dating from the late 19th to early 20th centuries distributed along the east side of the block that survived the Eaton Centre redevelopment on the west side opposite. The historic buildings maintain a sense of the long-established commercial identity of Yonge Street and share consistent setbacks and design commonalities of masonry cladding, cornice details, and decorative window surrounds.

**The property has contextual value because it is historically linked to its surroundings**

241 Yonge Street is historically linked to its surroundings as a purpose-built and prominent commercial building type constructed within the context of Yonge Street, a dynamic commercial area developing within the narrow property parcels of its historic lot patterns. Often considered Toronto's "Main Street," Yonge Street has consistently drawn businesses to establish commercial storefronts along its streetscape since at least the 1860s. The combination of the continued commercial success of the area and new structural innovations developed in the 1880s allowed for the possibility to

construct new, eye-catching commercial buildings on the street with increased height densities without needing to consolidate several properties or compromise on interior space. The metal frame construction and curtain wall approach allowed Art Metropole to commission the design of a four-storey commercial showroom within a single, narrow property parcel. Several buildings along Yonge Street exhibited comparable tall and narrow massing, such as the Mason & Risch building formerly at 230 Yonge Street and the R.S. Williams building formerly at 145-147 Yonge Street (both since demolished), suggesting a small design trend linked to this time and context.

See Attachments 1, 2 and 3 of this report for the Statement of Significance; Location Map and Photograph; and Research, Evaluation & Visual Resources pertaining to the property at 241 Yonge Street, as all of these documents are integral to the recommendations made in this staff report.

## **Prescribed Event Status**

As of July 1, 2021, Section 29(1.2) of the Ontario Heritage Act restricts City Council's ability to give notice of its intention to designate a property under the Act to within 90 days of a "Prescribed Event".

A Prescribed Event is a point of time when the application for an Official Plan Amendment, Zoning By-law Amendment and/or Draft Plan of Subdivision Application has been deemed complete and the City Clerk provides notice of that complete application to the public in accordance with the Planning Act. The Prescribed Event is not the date a development application is deemed complete or when an application is made to the City. A Prescribed Event, including any prescribed exceptions, are defined under O. Reg 385/21.

If a new or subsequent Official Plan Amendment, Zoning By-law Amendment and/or Draft Plan of Subdivision Application is submitted on the same property, the Prescribed Event date is reset to the new date the City Clerk issues notice to the public of the new or subsequent complete application.

As of January 1, 2023, should a property be subject to an Official Plan Amendment, Zoning By-law Amendment and/or Draft Plan of Subdivision Application that would trigger a Prescribed Event, the property must be listed in the heritage register prior to the Prescribed Event occurring to designate a property under Section 29(1.2)1 of the Ontario Heritage Act. This requirement does not apply to a Prescribed Event that has occurred prior to January 1, 2023.

In January 2025, the City received a combined Official Plan and Zoning By-law Amendment and Site Plan Approval applications related to a proposed redevelopment of the subject property (and several adjacent properties at 239, 243, 245, and 247 Yonge Street) with a 67-storey mixed-use building with a total of 774 residential units, and with 787 square metres of non-residential uses at grade along Yonge Street. The redevelopment proposes to retain portions of the historic four-storey commercial mixed-use building at 241 Yonge Street.

A Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) is required for all development applications that affect listed and designated properties to determine how a heritage property is proposed to be conserved. Designation enables City Council to review proposed alterations or demolitions to the property and enforce heritage property standards and maintenance. An HIA was prepared for the subject property in December 2024 by ERA Architects Inc. and was submitted in January 2025 along with the rest of the application submission requirements.

## **Community Consultation**

During the research and evaluation of the subject property, staff virtually interviewed AA Bronson, recipient of the Order of Canada and surviving member of General Idea, to discuss and gain an understanding of their association with 241 Yonge Street and the period when General Idea were tenants there, including the character of Yonge Street during this time, the establishment of Art Metropole, and the role the building played within the group's artistic oeuvre. Staff additionally consulted, via email correspondence, with staff of the National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives, and members of the Arts and Letters Club to access and discuss resources concerning both the original Art Metropole artist supply company and the Art Metropole artist-run centre. Staff would like to thank each of these individuals for their help in contributing to an understanding of the cultural heritage value of the Art Metropole building.

## **CONCLUSION**

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Staff have determined that the property at 241 Yonge Street meets 6 out of 9 criteria in Ontario Regulation 9/06, the criteria prescribed for municipal designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act. As such, the property merits designation and staff recommend that Council support the designation of this property to conserve its cultural heritage value.

The Statement of Significance: 241 Yonge Street (Reasons for Designation) attached as Attachment 1 to this report comprises the Reasons for Designation, which is the Public Notice of Intention to Designate.

## **CONTACT**

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## **SIGNATURE**

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Jason Thorne  
Chief Planner and Executive Director  
City Planning

## **ATTACHMENTS**

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Attachment 1 – Statement of Significance (Reasons for Designation)

Attachment 2 – Location Map and Current Photograph

Attachment 3 – Research, Evaluation & Visual Resources



**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE****(REASONS FOR DESIGNATION)**

The property at 241 Yonge Street is worthy of designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act for its cultural heritage value and meets Regulation 9/06, the provincial criteria for municipal designation.

**Description**

The property at 241 Yonge Street is located on the east side of Yonge Street, mid-block between Shuter Street to the south and Sankofa Square to the north. It contains a four-storey mixed-use commercial brick and stone building constructed in 1911 in the Edwardian Classicism style, following the designs of the architectural firm of Mitchell & White. It was purpose-built as the commercial property for the Art Metropole artist material supply company established in 1888.

The property was included on the Heritage Register on November 21, 1973.

**Statement of Cultural Heritage Value**

The property at 241 Yonge Street has design and physical value because it is a representative example of the Edwardian Classicism style applied to a commercial building type. Edwardian Classicism emerged in reaction against the highly decorative and eclectic designs typical of the High Victorian styles, such as Queen Anne, that were popular in Canada during the 1860s and 70s. By the late-19th century, the pendulum started to swing, and architects returned to find inspiration from the classical styles. The Art Metropole building exemplifies Edwardian Classicism through the symmetrical organization of its main façade that attends to balanced proportions and ordered form (especially its three-part division), the classical references in its design, its multipaned curtain wall glazing system, and its sculptural but self-contained ornamentation that contributes an elegantly composed presence to the streetscape.

The property has additional design value because it displays a high degree of artistic merit through the design cohesion of its main façade that is comprised of finely detailed, decorative elements executed with quality materials. These include the smooth ashlar limestone moulded into architrave surrounds, the multi-pane curtain wall and the pattern in the glazing created by the muntin bars and decorative mullions, featuring the cast iron spandrel panels with repeating "AM" crest and festoon, and the prominent fourth storey copper cornice that surmounts the full height semicircular Diocletian window and is detailed with denticulation, egg and dart moulding, and a lion head motif. Similar elements were formerly repeated, in variations, in the original cast-iron storefront that has since been altered.

The property has historical or associative value because it has direct associations with the contemporary Canadian art group General Idea. General Idea (1969–1994) remain some of the most influential artists to have emerged from Canada and together, Felix Partz (1945–1994), Jorge Zontal (1944–1994) and AA Bronson (b. 1946) created a groundbreaking practice that spanned twenty-five years. 241 Yonge Street was the

location of General Idea's second studio and office space in Toronto, it was where they published FILE Magazine, and it was the inaugural site of the artist-run centre they founded in 1974: Art Metropole. The history of 241 Yonge Street as the purpose-built storefront for the original Art Metropole artist supply company and the prominent appearance of its façade were both influential in General Idea's decision to select this location. The name of the 19th century art supply company directly inspired the naming of the contemporary artist-run centre. The original architect drawings of the building's main façade featured in the advertising and correspondence graphics for the centre for the duration of its occupation there, until 1978. General Idea and Art Metropole were both significant to the establishment of a national artist-run centre network that connected like-minded, counterculture contemporary artists across the country who were operating outside of traditional art institutions and exploring unconventional art mediums in the 1970s and 1980s.

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Situated on the east side of Yonge Street, just north of Queen Street and south of Sankofa Square, 241 Yonge Street is important in maintaining and supporting the historic commercial character of Toronto's iconic Yonge Street. Constructed as a commercial property in 1911, the design and typology of the Art Metropole building illustrates how the development of Yonge Street's commercial character has been evolving for over one hundred years. The subject property is one of a collection of several low-rise commercial buildings dating from the late 19th to early 20th centuries distributed along the east side of the block that survived the Eaton Centre redevelopment on the west side opposite. The historic buildings maintain a sense of the long-established commercial identity of Yonge Street and share consistent setbacks and design commonalities of masonry cladding, cornice details, and decorative window surrounds.

241 Yonge Street is historically linked to its surroundings as a purpose-built and prominent commercial building type constructed within the context of Yonge Street, a dynamic commercial area developing within the narrow property parcels of its historic lot patterns. Often considered Toronto's "Main Street," Yonge Street has consistently drawn businesses to establish commercial storefronts along its streetscape since at least the 1860s. The combination of the continued commercial success of the area and

new structural innovations developed in the 1880s allowed for the possibility to construct new, eye-catching commercial buildings on the street with increased height densities without needing to consolidate several properties or compromise on interior space. The metal frame construction and curtain wall approach allowed Art Metropole to commission the design of a four-storey commercial showroom within a single, narrow property parcel. Several buildings along Yonge Street exhibited comparable tall and narrow massing, such as the Mason & Risch building formerly at 230 Yonge Street and the R.S. Williams building formerly at 145-147 Yonge Street (both since demolished), suggesting a small design trend linked to this time and context.

## **Heritage Attributes**

### **Design and Physical Value**

The following heritage attributes contribute to the cultural heritage value of the property at 241 Yonge Street as a representative example of the Edwardian Classicism architectural style applied to a commercial building type, and also for displaying a high degree of artistic merit:

- The scale, form, and massing of the four-storey building on a rectangular plan
- The flat roofline accentuated by the prominent cornice
- The symmetrical composition of the main (west) façade
- The articulation of the main façade's three part division
- The building's materials, including:
  - smooth ashlar limestone masonry (west façade)
  - buff brick cladding (north, south, and east façades)
  - original cast iron features (west façade)
  - copper copping and copper cornice (west façade)
- The existing position and proportions of all original window openings on the main (west) façade
- The moulded, lugged architrave stone surrounds of the second and third storey flat-headed window opening
- The moulded stone voussoirs and prominent keystone around the fourth storey Diocletian window opening, with plain spandrels and moulded square surround above
- The grid patterns of the muntin bars and mullions on the main (west) façade
- The cast iron spandrel panel in the glazing between the second and third storeys with its repeating festoon design featuring intertwined letters "A" and "M" encircled and hung with ribbons
- Stone cornices with copper copping above the first and third storeys
- Prominent copper cornice at the roofline with denticulation, egg and dart moulding, and repeating lion's head motif

### **Historical and Associative Value**

The following heritage attributes contribute to the cultural heritage value of the property at 241 Yonge Street for its potential to yield information that contributes to an understanding of the art scene and artist materials culture in Toronto in the late-19th to early-20th century:

- The cast iron spandrel panel in the glazing between the second and third storeys with its repeating festoon design, specifically the intertwined letters "A" and "M" that stand for Art Metropole

### **Contextual Value**

The following heritage attributes contribute to the cultural heritage value of the property at 241 Yonge Street as supporting and maintaining the historic commercial character of Yonge Street, between Shuter Street and Sankofa Square, and as being historically linked to its surroundings:

- The zero setback of the building, its placement, and its orientation where the main (west) façade fronts onto Yonge Street
- The scale, form, and massing of the four-storey building with its narrow frontage that corresponds with the narrow property parcel

## LOCATION MAP AND CURRENT PHOTOGRAPH

### 241 YONGE STREET

## ATTACHMENT 2



Figure 1. This location map is for information purposes only. The exact boundaries of the properties are not shown. The red outline marks the location of the subject site (City of Toronto iView Mapping, annotated by Heritage Planning, 2025)



Figure 2. The main (west) facade of the subject property at 241 Yonge Street, looking east (Heritage Planning, 2025).

