

EXPORTING EDMONTONNESS: MANASC ISAAC LAUNCHES NEW STUDIO IN BUCHAREST, ROMANIA

Exporting Edmontonness

For much of our recent history, we imported design into Edmonton and Alberta. We lacked the confidence and the will to express ourselves in our architecture.

That has changed.

On the verge of its 20th year, Manasc Isaac Architects is exporting Edmonton design to Europe. On March 24, they officially open Latitudine 53 by Manasc Isaac on a beautiful street in Bucharest, Romania.

WHY BUCHAREST?

Like Edmonton, Bucharest is attracting young people who want to build something extraordinary in an open culture. It's not a "finished" city. For too long, it's been underestimated. Bucharest has a cooperative spirit, so it is another ideal city to reimagine design.

Join us to celebrate Manasc Isaac's expansion into Romania at 9:30am on Thursday, March 24, 2016 at 10225 100 Avenue NW, Edmonton AB.

REIMAGINE DESIGN

Thirty years ago there were many architects in Edmonton and not much work. Even worse, clients had little appetite for imagination and meaning in the city's architecture. Alberta's boom-and-bust cycles had created a culture of disposability. We wanted it cheap and we wanted it fast. When we had a major public project, we felt we had to import design talent.

Rather than complain, a few adventurous young architects from the city began designing and experimenting in the far north. With projects like Driftpile School they learned lessons in cold climates and in indigenous communities that influenced the rest of their careers: how to use the power of the sun, how to bring people together and ask the best questions, how to design with beauty and a sense of place and with a respect for local culture.

In the north, they learned to design buildings that can improve our environment.

In 1997 Vivian Manasc and Richard Isaac brought these lessons together and started a new company. They didn't want to impose a quick design on a client and move on to the next one. They had learned to work differently, and think differently.

The year they officially opened the office, they launched the first Sustainable Building Symposium to educate potential clients, builders, and competitors. They designed the first Green Certified buildings in Alberta, the first LEED, the first LEED Silver, and the first LEED Gold north of the 60th parallel. Architects from across Canada and around the world came to Edmonton to learn more about Manasc Isaac architects and the way they worked. Many joined the team.

Manasc-Isaac Architects have used Alberta as a lab. They have reimaged architecture from Edmonton, the most northerly major city on the continent. Their latest project, the Mosaic Centre for Conscious Community and Commerce, is the first net-zero commercial building in Alberta and a hint at the future of design in cold climates.

EDMONTON IN ROMANIA

Ana-Dora Matei and Alecsandru Vasiliu moved to Edmonton from Bucharest after Vivian Manasc presented at their university. Vivian had traveled to Bucharest to share her expertise on a Manasc Isaac specialty, winter design. They had never heard of designing for winter, or any season, in European architecture.

When Vivian handed them her card and invited them to Edmonton they didn't think she was serious. It turned out she was entirely serious. Ana and Alecsandru worked with the Manasc Isaac team in their modern building on 100th Avenue and, when it was time to return to Bucharest, their plan was simple: "steal everything we had learned in Edmonton."

Like Edmonton, Bucharest is a city of oil booms and busts. After years of leaving Bucharest, creative young people are returning to start businesses, launch careers and build something. It has four distinct seasons, and a distinct culture. The city went through unfortunate architectural periods under communism, where leaders tore down heritage buildings to make way for cheap, inefficient, and sometimes ugly towers. There are plenty of architectural problems to solve in Bucharest, and Manasc Isaac sees it — like Edmonton — as a lab.

Unlike London, Paris, and Rome it's an "unfinished" city, much like Edmonton, where imaginative people can make a difference. Like Edmonton, Bucharest is an ideal base to reimagine architecture across an entire continent.