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Conflict in the Expo Home:  
The Chatelaine Pavilion's Conservative Approach to Gender Roles

Widely considered the 20<sup>th</sup> century's most successful World's Fair, Expo '67 offered an opportunity for 62 nations to exhibit their unique culture and technological advancements through a series of awe-inspiring pavilions. Numerous Canadian industries also erected private pavilions to display their products and to attract the interest of millions of visitors and potential consumers. Expo '67 proved to be an extraordinary marketing tool, allowing businesses to associate their brands with a historical and immensely significant cultural event. The Canadian Lumbermen's Association and Chatelaine magazine participated in the World's Fair through the construction of the Chatelaine Expo Home. Situated on Île Notre Dame next to the Expo-Express Station, it was designed by Gustavo da Roza, a Winnipeg architect, following a competition which accepted over a hundred proposals. As Canada's most popular women's publication, Chatelaine magazine influenced millions of women. While it mainly published articles which catered to the traditional homemaker, reports on women's rights would occasionally appear among the countless articles related to fashion, child care and food preparation. During the 1960s, Doris Anderson, Chatelaine's chief editor, avidly supported the rising feminist movement and frequently commented on issues related to the status of women. Chatelaine claimed to be a magazine for the modern woman. Thus, the objectives of the Expo Home were to reflect

Chatelaine magazine, to appeal to its current readers and to promote itself to future subscribers. In addition, it had to patriotically display hundreds of Canadian household products which would be simultaneously advertized in the magazine. Most importantly however, the Chatelaine Pavilion had to fit within the context of Expo '67, a World's Fair which celebrated technology, cultural diversity and human progress.

Although the Expo Home was marketed as "the perfect home for modern living," (Bernard 192) its architecture failed to be truly progressive. Rather than reflect the imminent changes that were to occur due to second wave feminism, the house took a conservative stance and kept women in the stereotypical role of the homemaker. Firstly, despite its unusual exterior appearance, the home still functioned in the same manner as a typical suburban home where clear lines were drawn between a woman and a man's domain. Secondly, environmental control devices added extra responsibilities to housewives, suggesting it was their utmost duty to ensure the comfort of their family and guests. Thirdly, the home product advertisements in Chatelaine magazine depict society's ideal woman; a stereotypically dependant and submissive housewife.

The novel and fantastical designs of the Expo '67 pavilions are perhaps the most visually memorable features of the World's Fair. Buckminster Fuller's geodesic dome and Moshe Safdie's Habitat are examples of innovative structural systems which gained tremendous popularity among visitors. The Chatelaine Expo Home attempted to follow this trend, and, on a superficial level, succeeded in conveying the message that it was fashionable, modern and belonged amongst the futuristic pavilions of the exposition. Its exterior appearance differed greatly from that of the typical Quebec home; its roof was flat rather than peaked, its exterior cladding was a series of vertical wood strips as opposed to common brick or stone, and a large cantilever projected over the driveway. (Figure 1) However, closer analysis suggests that the

overall design of the Expo Home conformed to traditionalist views that placed women as homemakers. In its May 1967 Expo issue, *Chatelaine* magazine described the house as “Designed for an average family (...) a couple with a son, fifteen, and two daughters, ten and five.” (Chamaigne 89) Room typologies that characterize the post-war suburban home, notably the garage, hobby room, family room and master bedroom, were all conserved in the floor plans. (Figure 2) Conceived as an endorsement tool, the Expo Home promoted the values and lifestyle of the idealized *Chatelaine* woman, an affluent, stylish and dedicated housewife. She was predominantly responsible for bringing up children and was bound to the domestic space. Gender roles were inherently built into the home and its design reflected traditional gender inequalities. The most notable evidence of such inequality is the marginalization of the kitchen, the area of the house in which the stereotypical woman spends most of her time. The narrow galley kitchen of the Expo Home is situated at the back of the house and is only large enough to be comfortably occupied by one person, presumably the housewife. Despite its central location, it can be easily isolated from the formal living room and family room through the use of pocket doors. The large hall adjacent to the kitchen represented a more convenient, barrier free connection between these two main spaces of the second floor, further negating any need for a guest or household member to pass through the woman’s work area. In addition to its small floor space, the kitchen also had poor quality lighting. The small window that was positioned above the counter overlooked an interior stairwell which significantly limited the amount of sunlight which entered the kitchen. To compensate, a series of harsh fluorescent ceiling lights were installed in an orthogonal grid. (Figure 3) Despite the efficiency of the appliances that were advertized in the kitchen, the architectural merits of this isolated and claustrophobic space were pitiful. In comparison, the husband’s workshop area on the first level was spacious, easily accessible and had natural light

permeating through two windows. The workshop area was a personal, masculine, space assigned to the husband and to his hobbies. Although the kitchen, laundry room and sewing nook were all classified as part of the woman's domain, they functioned as work spaces rather than private areas where a woman could relax. These rooms were devoted not to the homemaker herself, but to the serving of her husband and children.