**241 YONGE STREET**

In undertaking this research and evaluation, we recognize that the area now known as the City of Toronto is the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples, and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 signed with the Mississaugas of the Credit (1805), and the Williams Treaties (1923) signed with multiple Mississaugas and Chippewa bands.



Figure 3. The subject property at 241 Yonge Street in context, showing its main (west) and south façades, looking northeast (Heritage Planning, 2025).

**1. DESCRIPTION**

241 Yonge Street - Art Metropole Building	
ADDRESS	241 Yonge Street
WARD	Ward 13 (Toronto Centre)
NEIGHBOURHOOD/COMMUNITY	Downtown Yonge East
CONSTRUCTION DATE	1911
ORIGINAL USE	Mixed-use Commercial (main street commercial block)
CURRENT USE* (*This does not refer to permitted use(s) as defined by the Zoning By-law	Mixed-use Commercial (main street commercial block)
ARCHITECT/BUILDER/DESIGNER	Mitchell & White
ADDITIONS/ALTERATIONS	See Section 3
LISTING DATE	November 21, 1973

## 2. ONTARIO REGULATION 9/06 CHECKLIST:

### CRITERIA FOR DETERMINING CULTURAL HERITAGE VALUE OR INTEREST

The following checklist identifies the prescribed criteria met by the subject property at 241 Yonge Street for municipal designation under Part IV, Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act. There are a total of nine criteria under O. Reg 9/06. A property may be designated under Section 29 of the Ontario Heritage Act if the property meets two or more of the provincial criteria for determining whether it is of cultural heritage value or interest.

The evaluation table is marked "N/A" if the criterion is "not applicable" to the property or "✓" if it is applicable to the property.

#### 241 Yonge Street

1.	The property has design value or physical value because it is a rare, unique, representative or early example of a style, type, expression, material or construction method.	✓
2.	The property has design value or physical value because it displays a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit.	✓
3.	The property has design value or physical value because it demonstrates a high degree of technical or scientific achievement.	N/A
4.	The property has historical value or associative value because it has direct associations with a theme, event, belief, person, activity, organization or institution that is significant to a community.	✓
5.	The property has historical value or associative value because it yields, or has the potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of a community or culture.	✓
6.	The property has historical value or associative value because it demonstrates or reflects the work or ideas of an architect, artist, builder, designer or theorist who is significant to a community.	N/A
7.	The property has contextual value because it is important in defining, maintaining or supporting the character of an area.	✓
8.	The property has contextual value because it is physically, functionally, visually or historically linked to its surroundings.	✓
9.	The property has contextual value because it is a landmark.	N/A

## 3. RESEARCH

This section of the report describes the history, architecture and context of the property. Visual resources related to the research are located in Section 4. Archival and contemporary sources for the research are found in Section 5 (List of Sources).

## INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

For time immemorial, Toronto has been home to Indigenous peoples. Ojibway oral histories speak of Ice People, who lived at a time when ice covered the land.<sup>1</sup> Following the retreat of glaciers approximately 13,000 years ago, small groups of Indigenous peoples moved from place to place, hunting and gathering the food they needed according to the seasons. Over millennia, they adapted to dramatically changing environmental conditions, developing and acquiring new technologies as they did so. Waterways and the lake were vital sources of fresh water and nourishment, and shorelines and nearby areas were important sites for gathering, trading, hunting, fishing, and ceremonies. Long-distance trade moved valuable resources across the land.

After maize and squash were introduced to Southern Ontario, by approximately 500 CE, horticulture began to supplement food sources. By 1300 CE, villages focused on growing food became year-round settlements surrounded by crops. These villages were home to ancestors of the Huron-Wendat Nation, who would continue to occupy increasingly larger villages in the Toronto area and beyond. These villages were connected to well-established travel routes which were part of local and long-distance trail networks, including the Carrying Place trails on the Don, Rouge and Humber rivers that connected Lake Ontario to Georgian Bay. Beads made from seashells from the eastern seaboard were found at the Alexandra site in North York, which was a community of 800-1000 people in approximately 1350.

By 1600, the Wendat had formed a confederation of individual nations, and had concentrated most of their villages away from Lake Ontario, in the Georgian Bay area. Following contact with French explorers and missionaries in Southern Ontario in the early 1600s, European diseases decimated First Nations. Competition for furs to trade with Europeans and the desire to replenish numbers through absorption of captives, among other factors<sup>2</sup>, contributed to the Beaver Wars, which after 1640, saw the Haudenosaunee Confederacy expand into Southern Ontario, dispersing the Wendat. Within the boundaries of today's Toronto, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy then occupied villages on the Carrying Place trails on the Humber and Rouge Rivers from approximately the 1660s to the 1680s.

In the late 1680s, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy chose to leave their village in the Toronto area and returned to their homelands in upstate New York. As evidenced by the 1701 Great Peace of Montreal, the 1701 Nanfan Treaty, and the Dish with One Spoon Treaty, the Haudenosaunee continued to have an interest in the resources of the area.

Anishinaabe people from the Lake Superior region then moved into the Toronto area. While the Wendat and Haudenosaunee people lived in year-round villages surrounded by crops, the Anishinaabe people continued to live primarily by seasonally moving across the land to hunt, fish and gather resources that were available at a specific time, including migrating birds and maple syrup. To the west of Toronto, the Anishinaabe

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1 With thanks to Philip Cote for the reference to Benton-Banai, Edward, *The Mishomis book: The voice of the Ojibway* (Indian Country Press, 1985), p. 26.

2 <https://histindigenouspeoples.pressbooks.tru.ca/chapter/chapter-5-colonial-wars-looking-east>; Gary Warrick, "The Aboriginal Population of Ontario in Late Pre-history," in Munson and Jamieson, eds., *Before Ontario: The Archaeology of a Province* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013), p. 72.



people became known as the Mississaugas of the Credit. To the east, they became known as the Chippewas of Beausoleil, Georgina Island and Rama and the Mississaugas of Alderville, Curve Lake, Hiawatha, Scugog Island.<sup>3</sup>

In 1787, as the British began to prepare for an influx of colonists into the area following the American Revolution, the British Crown negotiated the Toronto Purchase with the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation to obtain title to the land. The flawed and poorly documented agreement was invalidated, and Treaty 13 was negotiated in 1805 for lands now including much of the City of Toronto. In 1923, the Governments of Ontario and Canada signed the Williams Treaties for over 20,000 km<sup>2</sup>, including portions of eastern Toronto, with seven First Nations of the Chippewa of Lake Simcoe (Beausoleil, Georgina Island and Rama) and the Mississauga of the north shore of Lake Ontario (Alderville, Curve Lake, Hiawatha and Scugog Island).

The Mississaugas, Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee, or the Wendat did not traditionally regard land as a commodity to be sold. Following the Toronto Purchase, the British government quickly set out to survey the land into lots which were either sold or granted into private ownership of settlers. In 2010, the Government of Canada settled the Toronto Purchase Claim with the Mississaugas of the Credit after agreeing that the Mississaugas were originally unfairly compensated. In 2018, the Williams Treaties First Nations settled litigation about land surrenders and harvesting rights with the Governments of Canada and Ontario.

The City of Toronto remains the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. Toronto is also covered by Treaty 13 signed with the Mississaugas of the Credit, and the Williams Treaties signed with seven Mississaugas and Chippewa First Nations.

## **i. HISTORICAL INFORMATION**

The following section outlines the history and facts related to the properties which are the basis for determining historical or associative value of Criteria 4, 5 or 6 according to O. Reg. 9/06 Criteria.

### **Yonge Street**

Yonge Street was historically surveyed for the purposes of military operations and colonial ambitions to secure and develop Upper Canada.<sup>4</sup> Cleared by a combination of soldiers and settlers in the mid-1790s, its layout ran north from the Town of York (Toronto) generally following a parallel course to longstanding Indigenous trade routes that had previously established connections between the Lower and Upper Great

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<sup>3</sup> Mississaugas of the Credit, "The History of Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation." n.d.

<sup>4</sup> It is not the purpose of this report to review in detail the 200 plus years of history that define Yonge Street - an achievement which is already well accomplished by Daniel Ross in his book, *The Heart of Toronto*. Readers interested in acquiring a more comprehensive explanation of the history of Yonge Street are recommended to consult this source.

Lakes.<sup>5</sup> Utilizing those guidelines, the long reach of Yonge Street sought to break through the sparsely developed lands north of York like an ambitious timeline marking the projected growth of the town - such ambitions that would remain unrealized until later in the 19th century.<sup>6</sup>

Initially a rustic road that acted as an unreliable intermediary between Toronto and the rural lands to the north, Yonge Street was macadamized in the 1830s.<sup>7</sup> The incorporation of the City of Toronto in 1834 resulted in additional infrastructure and transportation improvements along the street, including omnibus service beginning in 1849 and the installation of Toronto Street Railway tracks in 1861. The rise of the railways in the 1850s had contributed to larger volumes of travel and new migrants coming into the City of Toronto (between 1861 and 1881 the population of the city nearly doubled from 45,000 to 86,000); this incited a considerable need for new housing construction.<sup>8</sup> While the colonial aristocracy and financially wealthy citizens of Toronto retreated to outer neighbourhoods removed from the increased hustle, bustle, and industry of the city's emerging downtown, the lands they left behind were subdivided into affordable, smaller lots and developed into housing neighbourhoods and various commercial streets to complement them.<sup>9</sup>

The commercial character that emerged on Yonge Street in the 1860s was ad hoc and highly competitive, but fairly distributed between small, independent family-run shops, with a notable proliferation of dry goods businesses.<sup>10</sup> Stores were located in low-rise, often Georgian style buildings situated on narrow lots, about a dozen per block.<sup>11</sup> This dynamic generally continued until the 1880s, at which point Yonge Street hosted approximately half of the city's recorded retail business.<sup>12</sup> The buildings were increasing in size and changing in style to rows of Victorian brick buildings of three- to four-storeys, and Yonge Street was now well established as a commercial street in Toronto - if not the most fashionable among them, which was a claim held by King Street (although Yonge Street equalled King in its variety).<sup>13</sup>

However, Ross discusses how by the end of the 19th century the commercial model shifted towards more centralized retail when, "a small number of merchants...used large-scale capital investment in real estate and new retail practices - including cash-only policies, direct buying, and in-house manufacturing - to dominate the market."<sup>14</sup> These were the types of business practices adopted by Timothy Eaton and Robert Simpson, and they utilized them unwaveringly to establish their department stores at the

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5 Daniel Ross, *The Heart of Toronto: Corporate Power, Civic Activism, and the Remaking of Downtown Yonge Street* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2022), 15.

6 Ross, *The Heart of Toronto*, 15-16.

7 Patricia McHugh and Alex Bozickovic, *Toronto Architecture: A City Guide*, 2nd edition (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2017), 198.

8 Ross, 16.

9 Ross, 17.

10 F. R. Berchem, *Opportunity Road: Yonge Street 1860 to 1939* (Toronto: Natural Heritage/Natural History Inc., 1996), 64.

11 McHugh, *Toronto Architecture: A City Guide*, 219-220.

12 Ross, 17.

13 Berchem, *Opportunity Road: Yonge Street 1860 to 1939*, 99-100.

14 Ross, 20.

key intersection of Yonge and Queen, where the pair anchored and consolidated the commercial status of Yonge Street, south of College Street.<sup>15</sup>

## 241 Yonge Street: The Art Metropole

In July 1911, *The Globe* newspaper reported on the issuance of a building permit for the erection of a four-storey brick building located on the east side of Yonge Street, between Wilton Avenue (Sankofa Square) and Shuter Street.<sup>16</sup> The building was being constructed for Art Metropole, an artist materials supply company, to house their commercial business. Art Metropole was established in 1888 and was first known to be located at number 7 Richmond Street West, and later at 131-133 Yonge Street, operating as tenants in both cases. The company was first managed by Cephas R. Beswetherick (1844-1911), about whom little is known at the time of writing beyond his diligent and practical interest in the procuring and selling of quality art supplies.<sup>17</sup> While it is possible that Beswetherick founded and owned Art Metropole in its early years, this remains unconfirmed based on current research.

