



Libraries through the lens

Concordia University Library, Quebec

THIS month's Libraries through the lens is a local pilgrimage for photographer Thomas Guignard.

Whereas last issue's image was a nostalgic look at Thomas' Swiss heritage, shaded by lockdown rules and thoughts of family far away, the latest installment is all about the here and now. After moving to a new city in the summer, Thomas has finally been able to take a proper look round.

Thomas says: "With travel restrictions and security measures cautiously relaxing in Canada, I have started exploring Québec, where I moved this summer.

One thing that has immediately struck me is the number of libraries occupying former churches in the province.

"Following the rapid secularization of Québec starting with the Quiet Revolution in the late 1960s, an increasing number of churches and other religious edifices became vacant or were repurposed. Several have become libraries. Such was the fate of the large convent and hospital of the Sisters of Charity of Montréal, also known as Grey Nuns, a religious order founded by Marguerite d'Youville in 1737."

Thomas explains that the convent and

hospital designed by Victor Bourgeau and included a large chapel, the Church of the Invention of the Holy Cross, consecrated in 1878.

Thomas adds: "When the nuns moved to a smaller facility in 2013, Concordia University converted the former convent into a student residence. Architect Robert Magne was in charge of converting the chapel into a reading room, attached to the Concordia University Library, which I had the privilege of visiting a few years ago. Study may have replaced devotion, but the airy majesty of the building still inspires awe and introspection."