Madhavi Desai states: "Architecture (...) is the record of the work done by those who have the power to build." (Desai 123) The Chatelaine Expo Home suggested that women of the 1960s did not have the power to build, that they merely had the privilege of decorating their homes and selecting appliances following their husband's approval. According to the home's floor plans, women's rooms were marginalized because housewives did not have the income or the influence to demand better spaces. However, history contradicts the Expo Home. By the 1960s, second wave feminism had already taken root in North America. Millions of women formed organizations to protest social injustices against women and to demand equal opportunities to education and salary. In 1967, Canada witnessed the start of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women, a project by the federal government that assessed the status of women in Canada and proposed methods to attain gender equality. The Chatelaine Expo Home could have reflected the rising feminist movement by incorporating flexibility in its design to accommodate the shifting role of women in the home. Instead, its lack of spatial plasticity displayed a conservative attitude which implied that women should continue to work as housewives, just as they had at the start of the post-war period.

During the Cold War, the Arms Race and Space Race brought forth ground-breaking scientific discoveries and revolutionary technological advancements. North American society in the 1960's marveled at the ingenuity of mankind and developed a profound reverence of

technology. While the television and the car continued to play pivotal roles in average family's life, the discovery of different plastics and the invention of new computer applications fuelled visions of a leisure-oriented future in which robots performed menial tasks. Chatelaine magazine's January 1967 issue featured an article entitled "How We'll Be Living in 25 Years" which stated:

*Yesterday, macabre machines, rockets and robots were a sci-fi fantasy. Today, they're a **fait accompli**. Tomorrow? To an extent unparalleled in the past, man can now control his environment. Chatelaine recently consulted thirty authorities (...) to find out just where we're headed in the next twenty-five years. Read on, for a penetrating peek into the foreseeable—and far-out—future, and some prophetic trends that are shaping Tomorrow today.*  
(Istona 22)

Feeding on Canada's enthrallment with the Future, the article stipulated a variety of farfetched lifestyle changes related to mega structures, rockets, computers and medicine. However, predictions on the status of women were still conservative.

*Hubby's just announced he's invited six Bigwigs to dinner half an hour before they're all due to arrive. Instead of flying into a 1967 style tizzy, you will face the Ordeal—calm, cool and collected. Dinner will be a mere matter of pushing a buttons on a keyboard computer.*

*The way to a man's heart will still be through his stomach. But you won't have to slave over a hot stove all day to make him pop the question. The next few decades promise more high-quality convenience foods than ever before—products that are harvested at peak quality and preserved under modern methods such as canning, freezing and drying.*

*(...) the woman of the future will experience new freedom and equality: her housekeeping time will have been reduced drastically and she will enter the job market on more equal terms with men. One designer of women's clothes predicts—tongue in cheek—that by 1970, women will be wearing pants to work.*  
(Istona 58-60)

The use of "more equal" as opposed to simply "equal" and the "tongue in cheek" comment suggest that Chatelaine did not convincingly equate technological developments with major

societal advancement. The Chatelaine Expo Home reflected the same uncertainty between gender roles and technology. Integrated into the design of the house, several technical devices emphasized the need to attain a superior control over the interior environment. The ideal housewife of the future would be responsible for the proper functioning of these devices in order to ensure optimum comfort for husband and children. Lighting was the first environmental element subjected to control techniques. The house's largest window was recessed into the cantilevered box, significantly limiting the amount of daylight which entered the living room and master bedroom. On the second level, the dining room had the only window which was directly exposed to exterior light. Similar to the kitchen, both the girls' and the boy's bedrooms acquired natural light indirectly from the stairwell and hallway. All windows were outfitted with pairs of opaque and sheer curtains made from the latest polyester fibers, presumably selected by the housewife to compliment the décor of the home. (Figure 4) Sunlight was replaced by electric lighting. Fluorescent bulbs provided homogenous, even light in work spaces such as the laundry room and kitchen. Different chandeliers and dimmers provided atmosphere in the social areas such as the living room, dining room and master bedroom. (Figure 5) Chatelaine suggested it was the housewife's responsibility to chose décor elements which allowed total control over the home's the interior environment. It was the woman's task to use her knowledge of the latest interior décor fashions to create the most visually pleasing and coherent home for her family.