Up to the mid-19th century, artist materials in Canada were primarily being imported from manufacturers in Britain and the United States because there were no major Canadian producers at the time,<sup>18</sup> hence the need for supply stores and wholesale agents like Art Metropole. In 1896, Cephas Beswetherick was party to a deputation headed by G. W. Allan (representing the Ontario Society of Artists) requesting for the "abolition of duties on the materials used by artists in the composition of works of art."<sup>19</sup> Beswetherick was identified as a dealer of the subject materials. The group was arguing against the 30% duties imposed on artist materials coming into Canada, which was a significant burden on artists buying supplies because most were imported - including the fairly essential materials of paint, canvas, and water-colour papers. The imposition of additional duties on already expensive products, argued Allan, hindered the progress of Canadian artists whom it should otherwise be in the Government's interests to assist in their success, or at least not impede, especially considering that there were few wealthy patrons of art in the country at the time.<sup>20</sup> The duties and the deputation indicate some of the financial difficulties possibly facing Canadian artists in the late 19th century that companies like Art Metropole sought to address and assist with.

Despite the demand, in 1900 the Toronto business directory lists only two businesses exclusively focused on providing artist materials: the E. Harris Co. Ltd. (established 1850), and the Art Metropole.<sup>21</sup> Acknowledging that not all art businesses may have advertised themselves in the directory, the small number is still surprising for a city

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> "Building Permits," *The Globe* (12 July 1911), 9.

<sup>17</sup> In at least one instance, Beswetherick even collected and arranged a publication on 'Practical Hints on the Use of Materials in Painting on China and Glass,' printed in Toronto and distributed, presumably, through the store (Figure 19). The source comes through happenstance from an eBay advert posting the pamphlet for sale.

<sup>18</sup> Barbara Klempan, "Early Manufacture of Artists' Materials in Canada: A History of Canadian Art Laboratory," *Journal of the Canadian Association for Conservation*, Vol 37 (2012), 42.

<sup>19</sup> "Artists' Materials," *The Globe* (20 November 1896), 7.

<sup>20</sup> "Artists' Materials," *The Globe*.

<sup>21</sup> Klempan, 42.

centre like Toronto and suggests that artists of the time may have supplemented their supply sources by visiting non-specialty stores, like hardware stores.<sup>22</sup> This could explain the language featured in Art Metropole's advertisements, discussed below, that highlights their tailored expertise and which would have been a way to set themselves apart from those competitors.

In 1900, Art Metropole relocated further north on Yonge Street to a larger space at number 149,<sup>23</sup> a decision that suggests business was going well; Art Metropole's advertisements in the *Bookseller and Stationer* periodical provide a better understanding of that business model. In the September 1902 issue, Art Metropole extolled their (self-proclaimed) benefits to the discerning consumer, citing their international purchasing reputation and credit, the quality and range of their materials, and the focus of their knowledge that all but guaranteed their capability to provide what any artist or draughtsmen of the early 20th century could need.<sup>24</sup> Some of their products and services included the standard pencils, pens, papers, and other drawing materials; paints, canvases and stretchers; maths instruments; but also the more unusual offerings, like pyrography.<sup>25</sup>

As the 20th century progressed, the number of art supply businesses increased,<sup>26</sup> and Art Metropole had established itself as one of the major dealers and wholesale agents in Toronto, operating alongside E. Harris Co. Ltd., George, Ridout & Company, and the Artists' Supply Company (established 1906).<sup>27</sup> The number of art supply companies continued to grow annually into the 1930s (Eaton's even began advertising their "Artists' Supply Department" in the same art magazines as E. Harris and Art Metropole), at which point the formerly sparse manufacture of artist supplies in Canada began to increase.<sup>28</sup>

In February 1911, the property at 149 Yonge Street was sold to new ownership and Art Metropole Ltd. purchased their own property at 241 Yonge Street from Albert Britnell for \$55,000.<sup>29</sup> Britnell had operated a bookstore at the location prior to this sale. The size of the property lot at 241 Yonge Street is described as 20 feet wide and 121 feet deep.<sup>30</sup> By 1911, Art Metropole was operating as a division of the Hughes-Owens Company that produced, imported, and sold architect and surveyor equipment, later diversifying into scientific instruments and then manufacturing facilities for aircraft instruments during the Second World War.<sup>31</sup> Hughes-Owens was incorporated in 1900 in Montreal and opened

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22 Ibid.

23 "Art Metropole's New Store," *The Globe* (24 November 1900), 26.

24 "A New Field for Up-to-date Booksellers and Stationers," *Bookseller and Stationer* Vol 18 No. 9 (Montreal: MacLean Publishing Co. Ltd., 1902), 24.

25 "A New Field for Up-to-date Booksellers and Stationers," 24.

26 Ibid.

27 Kate Helwig, Elizabeth Moffat, Marie-Claude Corbeil, and Dominique Duguay, "Early Twentieth-Century Artist's Paints in Toronto: Archival and Material Evidence," *Journal of the Canadian Association for Conservation*, Vol 40 (Ottawa: Canadian Association for Conservation of Cultural Property, 2015).

28 Klempan, 42.

29 "Yonge Street Property Sold," *The Globe and Mail* (8 February 1911), 5.

30 "Yonge Street Property Sold," *The Globe and Mail*.

31 Dave Allston, "Early Days: An inventor's legacy in Hintonburg," *Kitchissippi Times* (2 August 2024) <https://kitchissippi.com/early-days-an-inventors-legacy-in-hintonburg/>

branches across Canada; Art Metropole became their Toronto branch, specializing in the importing of artist materials and surveying instruments.<sup>32</sup> It is currently unclear when Hughes-Owens purchased Art Metropole. Cephas Beswetherick passed away in May 1911, but another name, Alex Cumming, was already recorded in the assessment rolls as the manager of Art Metropole prior to Beswetherick's death. The City Directory for 1905 is the last edition that lists Beswetherick as the manager, which could be an indication of sale but also of retirement (or both) since Cephas would have been around 60 years old at that time. Regardless, the transition from commercial renters into commercial property owners suggests that Art Metropole was experiencing another period of prosperity, an assessment further augmented by the fact that Art Metropole decided to construct a new building for their business rather than taking over a pre-existing structure as they had done in the past. Furthermore, they hired architects to tailor a design specific to their business' function, engaging the services of the newly formed firm, Mitchell & White.

Judging by newspaper advertisements, it was this move that precipitated the beginning of Art Metropole's brief foray into exhibiting art (or perhaps the desire precipitated the move). The construction of the building was in progress in July 1911, and they were fully operational in the space by autumn of the same year. At this point, advertisements began running in the 'Art and Artists' column of the *Globe* for small art exhibitions occurring at 241 Yonge Street - such events that do not seem to have taken place at any of their previous locations, nor any after. The first show advertised was the 'Thumb Box Exhibition,' an art show featuring local artists including Marion Long, Harriet Ford, and Florence Proctor among others.<sup>33</sup> The article also notes that Art Metropole would be hosting a memorial exhibition for the work of Sydney Strickland Tully, including around 400 pictures of her work, which indicates the breadth of the showroom space afforded by Art Metropole's new location.<sup>34</sup>

Art Metropole's dual role as artist supplier and exhibition space continued into the following year with shows for John W. Cotton's work,<sup>35</sup> as well as a watercolour exhibition featuring F. M. Bell-Smith, R. F. Gagen, C. W. Jeffery and eight other artists.<sup>36</sup> The Ontario Society of Artists, the Canadian National Exhibition, and the Arts and Letters Club (established in 1908 and located at 57 Adelaide Street East in 1910) were some of the exhibition venues contemporaneous with the Art Metropole,<sup>37</sup> though perhaps holding more prominence. For instance, the Arts and Letters Club hosted the first solo exhibit of oil sketches by J.E.H. MacDonald.<sup>38</sup>

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32 Victoria J.L. Fisher, "Ontario Hughes-Owens Co. Ltd." *Precision Instrument Culture in Canada, Ingenium Research Institute*, University of Ottawa <https://omeka.uottawa.ca/instrument-precision/exhibits/show/making-1918-1945/ontario-hughes-owens>

33 "Art and Artists," *The Globe* (18 November 1911), 11.

34 "Art and Artists," *The Globe* (18 November 1911), 11.

35 "Art and Artists," *The Globe* (3 December 1912), 5.

36 "Art and Artists," *The Globe* (18 April 1912), 9.

37 Kate Helwig and Alison Douglas, *J.E.H. MacDonald Up Close: The Artist's Materials and Techniques*, Canadian Conservation Institute (Frederickton: Goose Lane Editions, 2023).

38 Helwig and Douglas, *J.E.H. MacDonald Up Close*.

In January 1914, J. E. H. MacDonald was renting space at the Studio Building at 25 Severn Street, the purpose-built artist studio financed by Lawren Harris and the art patron Dr. MacCallum to foster a space where Canadian artists could work and collaborate. Alex G. Cumming, the successive manager of Art Metropole after Cephas Beswetherick, also rented space in the Studio Building around 1916 to 1918.<sup>39</sup> Positioned where he was, Cumming was likely a useful point of contact between the Studio painters and a reliable source of quality art supplies.<sup>40</sup> For example, in Helwig and Douglas' analysis of MacDonald's painting materials and methods, they reveal how the verso of the academy board on which he painted the sketch, *View from Split Rock* (1912), includes a label identifying Art Metropole as the wholesaler (Figure 20).<sup>41</sup> Since MacDonald painted sketches on several other boards of similar appearance during the same time period (c.1911 to 1913), it is possible that there are other examples of his work painted on, and/or painted with, Art Metropole merchandise from the 241 Yonge Street location.

In an earlier research paper by Helwig analysing paint brands in early 20th century Toronto, they note Art Metropole for having been one of the two major agents for distributing the paint brand Winsor & Newton in Canada, a high quality paint brand founded in 1832 and manufactured in London, England (Figures 21 and 22).<sup>42</sup> Winsor & Newton provided a wide range, offering 100 oil colours by 1849, and became the recommended brand of Art Metropole, remaining so well into the 1930s.<sup>43</sup> Based on chemical analysis of the paints used in their paintings, evidence suggests that the Winsor & Newton brand was used by famous Canadian painters such as David Mile, Tom Thomson, and J.E.H. MacDonald.<sup>44</sup> Helwig traces the relationship between Cumming, the Studio building painters, Art Metropole, and the Winsor & Newton product in order to support their hypothesis concerning paint brands used by early 20th century artists, such that Cumming could have advocated for certain brands based on his experience working at Art Metropole and advised fellow artists at the Studio Building to purchase them.<sup>45</sup> This research paints a broader picture about the interconnections of the early 20th century Toronto art scene: the points of contact and relationships, the significant sites and suppliers, and the overlaps between them - within all of which the Art Metropole store played a supporting, practical role.

In February 1914, Frank Stanley of the Stanley Piano company purchased the property at 241 Yonge Street to use as a new piano showroom.<sup>46</sup> However, it appears that they

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39 Helwig and Douglas, *J.E.H. MacDonald Up Close*.

40 Anecdotal evidence from Blair Laing's *Memoirs of an Art Dealer* relates how Cumming was even known to barter with artists, like Tom Thomson, who could not otherwise pay for art materials. On at least one occasion Laing relates how Cumming traded oil paints for one of Thomson's paintings.

41 Helwig and Douglas, *J.E.H. MacDonald Up Close*. This particular purchase would have been from the 241 Yonge Street location.

42 Kate Helwig, Elizabeth Moffat, Marie-Claude Corbeil and Dominique Duguay. "Early Twentieth-Century Artist's Paints in Toronto: Archival and Material Evidence," *Journal of the Canadian Association for Conservation*, Vol 40 (Ottawa: Canadian Association for Conservation of Cultural Property, 2015), <http://www.cac-accr.ca>.

43 Helwig, "Early Twentieth-Century Artist's Paints in Toronto."

44 Helwig, "Early Twentieth-Century Artist's Paints in Toronto."

45 Helwig, "Early Twentieth-Century Artist's Paints in Toronto."

46 "Stanley Piano Building," *The Globe* (14 February 1914), 9.

remained at their previous location, 14 Temperance Street, for another year while they continued to sell their existing stock in preparation for the relocation.<sup>47</sup> Based on current research, it is unknown why Art Metropole sold their purpose-built property at 241 Yonge Street after only three years.<sup>48</sup> They continued operations in the manufacture and wholesale of drafting and artist supplies well into the mid-20th century at various locations,<sup>49</sup> but they do not seem to have continued hosting art exhibits; that practice was unique to the 241 Yonge Street location.

