



Photo: Selwyn Pullan 1963

A THOM AMONG THE EAGLES

by *Robert Moffatt*

Forrest house
1143 Eyremount Drive, West Vancouver
Thompson, Berwick, and Pratt 1962-63

Defined by Japanese-inspired roof planes hovering above a mountainside site high in the British Properties, the Forrest house was a spectacular conclusion to architect Ron Thom's initial career in Vancouver. Its soaring, expressionistic form captures Thom arguably at the peak of his creative powers.

Thom designed the house around its roof, an overlapping series of wing-like planes flaring upward at the edges and seeming to float in space above the sloping, rocky terrain. Their curving white undersides and the walls of floor-to-ceiling glass further the impression of weightlessness, occasionally relieved by solid elements clad in vertical cedar siding. Steel beams concealed in the ceilings span the open, flowing interior spaces. These complex roof forms and their structural supports required over one hundred hours for Thom and colleague Dick Mann to design.

Living areas are tightly interlocked rectangles descending the slope on

four levels. Entering the house through the glass-walled entry, visitors descend two steps to the dining area and down several more steps to the living room with its commanding view of Vancouver through floor-to-ceiling windows, butt-jointed at the corner for the illusion of total transparency. Both the living and dining areas open onto large terraces through French doors. A carpeted conversation pit and a fireplace of brown-toned Squamish stone are tucked into a sheltered corner of the living room, a cozy focal point for cold, rainy nights. The kitchen, family room and utility areas are at the centre of the house with the bedrooms in a row at the rear.

Thom designed the Forrest house while commuting cross-country to oversee the construction of his Massey College at the University of Toronto; the success of that project prompted him to move to Toronto soon after. The Forrest house is one of two residences by Thom to win a 1964 Massey Medal for Architecture.