In addition to lighting, home technologies that related to bodily comfort were also displayed in the Expo Home. A central air system combining natural gas heating, air conditioning and air humidifying was advertised in the house as the latest method to ensure year-round optimum comfort. New hot water tanks and water softening equipment guaranteed an almost limitless supply of water devoid of any mineral content. Using the technologies of the

Chatelaine Expo Home, the ideal homemaker would maintain a perfect, climate controlled environment for her husband and children. It would be her duty to ensure her family's comfort and to protect the status quo. The perfect shelter and housewife had to resist change in the presence of any external environmental forces, be they ecological or social.

As a mass-market magazine, Chatelaine was a business that had to balance two customer bases—readers and advertisers. While selling subscriptions and expanding readership was a perpetual goal, fast revenue was generated through the publication of advertisements. Although Chatelaine occasionally published forward-thinking articles and editorials related to gender issues, they were largely contradicted by a profusion of conservative and sexist ad pages. Since house wares were the most commonly advertized products, it made sense for the Chatelaine Expo Home to reflect the ads that were published in the magazine. The design and contents of the house had to satisfy the clients who represented their main source of immediate income. Consequently, building supplies such as carpeting, paint, wood paneling, copper pipe and faucets were the celebrated features of the house. The overall design objective of the pavilion is clearly linked to the advertisers' motives of creating a consumer demand for new appliances and décor elements. Unsurprisingly, the building product advertisements propagated clichéd images of men and women. The ads were targeted at couples because it was assumed that women would need to obtain their husband's agreement and money for the purchase of such expensive items. The May 1967 Expo issue published an Interlux Paint ad which declared: "Behind every „Man in the Home" there's a woman who has her heart set on Interlux Paints." (Interlux Paints, Interlux Ltd. Figure 6) The expression "Behind your man" suggested that the ideal wife was passive and submissive under all circumstances. Her happiness depended on her husband and his willingness to provide her with the household items of her choice. The ad wife could have her "heart set" on

a specific product, but she would have to wait diligently for her husband to reward her. A woman's potential for self fulfillment and independence were never referenced.

Domtar also followed the trend of depicting traditional gender stereotypes. (Figure 7) On page 87, a wife stands behind her husband with a satisfied grin as he finally states, "OK Domtar. You've almost talked us into it. So send us our free Centennial Project Kit." The ad also included: "P.S. An aside to impatient wives. Need a little extra something to get that man of yours moving on these Domtar ideas for your home? Just mail the coupon and we'll speed back a package of colourful brochures... that'll really get him off and running." (Domtar Products, Domtar Construction Materials Ltd.) Ads such as this one advised women to coerce their husbands into buying them products. A good wife did not need financial independence; she simply needed to hone her skills in manipulation.

Finally, Brinton advertised their "Seignior" carpet with a story of a couple celebrating their wedding anniversary and the husband's recent promotion. (Figure 8) While the husband sits on an elegant chair, his wife lounges on the newly purchased carpet. An unwrapped gift, presumably given to the wife, is placed in the foreground. Once again, the husband is depicted in a position of power. The wife's role is to compliment her husband, to accept his gifts and to remain dependant. "At a time when many Canadian women were heading back to the workforce, the women of Chatelaine's ad world were usually uncertain of any role beyond that of the sex symbol or consumer." (Korinek 175) Chatelaine magazine and its Expo Home had a symbiotic relationship; the magazine featured the house and the house, in turn, featured the products advertised in the magazine. Thus, it was impossible to disassociate the slogans and images of the ads from the architecture of the Expo Home. Functioning as a brand extension, the Chatelaine pavilion became the home of the idealized, prosperous couple of the Brinton advertisement.



Their affluent yet traditional lifestyle was projected into the house. The adoption of this safe, conservative imagery further distanced the Expo Home from Canada's social realities. Not only were thousands of women re-entering the workforce, massive waves of immigration changed the cultural fabric of the country. The stereotypical white, suburban housewife was quickly losing her status as a social norm.