### **Architects: Mitchell & White**

James Mitchell (1876-1940) was born in Scotland and spent his late teens through late twenties training and apprenticing as an architect at various Scottish firms.<sup>50</sup> Mitchell emigrated to Canada in 1905 to Montreal where he worked with the firm Hutchison & Wood for two years before relocating to Toronto in 1907. Once in Toronto, Mitchell worked under the renowned firm of Darling & Pearson until 1911, at which point he and a fellow Scottish architect, George N. White (who was also working for Darling & Pearson at the time), formed their own partnership.

The Art Metropole building at 241 Yonge Street was one of two known buildings to have been designed during the brief collaboration of Mitchell & White.<sup>51</sup> By 1914, Mitchell was working independently. The remainder of his recorded works were mostly residential buildings, with a few industrial examples, and apparently nothing of comparable typology to 241 Yonge.<sup>52</sup>

Born and educated in Scotland, George N. White (1874-1964) came to Canada in 1911. Around 1913 he joined the Provincial Architect's Department (perhaps building off of his previous municipal experience working at the City Architect's Office of Edinburgh, Scotland for several years before emigrating).<sup>53</sup> The timing of this new position may explain why White's partnership with Mitchell only lasted a few years. White's career at the Department was prolific, and due to the nature of the role the numerous designs he produced were by and large for institutional buildings such as schools, hospitals, and banks.<sup>54</sup>

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47 "Stanley Piano Plans," *The Globe* (6 February 1915), 7.

48 In an interesting swap, after selling 241 Yonge Street to Frank Stanley, Art Metropole moved into Stanley Pianos' previous location at 14 Temperance Street. There was a considerable increase in property tax assessments for Yonge Street properties in 1911 that could have possibly affected their operating budget, and independent retailers on Yonge Street were carrying extra financial strain from the high land values (see Ross, 26-27), but this was a more relevant issue in the post-war period. Art Metropole also suffered a fire in 1912 that damaged their stock. Yet these factors alone still fall short of explaining their decision to relocate.

49 14 Temperance Street and later 36 Adelaide Street.

50 Robert G. Hill, "Mitchell, James," *Biographical Dictionary of Architects in Canada, 1800 - 1950*. Accessed 26 February 2025. <http://dictionaryofarchitectsincanada.org/node/1843>

51 Hill, "Mitchell, James."

52 Hill, "Mitchell, James."

53 Hill, "White, George N.," *Biographical Dictionary of Architects in Canada, 1800 - 1950*. Accessed 26 February 2025. <http://dictionaryofarchitectsincanada.org/node/363>

54 Hill, "White, George N."

## General Idea (artist group)

Toronto of the 1960s was experiencing a burgeoning counterculture scene, centered around Rochdale College, its offshoot Theatre Passe Muraille, and Coach House Press.<sup>55</sup> It was these institutions and the culture surrounding them that drew Slobodan Saia-Levy, Ronald Gabe, and Michael Tims to Toronto, better known by their pseudonyms: Jorge Zontal, Felix Partz, and AA Bronson, the three members of the artist group General Idea.<sup>56</sup>

AA Bronson was born in Vancouver in 1946 and studied architecture at the University of Manitoba, but he did not graduate. Instead, Bronson was drawn to "unconventional communities," or communes. This interest went beyond the theoretical: Bronson and a group of seven others dropped out of university to start their own commune in an old Victorian building in Winnipeg. Bronson's exploration of communal societies continued through further research into and lectures on the topic, ultimately resulting in an invitation from Rochdale College for Bronson to live in their co-op for free for six months. Jorge Zontal (1944-1994) was born in a concentration camp in Parma, Italy, to Yugoslavian-Jewish parents. He moved to Halifax, Nova Scotia in the 1960s to study architecture at Dalhousie University, later shifting his focus to film. In 1968 he traveled to Toronto for film related work connected with Theatre Passe Muraille and ended up staying in the city.<sup>57</sup> Felix Partz (1945-1994) was born in Winnipeg and also studied at the University of Manitoba where he first met Bronson, but their connection did not develop further until meeting again in Toronto.<sup>58</sup> Partz initially went to Toronto to visit his friend, Mimi Paige, who was participating in the Rochdale College collective and who was also a mutual acquaintance of both Bronson and Zontal.<sup>59</sup> All three future members of General Idea connected through Paige, while working on a production of Theatre Passe Muraille's.

As a group, General Idea created works that sought to examine and question the existing assumptions and structures of the art world, often taking established pop culture iconography or well known existing artworks and mimicking their imagery as a

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55 Rochdale College was founded in 1968 as a free university and was one of the few institutions of this nature to have been built for this purpose. It was built in relation to the University of Toronto as a co-op residence for the students with the idea of being run by them. The project garnered international attention and attracted many individuals to Toronto who were interested in these types of communities. Theatre Passe Muraille developed out of Rochdale College with a mandate to develop new Canadian plays. Coach House Press, a printing press and publishing house, was founded in 1965 and was closely associated with Rochdale both in its location and philosophies. Theatre Passe Muraille and Coach House Press are still in operation today, however, Rochdale College closed in 1975 due to financial issues and a declining reputation associated with drug use and illicit activities.

56 The content of this section cites extensively from Sarah Smith's comprehensive publication, *General Idea: Life & Work*. Any readers interested in understanding more of the nuances about General Idea's biography are encouraged to consult her work.

57 Sarah E.K. Smith, *General Idea: Life & Work*, (Toronto: Art Canada Institute, 2016), accessed February 6, 2025, <https://www.aci-iac.ca/art-books/general-idea/>

58 Smith, *General Idea: Life & Work*.

59 Smith, *General Idea: Life & Work*. Mimi Paige was also a fellow artist and was an occasional muse of General Idea's from the 1960s to 80s.



form of social critique.<sup>60</sup> General Idea were part of a shift in the art world in the latter half of the 20th century where the role of the artist was moving away from being a creator of images to hang on museum walls, and moving towards being a social commentator.<sup>61</sup>

Two key projects were started by General Idea in Toronto in the early 1970s: FILE Magazine (established in 1972 and ran until 1989), and Art Metropole, the artist-run centre established in 1974. Smith explains how, "General Idea was centrally involved in the creation of [the] artist-run culture in Canada" as key figures in the formation of a network of these institutions across the country. The concept of an artist-run centre is fairly self-explanatory: they were galleries or art spaces developed and run by artists, typically operating as not-for-profit organizations with similar mandates to support avant-garde practices in art, to cultivate its production, and to exhibit new works in mediums that many pre-existing art galleries and museums did not display, such as low-cost multiples, mail art, audio and video art.<sup>62</sup> There were several examples across Canada starting as early as the 1940s, but Art Metropole was part of the larger trend that emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s as alternate options to the established art institutions.<sup>63</sup> General Idea used both FILE Magazine and Art Metropole as methods through which to connect artists with styles and interests in common, especially in the area of ephemeral art mediums. FILE Magazine (its logo a riff off of LIFE Magazine) published art directories and advertised artists and art forms that were not otherwise represented in conventional gallery spaces. Andy Warhol is noted to have been an early subscriber; furthermore, Warhol's approach to art production was a significant influence on the fluid methods of both General Idea's art production process and the ideas their art works explored, where the spheres of studio space, archives, and their personal social lives all overlapped.<sup>64</sup>

General Idea worked together in Toronto until around 1985 when they relocated to the United States; while there, they created one of their better known works: the *AIDS* (1987) painting that referenced Robert Indiana's iconic painting, *LOVE* (1966). Repurposing its design, General Idea "created an extensive series of posters, painting installations, a sculpture, and an animation for the specta-colour Board in Times Square, New York City, all of which were based on the AIDS logo."<sup>65</sup> The driving concept behind the piece was to counterbalance and address the taboo nature of AIDS during the epidemic of the 1980s by placing or pushing the word into the public sphere where it was otherwise being under addressed due to widespread homophobia. Tragically, the topic became particularly relevant to General Idea when both Partz and Zontal were diagnosed HIV-positive in 1989 and 1990, respectively. All three members returned to live in Toronto in 1993, moving into a penthouse apartment at the Colonnade at 131 Bloor Street West.<sup>66</sup> In the same year, General Idea received the City

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60 Smith, *General Idea: Life & Work*

61 Ibid.

62 Smith, *General Idea: Life & Work*

63 Smith, *General Idea: Life & Work*.

64 Adam Welch, ed., *General Idea* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 2022), 61.

65 Smith, *General Idea: Life & Work*.

66 Coincidentally, this property was designated under Part IV in 1983 for its architectural value.

of Toronto's Lifetime Achievement Award and in 1994 they were recognized with the Jean A. Chalmers Award for Visual Arts in Toronto.<sup>67</sup>

In February 1994, Jorge Zontal passed away soon followed by Felix Partz in June of the same year. Partz's passing led to the final, and perhaps most haunting, work by General Idea: *Felix, June 5, 1994* (1994), a billboard size photo print (lacquer on vinyl) of Felix on his bed, surrounded by his personal and brightly coloured pillows and blankets, taken a few hours after his death.

Since the deaths of Zontal and Partz, Bronson has continued to work and exhibit as a solo artist. Additionally, he acted as the director of Printed Matter, Inc., in New York City from 2004 to 2010, and founded the NY Art Book Fair in 2005. Bronson has taught at UCLA, the University of Toronto, and the Yale School of Art. In 2008, he was made an Officer of the Order of Canada, and in 2011, he was named a Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the French government. Bronson currently lives and works in Berlin.

### **Art Metropole (artist-run centre)**

At the encouragement of Mimi Paige, Bronson, Partz, and Zontal first moved in together in 1969 at 78 Gerrard Street East, a semi-detached Victorian Bay-and-Gable with an altered ground floor storefront.<sup>68</sup> Seven people lived in the space together and used the storefront to experiment with what can loosely be termed art installations: faux retail stores selling found objects, like romance novels. Eventually the living situation at 78 Gerrard became too crowded, and the trio began to look for a new place to live.

The buildings along lower Yonge Street were known among their contemporaries as good prospects for large spaces available at low rents due to the declining reputation of the area (Yonge Street was becoming known as 'Sin Strip' in the 1970s) and the fact that most of the three- to four-storey buildings did not have elevators, which made the top floors undesirable for most tenants. But these conditions were fine and indeed ideal for artists seeking studio space. In an interview with the author, Bronson recalls how artists started moving into the area and setting up their studios in the upper storeys of the buildings along both sides of lower Yonge Street (mostly south of Dundas down to King Street), creating a quasi invisible artist society because the top floors were removed from casual commercial foot traffic.<sup>69</sup> From the outside street level, the average pedestrian had no sense of how many artists were living and working above them.<sup>70</sup> In fact, during their tenure at 241 Yonge Street, General Idea were not listed as tenants by the city directories. As far as the publication was concerned, they were invisible.

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67 "Biography," GENERAL IDEA 1969-1994. Accessed February 6, 2025, <https://www.aabronson.com/GI/biointro2.htm>

68 Coincidentally, this property was designated under Part IV in 1979 for its architectural value.

69 AA Bronson, interview with author, Microsoft Teams meeting, March 5, 2025.

70 Parallels can be drawn to the SOHO artist culture that was emerging in the former industrial lofts of that neighbourhood in New York City around the same time, but on a much larger and more formalized scale.

General Idea settled into their first studio space in 1970 at 87 Yonge Street.<sup>71</sup> Along with several others, they occupied two floors that cost them \$250 a month for approximately 5000 square feet.<sup>72</sup> Bronson, Partz, and Zontal lived there for three years, and it was at this location that the group General Idea formally came together. FILE Magazine started publishing out of this location, and it is also where the three artists came up with the idea that would eventually become the Art Metropole artist-run centre.

Art Metropole was conceived as a collection point and distribution centre for artist's products, specifically video art, audio, artist books, prints, and mail art - all the low-cost multiples that many contemporary artists were creating at the time, but few traditional galleries were collecting or showcasing. Despite the growing popularity of these mediums, General Idea noticed that no infrastructure existed to help identify which artists were the authors, or to help people access them.<sup>73</sup> Art Metropole, essentially, sought to answer two major questions posed by ephemeral art: who created it, and how to get it. General Idea wanted a space where they could display the multiples and sell them, but the fundamental goal was to create an operation where they might facilitate the distribution process and connect the ephemeral art scene of the 1970s.

