

BING THOM CM, LLD (HON), ARCHITECT AIBC, FRAIC, AIA

Principal, Bing Thom Architects

BIOGRAPHY



Bing Thom has established a reputation for innovative design on a wide range of projects, from delightful small scale interiors and houses to the challenges of designing cities. He thrives on complex building types such as performing arts centres and civic buildings. More often than not his projects are mixed-use, integrating a range of commercial, residential and institutional uses to create a vibrant and sustainable whole.

Bing Thom believes in a holistic approach to architecture and attributes much of his success to his involvement in all aspects of building. This includes not only an understanding of the programmatic, technical and tectonic aspects of building, but also urban planning, development and construction. While international in outlook, his design approach is always closely rooted in a deep understanding of the culture and history of each project’s community. Given this, it is not surprising that he is well known as an effective advocate for positive change in our cities.

With current projects in Washington dc, Edmonton and Calgary, AB, China and in his home town of Vancouver, the 40 year career-to-date of Bing Thom is an impressive one. The work of his firm has garnered a prodigious number of design awards and enjoys broad popular appeal. His collection of legacy buildings around the world includes the Canada Pavilion for Expo ‘92 in Seville, Spain; Central City, the new mixed-use campus for Simon Fraser University in Surrey bc; the Chan Centre for the Performing Arts; Aberdeen Centre; the Pacific Canada Pavilion at the Vancouver Aquarium and Marine Science Centre; the Governor General Award winning Point Grey Road Condominiums and False Creek Yacht Club; master plans for the Cities of Dalian and Yuxi in China and Fort Worth tx, Vancouver’s Sunset Community Centre, Tarrant County College’s new downtown campus Fort Worth, TX and the much celebrated Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater in Washington dc. Bing Thom Architects’ newest project is Hong Kong’s Xiqu Centre, a contemporary home for Chinese Opera won through an international design competition and the inaugural project in the West Kowloon Cultural District.

Prior to opening his own practice in 1980, Bing Thom’s professional career began in the offices of Fumihiko Maki and Arthur Erickson. Arthur Erickson taught Bing at university and invited him to work on the winning competition for Simon Fraser University. After graduate school in Berkeley and a period teaching architecture at the University of Singapore, Bing returned to the Erickson office in the early 1970s in time to take a leadership role on the Robson Square government offices/law courts complex in downtown Vancouver. While at Erickson’s, Bing helped to open offices in Toronto and Los Angeles and led the design teams that were responsible for winning several important design competitions, including the massive Bunker Hill project in Los Angeles and the Napp Laboratories in Cambridge, England.

While Bing Thom’s preference is clearly to build rather than work in academia, teaching and research are very much at the core of his practice. His studio is a laboratory of exploration into new materials and techniques. Seeing himself in the tradition of the “master builder”, Bing’s work is characterized by close collaboration with trades and industry. There is often one full sized mock-up in the parking area in front of his office as the teams research new eco-efficient materials and methods of construction that can be applied to the firm’s projects. A popular speaker, Bing has been invited to lecture at many universities including the University of Singapore, University of British Columbia, University of Lethbridge, University of California at Los Angeles, the University of Illinois, Harvard University, McGill, Dalhousie, Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium, Qinghua University in Beijing, Chongqing Architecture and Engineering Institute and Tongji University in Shanghai.

With close personal and professional ties to Asia and North America, Bing has been a strong advocate of Canada's multi-cultural traditions. In his 40 person office, his team is shaped by the wide-range of experience brought by professionals from 13 different countries, who collectively speak 14 languages. He is constantly championing the creative and competitive advantages that this diversity brings and has been outspoken about Canada's immigration and trade policies.

Bing Thom's commitment to the community as a volunteer is significant and his influence in this regard is as important as his professional work. He was a founding member of Vancouver's Chinese Cultural Centre and has served on the Boards of the University of British Columbia and the Vancouver Public Library. He led the Building Committees that established design competitions to select the architect for both the Chinese Cultural Centre and the Vancouver Public Library. In addition to his own extensive involvement, he supports and encourages his staff to be involved in the community and, as a result, many more organizations in Vancouver benefit from his attitude toward volunteerism.

Bing Thom's talent and service has been recognized already by a range of honours including the Order of Canada, the Golden Jubilee Medal, honorary degrees from Simon Fraser University and the University of British Columbia, and an honorary professorship from Tongji University in Shanghai. Most recently, Bing Thom was the recipient of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada's Gold Medal, the highest honour given to a Canadian architect.

EDUCATION Master of Architecture, University of California, Berkeley, USA
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