In 1967, 20 year-old Mary Biringer spent much of her summer at Expo '67. She loved the fashion at Expo and was an avid reader of *Chatelaine* magazine, yet upon asking her opinion of the *Chatelaine* house, Mrs Biringer could not even recall what the pavilion looked like. "It didn't have a significant impact on me. I don't remember anything about it, although I'm certain visited it. To be honest, I was much more interested in meeting new friends at the German beer garden during Expo." Patricia Lafferty had a similar response, "I spent at least four days a week at Expo with my family during the entire summer. I must have visited the pavilion, but I have no memory of it. My mother probably had an interest in visiting, but I was definitely more interested in the video phones at the Bell pavilion." Visitors at Expo '67 wanted to expand their horizons. The National Pavilions offered views of different lifestyles in faraway parts of the world. Both theme pavilions and most private pavilions displayed recent discoveries using cutting edge audio-visual technology. Although the *Chatelaine* house succeeded in displaying the latest Canadian household appliances in a favourable light, it failed to maintain a lasting impression on Expo visitors. One cannot even begin to compare the banal, easy to clean artificial grass of the Expo Home with the fantastic virtual-realities of the Kaleidoscope Pavilion. Perhaps if *Chatelaine* had designed a truly revolutionary house which challenged the tired stereotypes of the time, it would have had a greater impact on its visitors. Instead, it averted any form of controversy by simply becoming a brand extension of the products it featured. Fortunately, the women who visited

Expo '67 looked beyond the stereotypes of every day mass media and found inspiration in amazing the world of opportunities that were presented in the extraordinary pavilions.

Regardless of gender, race and age, all visitors at Expo witnessed Canadian society's desire to invest in a "future made of happiness, of prosperity and of freedom." (Bernard 1)

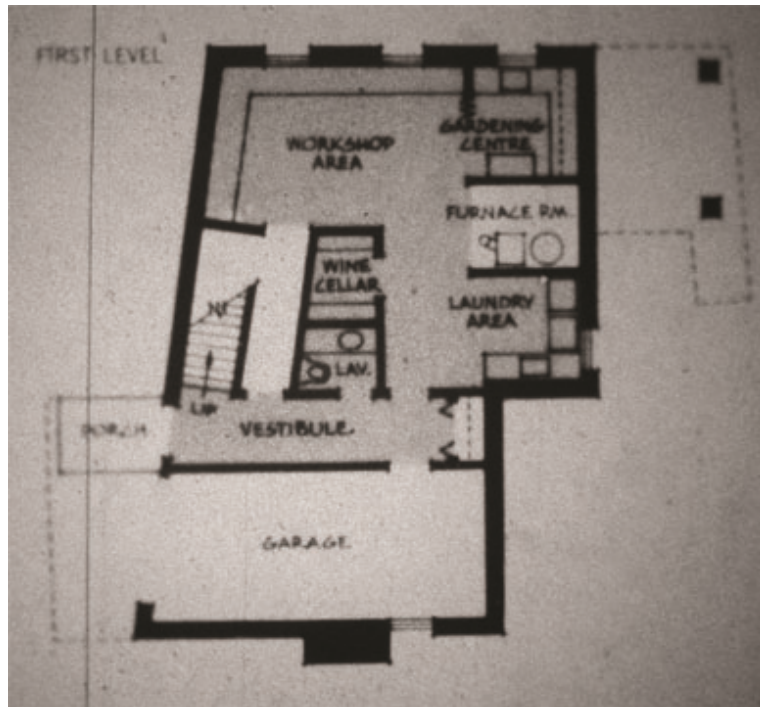
Figure 1



"Chatelain Model House." *Expo '67-Dixon Slide Collection-Slide Details*. Web. 29 Mar 2010.  
<<http://digital.library.mcgill.ca/expo-67/search/slideDetails.php?id=71>>.