While walking along Yonge Street looking for such a venue, General Idea were attracted by the "gorgeous" façade of 241 Yonge Street.<sup>74</sup> After conducting their own research, they discovered the history of the building and its origins as the storefront for Art Metropole, the art supply store established in 1888. By the 1970s the original Art Metropole was no longer in business and the copyright to the name was available, so the group decided to open their artist-run centre at this location and call it Art Metropole as a nod to this history. They moved into the third floor in 1973.<sup>75</sup> From memory, Bronson describes it as a beautiful space: "[It was clear that] it was a building that had been designed beautifully by a really good architect. All that was left [inside] was just floors and walls and ceiling, but it just had a beautiful space and a beautiful sense of light and air, and it really almost felt like...we were participating in history by reoccupying that building and, in a way, putting it back to its original purposes."<sup>76</sup> The way that Bronson describes the relationship between the Art Metropole concept and the Art Metropole building illustrates how each layer of the subject property's location, architectural design, associative history, and the layout and volume of the interior contributed to it providing a near ideal space from which General Idea could operate their centre.

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71 The property has since been significantly altered and only portions of its bay windows remain.

72 AA Bronson, interview with author, Microsoft Teams meeting, March 5, 2025.

73 AA Bronson, interview with author, Microsoft Teams meeting, March 5, 2025.

74 AA Bronson, interview with author, Microsoft Teams meeting, March 5, 2025. General Idea's lease at 87 Yonge Street was not renewed by their landlord, hence the need to find a new location.

75 The ground floor was vacant, and the second floor tenant was Mr. Arnold's Message Shop - a business that, judging by building permit issues, appears to have gone through many iterations of adult entertainment from a message parlour, restaurant, and music and burlesque venue, each with strong erotic undertones and implied connections to crime. Mr. Arnold's illustrates a general social trend that was emerging along Yonge Street in the 1970s and garnered it the nickname 'Sin Strip.'

76 AA Bronson, interview with author, Microsoft Teams meeting, March 5, 2025.

Art Metropole was incorporated in May 1974 and officially opened in October.<sup>77</sup> In an application for grant money to support their operations, the group describe the centre as "a cultural service agency which collects, displays, and dispenses information on contemporary art. In particular, our activity centres around books and videotapes by artists and the documentation of performance works by artists."<sup>78</sup> General Idea used the architectural drawing of the building's main façade as a watermark for their invitations and later for their correspondence paper and ordering forms (Figure 24). The lettering of their logo was pulled directly from Mitchell and White's drawing for the original storefront signage, which they had found during their research at the City of Toronto archives (Figure 23).<sup>79</sup> Bronson notes that, "[finding] that image is what cemented the thought of moving in there [to 241 Yonge Street]."<sup>80</sup> Bronson goes on to describe how the design of the building itself gave the group a sense of authority, authenticity, and pride in the work that they were doing. The building and its impressive façade were part of their graphic identity, but it also became part of their personal identity for the time that they spent there.<sup>81</sup>

Peggy Gale, a video curator who formerly worked for the Canada Council and who had published several books about video art, was the second employee hired at Art Metropole.<sup>82</sup> She worked as Art Metropole's video distributor and organized exhibitions across Europe and North America, but her main role with the centre was to curate video packages and mail them out to their order catalogue subscribers. As the centre progressed, there were typically three to four people working there at any time in an experimental studio and office-like atmosphere. General Idea used the space to host occasional video screenings and to display archival materials, and the studio was always open to members of the public to browse their reference library of books by artists, books about contemporary art, a video screening room, and a lecture space.<sup>83</sup> However, collection and distribution remained the main focus as they began to amass a significant number of materials.

By 1978, the same anti-social culture of the Yonge Street "Sin Strip" that initially made the area affordable for General Idea to rent turned to their disadvantage when on August 1, 1977, the body of Emmanuel Jacques (a 12-year-old shoe shine boy who worked on the strip) was found on the roof of the nearby 245 Yonge Street; he had been raped and murdered by employees of the Charlie's Angels body rub parlour below.<sup>84</sup> Public concern and outcries against the conditions of Sin Strip rose to a pitch, and the culture along the street became one of suspicion while the police were investigating the murder; in particular, a prejudiced distrust was cast against the entire gay community

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77 Established through Art Official Inc., the non-profit legal entity General Idea created in 1971 that allowed them to apply for grant funding for the FILE Magazine and Art Metropole projects.

78 "Art Metropole," Fonds 1130, File 374 (City of Toronto Archives, 1981).

79 This decision echoes previous instances where the group appropriated existing logos into their work, such as the FILE Magazine logo and the image style of their AIDS artworks.

80 AA Bronson, interview with author, Microsoft Teams meeting, March 5, 2025.

81 Today, AA Bronson is primarily based in Berlin, but whenever he returns to Toronto, he often ends up walking along the section of Yonge Street to look at the Art Metropole building.

82 Gale was also married to the Canadian artist Michael Snow.

83 "Art Metropole," 1981.

84 Ross, 124.

because the perpetrators had been identified as gay men.<sup>85</sup> A general uneasiness developed in the landlords renting the upper storeys on Yonge Street, which were difficult to regulate or monitor activities (illicit or otherwise); this possibly contributed to the termination of General Idea's lease.<sup>86</sup>

At this point in time, it was difficult for General Idea to find a new space on Yonge Street to host Art Metropole; additionally, the former artist studio culture in the area had dispersed by the end of the 1970s and was shifting toward the Queen West area. The cultural shift was spearheaded by organizations like Ace Space, the first artist-run centre in Toronto, that had relocated from Yonge Street to Richmond Street, signalling the transition of the art scene locale in Toronto. Art Metropole's second location also ended up on Richmond Street, at 217. Its large industrial space located on a lower storey changed the tone of the centre from what it had been at 241 Yonge Street, and 217 Richmond was operated more like a traditional shop. Art Metropole's archive of artist material, books, and other low-cost multiples continued to grow until they ceased collecting in 1996, later donating their mass of material on contemporary art to the National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives in 1999. Art Metropole continues to operate as a non-profit artist-run centre in Toronto today (currently located at 896 College Street).

## **ii. ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION**

The following section provides an architectural description and analysis related to the property which will establish the basis for determining design or physical value of Criteria 1, 2 or 3 according to O. Reg. 9/06 Criteria.

### **241 Yonge Street (1911)**

The July 26, 1911, issue of 'Contract Record' included a short write up on the new headquarters being constructed for the Art Metropole at 241 Yonge Street accompanied by an elevation of the proposed final design (Figure 6). The excavation was described as being "well underway," laying the groundwork for the brick and steel building (with stone cladding on its west façade) that would eventually include 11,000 square-footage devoted to the company's showrooms, stock rooms, a blue-print room, and a picture gallery.<sup>87</sup>

Today the very same building still stands intact, rising four-storeys to a flat roofline and situated within a narrow, rectangle plan running west-east perpendicular to Yonge Street and O'Keefe Lane (Figure 7). The building footprint occupies the entire lot; its main façade faces Yonge Street. Since the building is taller than the adjacent buildings to the immediate north and south (and has been since its initial construction), portions of those façades are therefore visible from street level - specifically the upper westernmost corners. The building's rear façade is visible from O'Keefe Lane (Figure 29).

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> AA Bronson, interview with author, Microsoft Teams meeting, March 5, 2025.

<sup>87</sup> "New Headquarters," The Contract Record Vol 23 No.30 (26 July 1911), 53.

The main (west) façade curtain wall is clad in smooth ashlar limestone with cast iron and copper details and a high glazing to masonry ratio (Figure 7). The stone cladding is utilised primarily in the capacity of moulded voussoirs and architraves around the window openings to the effect that it reads like a refined border for the large portions of glass. This creates a very light yet ordered appearance. The composition of the façade is perfectly symmetrical and organised into three parts where each third is defined by a cornice line. The three-part division alludes to the column in classical architecture, which is also divided into threes: a base, a shaft, and a capital.<sup>88</sup> This design approach was widely applied to the early skyscrapers of the late-19th and early-20th centuries when classical design principles were once more gaining traction among architects.<sup>89</sup> The rising heights of the skyscrapers lent themselves well to the columnal reference where each iteration includes a defined base to ground the lower storeys, a longer mid-section of uniform design across several storeys (shaft), crowned by the upper storeys that typically showcase finely wrought details (capital).

The street level storefront forms the base (Figure 28). Its original appearance is documented in a photograph from 1913 appearing in "Architectural Bronze & Iron Works, Toronto" published by the company Canadian Allis-Chalmers Ltd., to advertise examples of their cast iron work in recent commissions (Figure 7).<sup>90</sup> The cast iron component had three bays divided by decorative mullions, a recessed central entrance with slightly chamfered display windows projecting on either side, and three squared transom windows above.<sup>91</sup> The storefront was framed by stone pilasters supporting an entablature of a simple cornice and signage in the architrave that read, "The Art Metropole" in stylized letters.

The middle third of the façade is formed by the two-storey, flat-headed window opening with moulded, lugged architrave surround and a stone cornice with copper coping (Figure 26).<sup>92</sup> The two storeys of the glazing are delineated by a horizontal cast iron spandrel panel of three sections in equal size with a repeating festoon featuring the letters 'A' and 'M' interlaced within a crest, encircled, and hung with ribbons (Figure 27). The glazing is divided into three bays by decorative cast iron mullions.<sup>93</sup> Muntin bars divide the rest of the glazing into a multi-pane, gridded pattern with vertical emphasis.

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88 Kalman, 576.

89 Kalman, 576.

90 Allis-Chalmers Ltd. was responsible for several other highly detailed cast iron components on significant buildings contemporaneous with and in proximity to 241 Yonge Street, including the bronze marquee at the Ryrie Bros. building by Burke, Howard & White, and the bronze marquee and storefront at the Mason & Risch building by Bond & Smith.

91 A pedimented sign for the Art Metropole projected horizontally from the middle transom window.

92 Judging by the drawing plans by Mitchell & White, a second 'Art Metropole' sign was originally intended for the space above the window in the architrave; the 1913 photo shows that this design aspect was not actualized.

93 In the original design of the building, these mullions in the upper middle storeys fell in direct alignment with those that divided the glazing of the original storefront below. Both sets were and are prominent in design and the relationship between them created another layer of spatial order in the façade by dividing it into three bays - a beautiful design choice subtly akin to the fluting in a Doric column, now slightly obscured with the loss of the original storefront.

The fourth storey is centred by a full height, round-arch Diocletian window with moulded stone voussoirs, prominent keystone, and plain spandrels between the squared, moulded surround (Figure 25). The multi-pane muntin pattern in the glazing of the window is a square grid. The storey is crowned by a prominent, denticulated copper cornice with egg-and-dart moulding and a lion's head motif running along the top.

The rear (east) façade is clad in common bond buff brick. It has a different character from the main and its simplified design indicates its utilitarian function as a rear façade facing a rear laneway (Figure 29). It is arranged into two asymmetrical bays where the left side is narrower than the right and rises a half-storey taller to accommodate the entrance room onto the roof. The regular fenestration pattern of flat-headed rectangular window openings follows the arrangement of bays: vertical openings at left separated from the wider, horizontal openings at right. The current muntin pattern has been changed from the original and the window openings on the lower storeys have been altered or infilled (Figure 29).

The north and south façades are clad in the same common bond buff brick; where their corners meet with the main façade, the limestone has been inset into the brick (Figure 32).<sup>94</sup> The compatible colours of the two masonry types smooths the transition between them.<sup>95</sup> The visibility of the upper storeys of these façades from street level was utilized for advertising over the years, where Art Metropole, Stanley Pianos, and Evangelical Books all painted signage on the bricks to showcase their businesses up and down Yonge Street (Figures 12, 14, and 17). Building blueprints for the south elevation show a series of window openings along the second and third storeys of varying sizes and styles, mostly set back behind the two-and-a-half-storey building that formerly occupied the lot to the south (Figure 10). These windows were confirmed to be mostly intact during a site visit of the building's interior (Figure 30).

## **Edwardian Classicism and the Commercial Typology**

The design of the building by the architects Mitchell and White is representative of the Edwardian Classicism architectural style as applied to the commercial typology, which some architecture historians further classify as the Edwardian Commercial style due to its prevalence in the design of commercial buildings across Canada in the early 20th century (especially office buildings and early skyscrapers).<sup>96</sup>

Edwardian Classicism emerged in reaction against the highly decorative and eclectic designs typical of the High Victorian styles, such as Queen Anne, that were popular in Canada during the 1860s and 70s.<sup>97</sup> By the late 19th century, the pendulum started to swing, and architects returned to mine inspiration from the more ordered classical

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94 Except for a slight wraparound of the copper cornice, none of the other design features of the main façade carry over into the north and south façades.

95 Overall, the colour palette of the building achieved by the combination of materials is one of an understated, warm greyscale. Mitchell and White's specifications for the building design even include a note that the copper components should be smudged with acid to accelerate the green oxidization, suggesting a conscious decision to mute the flashy material and blend it in with the limestone and cast iron features.

96 Kalman, 577.

97 Kalman, 533.

styles, resulting in buildings that displayed sculptural yet balanced and self-contained designs; this period, dating approximately between 1890 to 1930, thus became known as the Second Classical Revival (of which Edwardian was a part).<sup>98</sup> The revival was significantly inspired and perpetuated by the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, a state school of art education that was renowned for training architects around the world;<sup>99</sup> its teachings emphasized the tenets of proportion, sense of scale, and visual order.<sup>100</sup> As the influence of Beaux-Arts grew beyond the school itself, its philosophy permeated the general architecture trends of the period such that the several stylistic branches of the Second Classical Revival are sometimes collectively referred to under the umbrella term of 'Beaux-Arts'.<sup>101</sup>

The Art Metropole building at 241 Yonge Street exemplifies Edwardian Classicism for a commercial typology through the symmetrical organization of its main façade that attends to balanced proportions (especially the three-part division), the classical references in its design, and its sculptural but restrained ornamentation that contributes a quietly beautiful presence to the streetscape.

## Showroom Interiors

In addition to the stylistic innovations (or rather reinventions) of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, there had emerged around the same time a significant structural innovation that was pivotal for both the design of the building at 241 Yonge Street and its function as a purpose-built art gallery and commercial space. This was metal frame construction.<sup>102</sup> Its development allowed for the construction of taller buildings not confined in their composition by load bearing walls that were, by necessity, thick at the base in order to support height density above.<sup>103</sup> This structural requirement not only impacted the visual design of buildings, but it had further implications for the function of commercial spaces. As the architect Edmund Burke explains, "the increased thickness of walls which would be necessitated by [conventional] methods in the erection of a high building would occupy so much valuable floor space and reduce the light to such an extent that the commercial success of the building would be interfered with."<sup>104</sup>

In place of a heavy base, the internal metal frame became the support for exterior curtain walls. Now relieved of their roles as the main structural support, curtain walls were thinner and allowed for brighter, more spacious interior volumes. Of particular importance to the construction of taller commercial buildings on Yonge Street, the metal frame construction method meant that a smaller footprint was feasible and therefore these higher density buildings could be slotted into the narrow property parcels with comparative ease.<sup>105</sup>

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98 McHugh, 69-70.

99 For instance, the prominent Toronto architect Alfred Chapman studied at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts between 1901 to 1903. He later brought that influence back to Toronto with his design for the Central Reference Library at College and St. George Streets, constructed 1907-08.

100 McHugh, 952.

101 Kalman, 534.

102 Widely accepted to have been first executed in Chicago for the Home Insurance Building in 1885.

103 Kalman, 571.

104 As quoted in Kalman, 574.

105 McHugh, 219-220.



Standing as a slender, four-storey building that nonetheless accomplishes considerable square-footage, the built form of the Art Metropole building is an excellent example of how this construction method manifested within the context of the site and streetscape. Despite the narrowness of the building, the interior spaces do not feel enclosed and instead achieve an openness that allows for the various functions of the offices that occupy the upper storeys today (Figure 30). Natural light comes in through the large windows of the east and west façades.<sup>106</sup> In a cohesive design relationship, the exterior division of the main façade (with its aforementioned well-organized layout) mirrors the interior division of floors that additionally demonstrate the ethos of simple but pleasing proportions.

Mitchell & White's building plans for Art Metropole indicate how each floor of the building had a purpose to suit the operations of the business (Figures 8 and 9). The basement was the blue print room; the first floor was the storefront with a mezzanine level for a display gallery, which accounts for the extended height of the storey; the second floor was the picture gallery, which may account for the increased number of window openings at this level of the south elevation to allow more light into the space for viewing; the third floor was a stock room and picture framing room; the fourth floor was an additional stock room and penthouse.

## Alterations

In 1957, a building permit was submitted for new storefront signage by Evangelical Publishers, including a new sign band advertising 'Evangelical Beacon Books Cameras,' plus a vertical projecting sign for 'Evangelical Books' that ran down the building (Figure 16). The street level storefront materials included stone at the base, metal, vitrolite, and baked enamel. Similar to Art Metropole and Stanley Pianos before them, Evangelical Books also utilised the greater height of the building to advertise their business on the upper south elevation by posting directly on the brick.

This heralded a series of permits for storefront alterations incoming with each new tenant, typically coinciding with significant interior alterations. In steady succession from the late 1960s through the 1980s, proposals came in for a bridal boutique, a Wimpy's restaurant, a private dining club, a massage parlour, an Athlete's Foot shoe store, and a ladies clothing store. Some of these plans came to fruition and others did not,<sup>107</sup> while others like the 'Bargain Boutique' pictured circa 1973 (Figure 18) were evidently actualised but had no corresponding permit. Later, in the 1990s, the main (west) façade of the building was made to accommodate signage for a Taco Bell restaurant and another new storefront design that closely resembles what exists today (Figure 18). As a result of this high-tenancy-turnover, the original cast iron storefront is no longer present and the original design details of the Art Metropole's interior showrooms have been replaced to suit the purposes of the variety of commercial uses, but leaving intact the spacious interior volumes, brickwork of the walls, and the heavy timber beams of the

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<sup>106</sup> Skylights on the fourth storey bring in additional natural light to this level.

<sup>107</sup> For instance, the permit for the Athlete's Foot company proposed the installation of a 'mountain' to rise between the floors of the building; unfortunately, the permit notes provide little detail to determine if this proposed mountain was a decorative feature or a functional attraction, like a rock-climbing wall. It is unlikely that this feature ever came to fruition.

floors (Figures 30 and 31). The glazing and muntin bars of the windows on the main (west) façade have been replaced following a very sympathetic design to the originals.

### iii. CONTEXT

The following section provides contextual information and analysis related to the property which is the basis for determining contextual value of Criteria 7, 8 or 9 according to O. Reg. 9/06 Criteria.

The City of Toronto Property Data Map attached (Attachment 2) shows the site of the property at 241 Yonge Street.

The influence of the department stores on the built and social character of Yonge Street cannot be overstated. Their early expansion helped drive the commercial success of the street and essentially put it on the map as the shopping destination of Toronto.<sup>108</sup> The competition they posed placed pressure not only on the business sales of other independent retailers, but also on land availability and value because their expansion practices often involved the demolition of many pre-existing, smaller shops to replace them with taller buildings or larger complexes.<sup>109</sup> Other business owners in the area were following the same trend to varying degrees, from the large-scale construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway Building further south at 69 Yonge Street in 1911-1913,<sup>110</sup> the Traders Bank (later Montreal Trust) building at 67 Yonge Street in 1905-06, the Royal Bank of Canada building at 2 King Street East and 73 Yonge Street in 1913-1915, to the smaller-scale experiments in increasing height density with the construction of the Hermant Buildings at 19 and 21 Sankofa Square in 1913, the Mason & Risch piano showroom building formerly at 230 Yonge Street in 1911, and the Art Metropole building at 241 Yonge Street also in 1911. The success of Yonge Street as a commercial destination supported these construction ventures of flagship storefronts and offices, eventually resulting in the character of a high density commercial streetscape along Yonge Street between King and College Streets at the turn of the 20th century, with an increasing fine-grain character progressing northwards in tandem with the series of narrow lot patterns (Figures 4 and 37).

In order to anticipate for the growth of their business, the department store Eaton's continuously purchased properties on and around Yonge Street throughout the 20th century, owning not only commercial storefronts but warehouse buildings where they manufactured their products (until outsourcing in the 1950s influenced their closure).<sup>111</sup> The stores and warehouses created employment opportunities for residents of the surrounding area, sometimes to the effect of highlighting or even perpetuating economic dichotomies between those who spent money on Yonge Street and those who lived behind the streetscape in neighbourhoods like the Ward, working to support many of Eaton's early manufacture endeavors.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Ross, 40-41.

<sup>109</sup> Ross, 21.

<sup>110</sup> Ross, 25.

<sup>111</sup> Ross, 47.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

Around the 1960s, Eaton's looked to consolidate their land holdings and initiate some of their development plans that proposed large-scale demolitions of pre-existing buildings; rumours and news of these plans left many of the smaller commercial businesses along Yonge Street in limbo waiting to see if they would come to fruition and instigate mass redevelopment, since it would be difficult to commit to long-term business plans as an independent retailer when the prospect of radical change to your surroundings was on the horizon.<sup>113</sup> Eaton's ongoing land assembly practices also drove real estate competition, resulting in soaring land values for the surrounding area.<sup>114</sup> These conditions began to impact the types of businesses renting along the street and the social character of the area where many spaces were left vacant or rented on short-term leases; this opened the door for retail types that existed on the social margins, such as porn theatres and sex shops whose numbers increased along the street until Yonge Street acquired the disparaging nickname of 'Sin Strip'.<sup>115</sup> However, this character also created opportunities for creatives and Toronto's gay community to move into the vacated spaces that were being passed over by conventional retailers. The artist group General Idea benefited from this character on two occasions when they were able to afford their first studio space at 87 Yonge Street, and later at the subject property, 241 Yonge Street.

When the Eaton Centre finally opened in 1977 after a decade of planning, it had required the demolition of many buildings fronting onto the west side of Yonge Street. One example included the loss of the Mason & Risch building at 230 Yonge Street, designed by architects Bond and Smith (Figure 35). The building was contemporaneous with the Art Metropole at 241 Yonge Street, pre-dating it by a few months, and was located nearby, down and across the street (Figure 5). Its construction process and final design was well covered in the March and October issues of *Construction Journal* in 1911. Bond and Smith dealt with similar narrow, mid-block site conditions as 241 Yonge Street but proposed an even taller building at seven-storeys, and therefore "it was necessary to scrutinize very carefully the different methods of construction to determine which would take up the least room."<sup>116</sup> The skeleton frame construction (with reinforced concrete) was selected to economize on both space and cost.<sup>117</sup> When the building was complete, *Construction Journal* complimented the design and layout of the building as a "unique" interpretation of a commercial space and solution to a construction problem,<sup>118</sup> possibly establishing a standard continued by Mitchell and White in their designs for Art Metropole (their June 1911 drawings post-date the *Construction Journal* write up). The pair of buildings exhibited a common solution to the tricky context. Several tall and narrow commercial showrooms appeared along Yonge Street in the late 19th to early 20th centuries with Edwardian Classicism or Beaux-Arts influences in their designs, such as the R.S. Williams building formerly at 145-147 Yonge Street and now demolished, and to a similar extent the Heintzman Hall (or J. F. Brown) building at 193

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<sup>113</sup> Ross, 50.

<sup>114</sup> Ross, 55.

<sup>115</sup> McHugh 199-200.

<sup>116</sup> "Mason & Risch Piano Warehouse Toronto," *Construction Journal* Vol 4 No. 4 (March 1911), 77.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> "Mason & Risch Company's New Premises, Toronto." *Construction Journal* Vol 4 No. 11 (October 1911) 65.

Yonge Street, designated Part IV in 1985 (Figures 34-36).<sup>119</sup> Each building successfully navigated the mid-block, narrow lot sizes to maximize interior space for commercial function - especially the function of display.