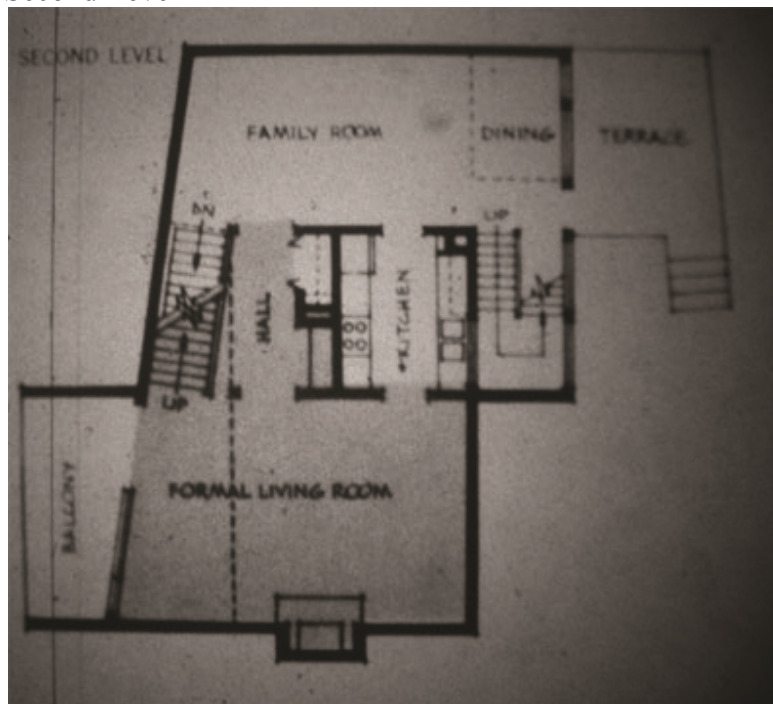
Figure 2  
Expo Home Floor Plans

First Level



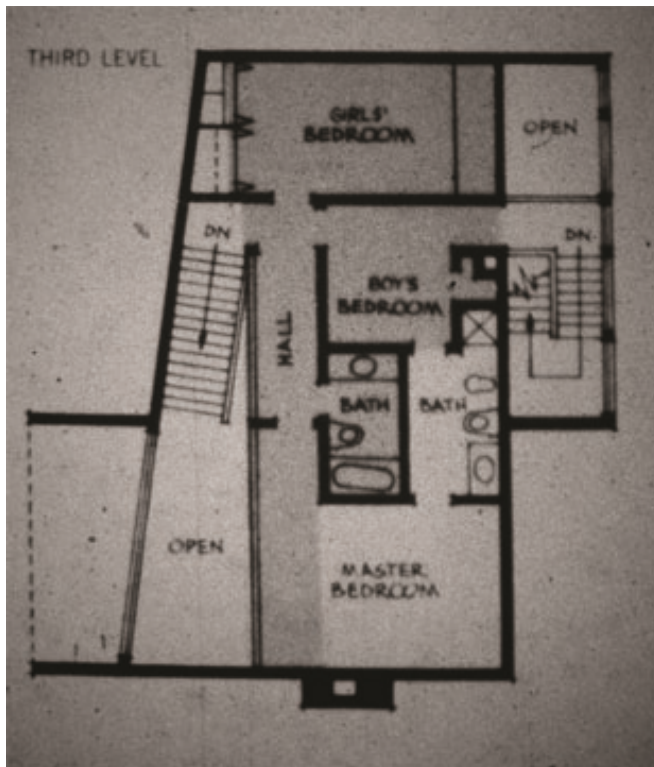
"Chatelaine Expo Home." *Chatelaine* May 1967: 89. *Print.*

Second Level



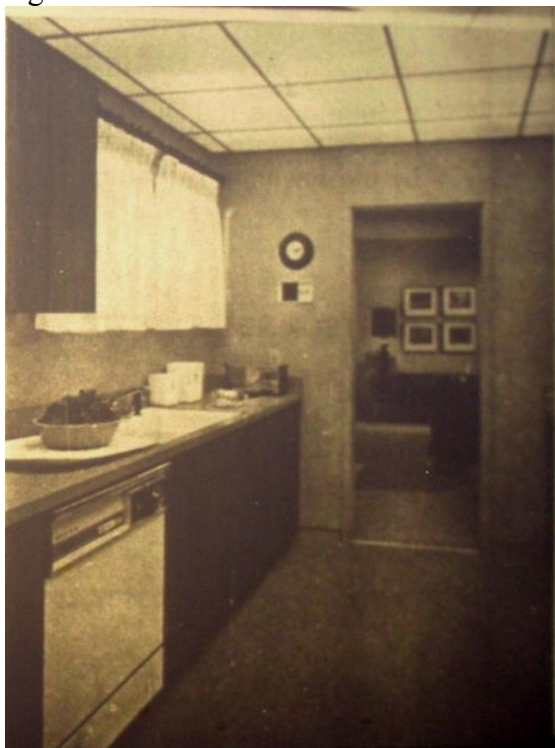
"Chatelaine Expo Home." *Chatelaine* May 1967: 89. *Print.*

Third Level



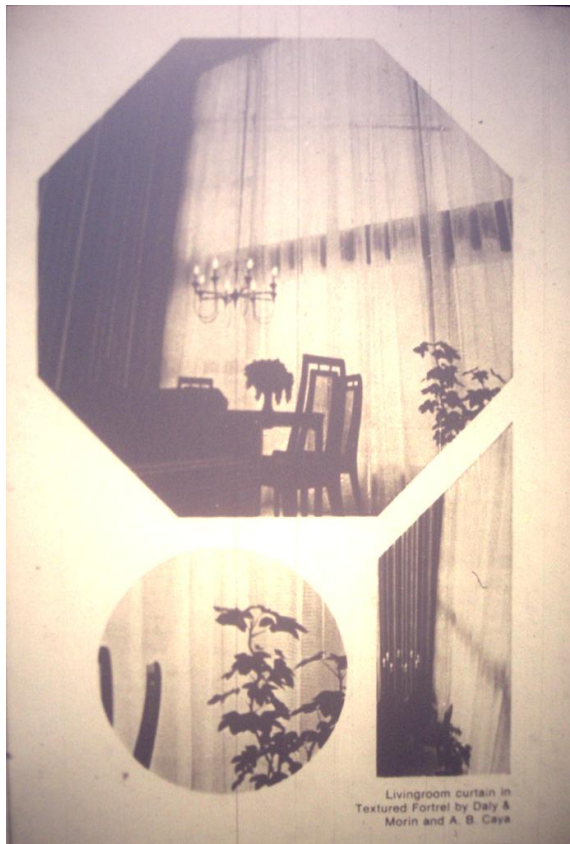
"Chatelaine Expo Home." *Chatelaine* May 1967: 89. *Print.*

Figure 3



Delbuguet, Rene. "Chatelaine Expo Home." *Chatelaine* May 1967: 89. *Print.*

Figure 4



Fortrel Draperies by CEL-CIL Fibres Ltd. Advertisement. *Chatelaine* May 1967: 125. Print.

Figure 5



Delbuguet, Rene. "Chatelaine Expo Home." *Chatelaine* May 1967: 89. Print.



Figure 6



Behind every  
 “Man in the Home”  
 there’s a woman  
 who has her  
 heart set on  
 Interlux paints

Nobody understands women better than Chatelaine. That’s why Canada’s leading women’s magazine has chosen Interlux paints for their “Man in the Home”.

If you’re visiting Expo 67, be sure to call at this fascinating pavilion. You’ll see the beautiful Interlux fashion colours specially created for you in 1967—colours which will give you a whole host of new ideas in interior decoration.

See the Yellow Pages or write to us for the name of your nearest Interlux dealer. He’ll be pleased to show you the complete selection of quality Interlux paints in a range of modern finishes. And he can mix any of a thousand colours—to the precise shade you’ve got your heart set on.