Located on the east side of Yonge Street, 241 Yonge Street survived the Eaton Centre redevelopment (Figure 38). Along with the Ryrie building at 229 Yonge Street, the John William Drummond stores at 253 Yonge Street, the Chapman Brothers Jewellers store at 261 Yonge Street, the John Bugg stores at 275-277 Yonge Street (designated Part IV in 2001), and the Childs restaurant and offices at 279 Yonge Street (designated Part IV in 2001), the subject property is one of a collection of low-rise commercial buildings dating from the late 19th to early 20th centuries distributed along the east side of the block that maintain a sense of the long-established commercial identity of Yonge Street and illustrate how the typology of the commercial building evolved along the street through the turn of the century (Figures 32 and 33). Although interspersed with several contemporary constructions or re- and over-cladded façades between them, the historic buildings share consistent setbacks and design commonalities of masonry cladding, cornice details, and decorative window surrounds. These properties maintain a connection with the low-rise, fine-grain style of Yonge Street's historic commercial character amid the contemporary high-rise mixed-use developments that are now adding another layer to the built environment of Yonge Street, south of College Street.

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119 193 Yonge Street's slightly wider façade demonstrates how similar design and construction principles manifest within a larger property parcel because the footprint of the building was the result of the consolidation of several property parcels that predated it.

## 4. VISUAL RESOURCES



Figure 4. Yonge Street, east side near Shuter Street, in 1910. Note that the Art Metropole building at 241 Yonge Street has not yet been built. Its future location is located to the far left of the photo (TPL).



Figure 5. Side photo of the newly constructed Art Metropole building in 1912 when it caught fire. The building itself sustained minimal damage, but portions of the merchandise was lost. The Mason and Risch piano showroom building at 230 Yonge Street is visible down the street, at right (CTA).

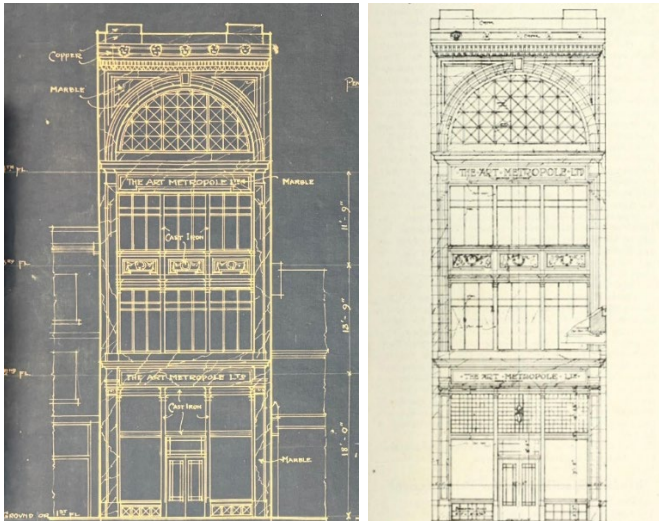


Figure 6. At left: original elevation of 241 Yonge Street's west façade as drawn by the architects Mitchell & White, dated June 1911 (CTA). At right: elevation drawing of 241 Yonge Street that appeared in the *Contract Record* Vol 25 No. 30 (26 July 1911), 53.





Figure 7. At left: Photograph of Art Metropole in 1913, appearing in "Architectural Bronze and Iron Works, Toronto," *Canadian Allis-Chalmers, Limited* (December 1913), 66.

<https://glassian.org/Prism/AllisChalmers/architecturalbro00arch.pdf>. At right: photo of the Art Metropole building in 2025 illustrating the overall integrity of the original design.

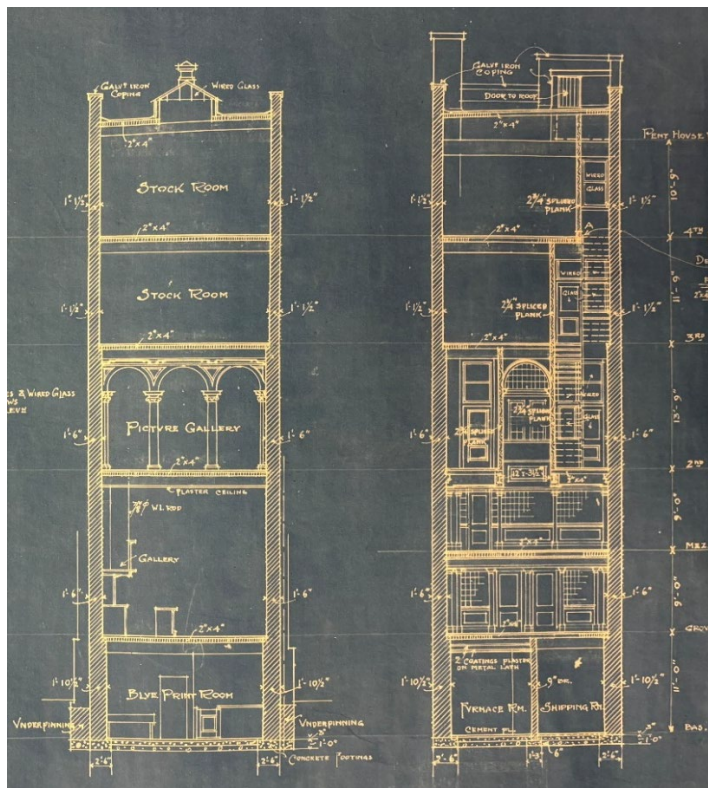


Figure 8. Cross-sections of 241 Yonge Street's interior space indicating the intended use and corresponding design of each floor, as drawn by the architects Mitchell & White, dated June 1911 (CTA).

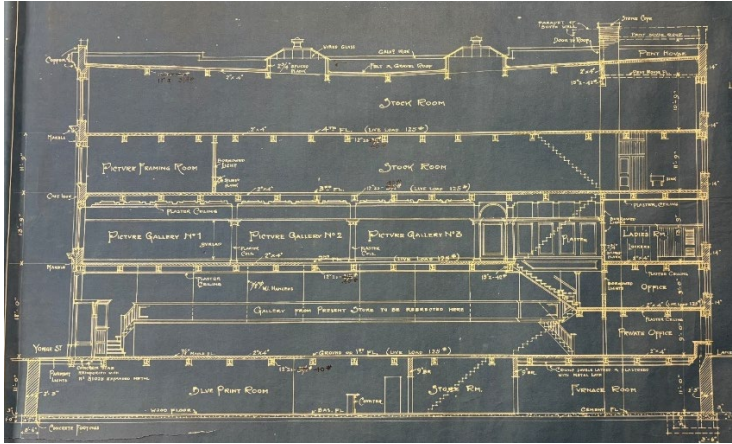


Figure 9. Longitudinal section of 241 Yonge Street's interior space indicating the intended use and corresponding design of each floor, as drawn by the architects Mitchell & White, dated June 1911 (CTA).

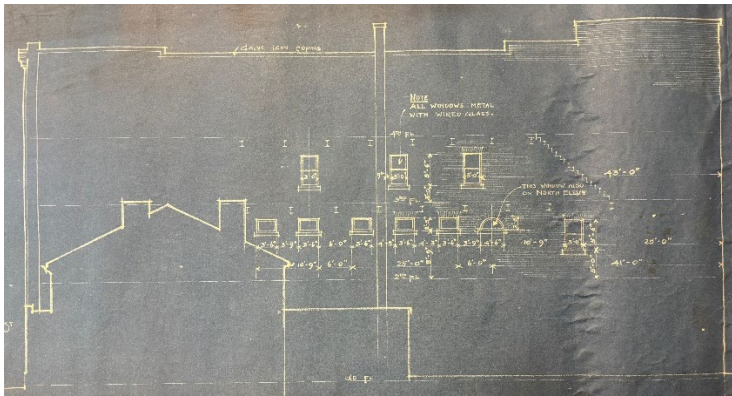


Figure 10. Original drawing of the south elevation of 241 Yonge Street by the architects Mitchell & White and dated August 1911 (CTA).



Figure 11. Intersection of Yonge and Shuter photographed in 1919. 241 Yonge is visible at far left with Stanley Pianos signage is on its south façade (CTA).



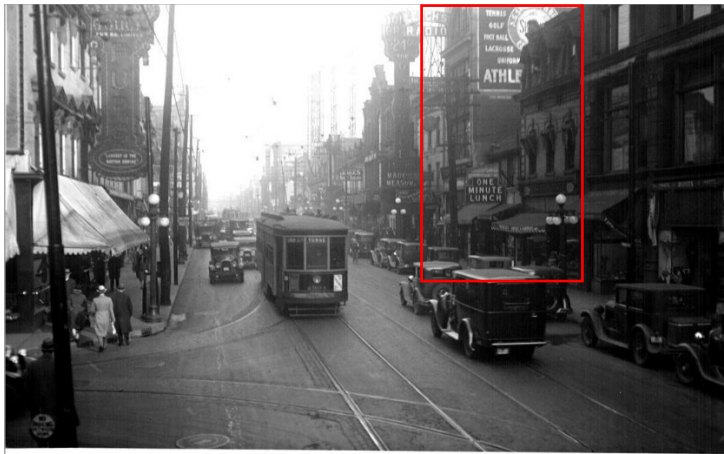


Figure 12. Yonge St looking north from Louisa in 1930. Art Metropole is pictured at centre with the "athletics" signage on its south façade (CTA).



Figure 13. Yonge Street near Shuter looking south in 1935; Art Metropole is pictured at centre left (CTA).

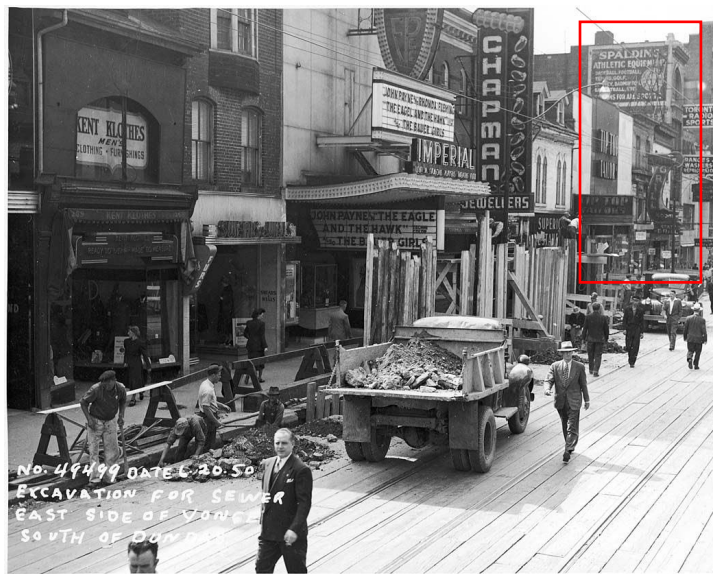


Figure 14. Yonge Street near Shuter looking south c. 1950s. Art Metropole is pictured in background with the "Spalding Athletics" signage on its north façade (CTA).





Figure 15. Yonge and Shuter Streets, c.1950s (CTA).



Figure 16. 241 Yonge Street c.1962, now occupied by Evangelical Books with new corresponding signage on its west and south façades (Vintage Toronto, Facebook).



Figure 17. Yonge Street north of Shuter looking northeast in 1971. While the ground floor tenants have changed, the Evangelical Publishers signage is still intact on the south façade (Toronto Star Archives).



Figure 18. From left to right: 241 Yonge Street in 1973, 1982, and c.1993 showing the tenant and signage evolution (THB).

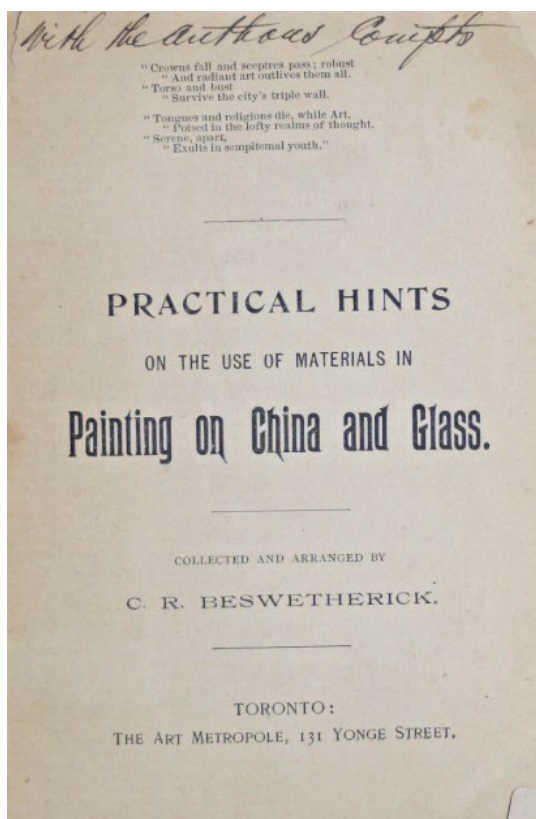


Figure 19. Title page from a publication by Art Metropole advising customers on how to use their products, printed in Toronto by Hill & Weir on Temperance Street (eBay product for sale, n.d.).

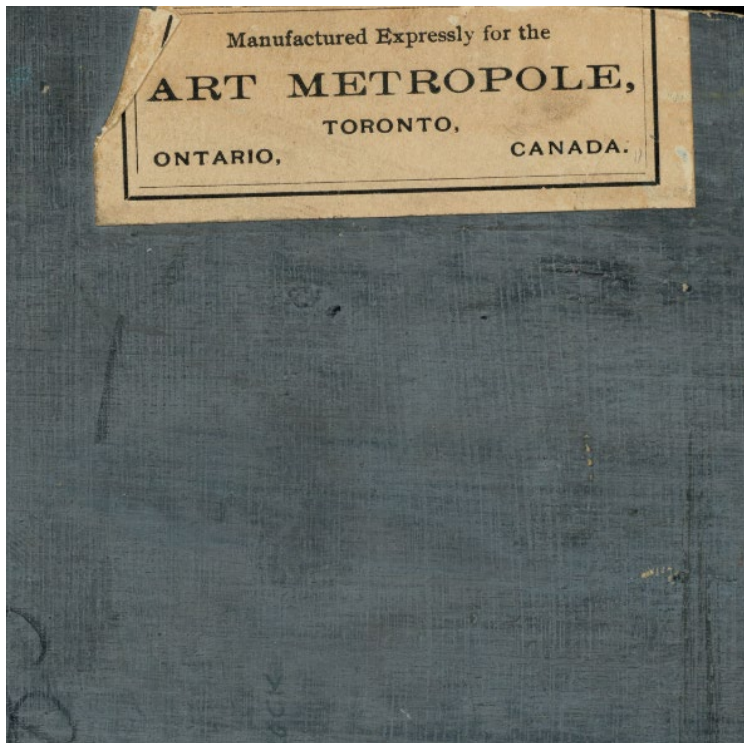


Figure 20. A 10cm x 10cm area of the back of the board for J.E.H MacDonald's *View from Split Rock* 1912 (National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa) featuring the label from the Art Metropole artist supply store.



Figure 21. Advertisement for Winsor & Newton paint in *American Magazine of Art* Vol 15 No.2 (February 1924) that lists Art Metropole as their Canadian distributor. Art Metropole would be located at 14 Temperance Street by this time.



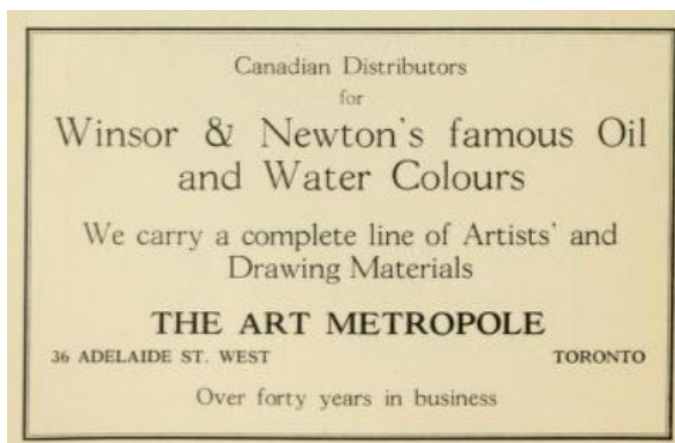


Figure 22. Advertisement for Art Metropole in the OCA Students' Annual, Ontario College of Art, 1927.



Figure 23. Example of General Idea's usage of the original Art Metropole lettering from 1911 for their artist-centre masthead sixty-three years later (AMA).

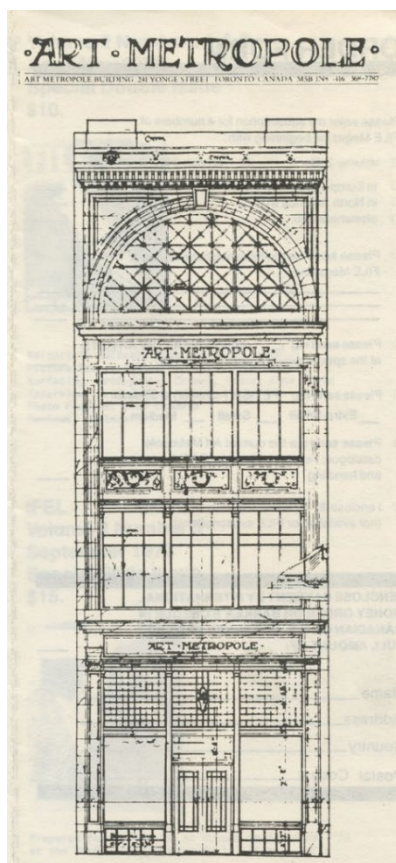


Figure 24. Excerpt from Art Metropole order form from 1976, featuring the original Mitchell & White elevation and signage lettering of the building from 1911 (AMA).

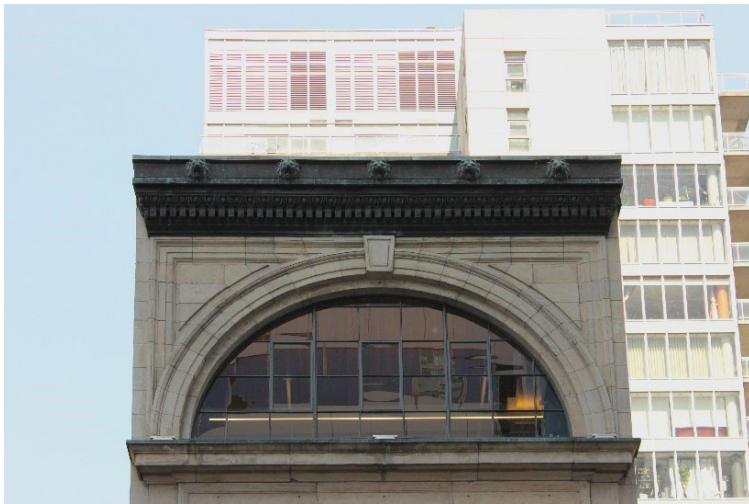


Figure 25. Detail of the fourth storey, or "capital", of 241 Yonge Street (Heritage Planning, 2025).



Figure 26. Detail of the second and third storeys, or "shaft," of 241 Yonge Street (Heritage Planning, 2025).



Figure 27. Detail of the "AM" design in the festoon of the cast iron spandrel panel, c.1990s (CTA).





Figure 28. Detail of the first storey storefront, or "base," of 241 Yonge Street (Heritage Planning, 2025).



Figure 29. At left: 241 Yonge Street's east (rear) elevation pictured in 2025 (Heritage Planning, 2025). At right: original drawing of 241 Yonge Street's east elevation by architects Mitchell & White, dated June 1911 (CTA).

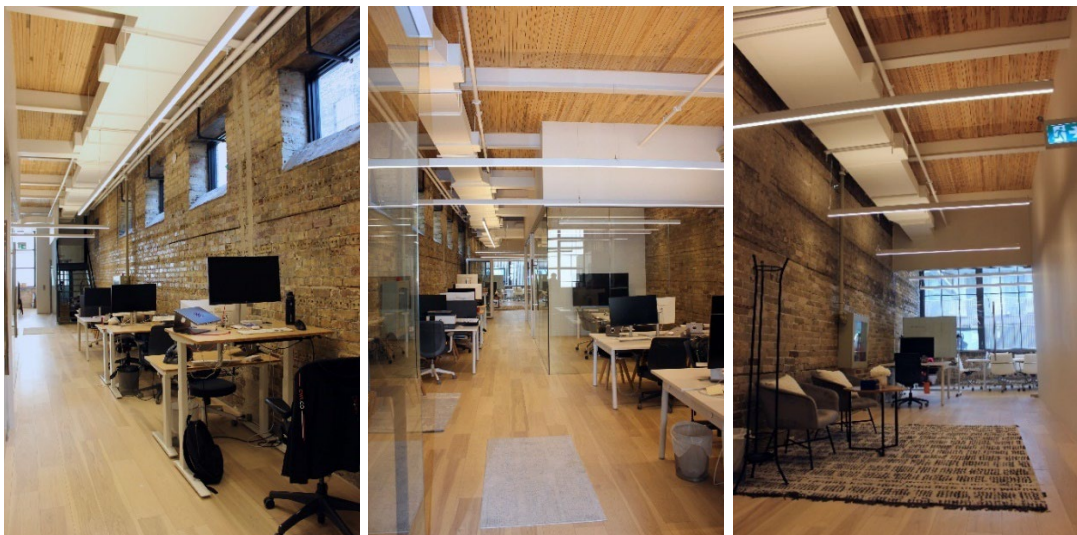


Figure 30. Details of the second floor interior space, currently used as office space, at 241 Yonge Street showing the undivided length of the space, height of the ceilings, large window openings at the east and west elevation, and brick walls (Heritage Planning, 2025).



Figure 31. Detail of the fourth storey Diocletian window as viewed from the interior (Heritage Planning, 2025).



Figure 32. 241 Yonge Street in context as viewed from the west side of Yonge Street, looking northwest (Heritage Planning, 2025).



Figure 33. 241 Yonge Street in context as viewed from the west side of Yonge Street close to Shuter Street, looking northwest (Heritage Planning, 2025).





Figure 34. The R.S. Williams and Sons piano showroom at 149 Yonge Street, pre-demolition, c.1980s (THB).



Figure 35. The Mason & Risch piano showroom building in 1919 with its narrow façade divided into three parts, formerly located at 230 Yonge Street (CTA).



Figure 36. At left: Heintzman Pianos at 193 Yonge Street pictured c.1929 (centre right of photo) showing its height relative to adjacent properties (CTA). At right: 193 Yonge Street pictured in 1993 showing the vertical emphasis of its west façade (THB).





Figure 37. Excerpt from 1913 Goad's Atlas showing the mostly narrow lot patterns along Yonge Street between Queen Street West and Wilton Avenue, contrasted by the larger lots owned by the T. Eaton Co. Ltd., department store.

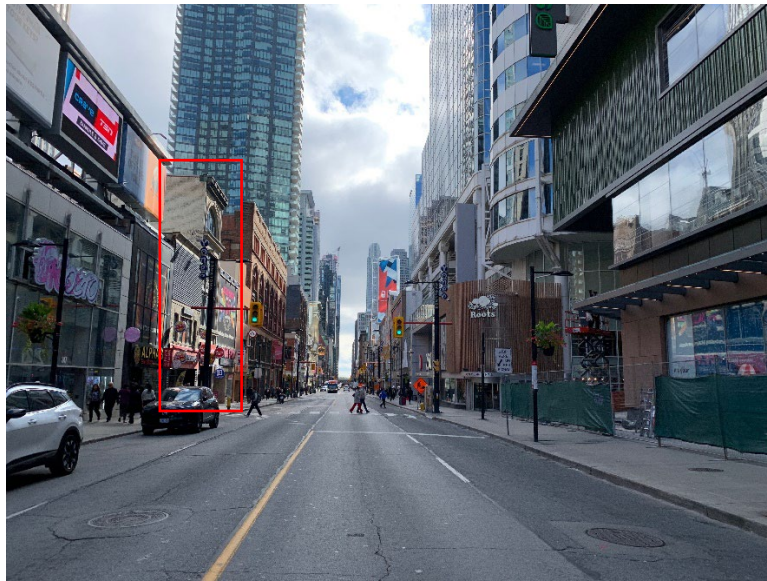


Figure 38. Yonge Street looking south showing 241 Yonge Street in context with the current Eaton Centre at right (Heritage Planning, 2025).

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