*The living room of the Chatelaine home at Expo 67*

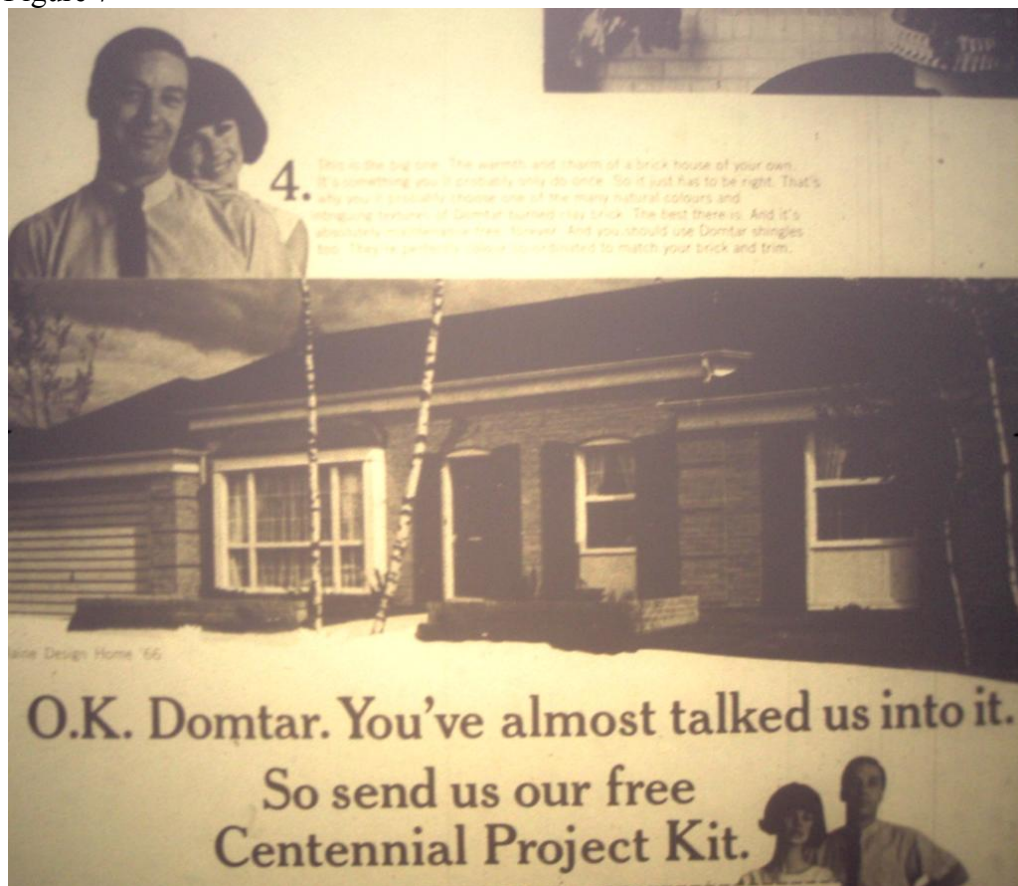
## International Paints

Head Office: Montreal. Branches and factories from coast-to-coast.  
*P.S. This is our 125th year in Canada. Watch your local newspaper for details of giant Interlux birthday bargains.*

*Featured in “Man in the Home”*  *CHATELAIN*

Interlux Paints. Advertisement. *Chatelaine* May 1967: 113. Print.

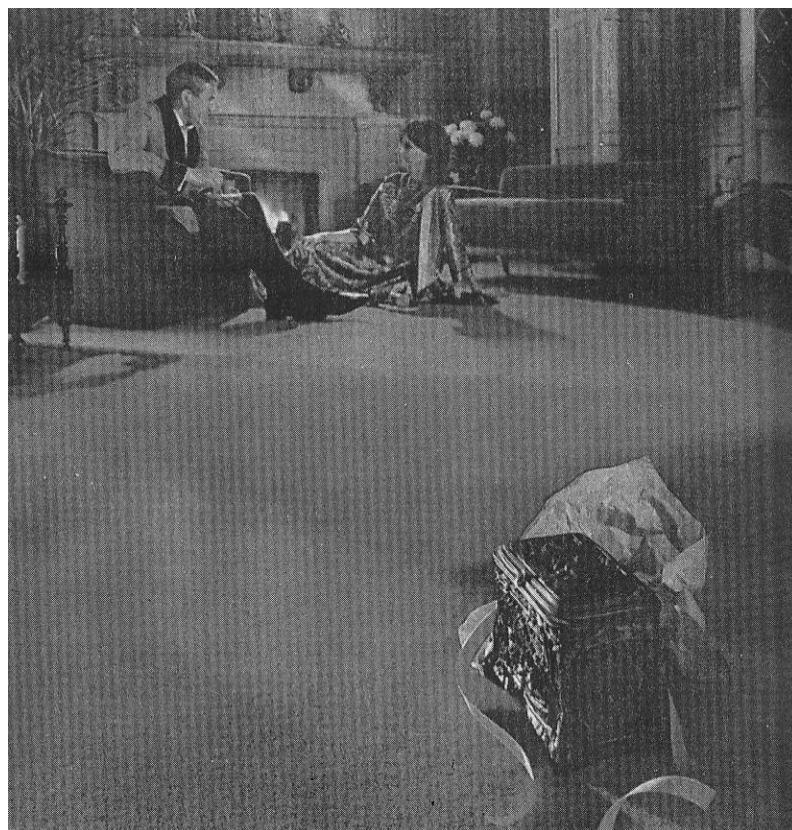
Figure 7



Domtar Products. Advertisement. *Chatelaine* May 1967: 87. Print.



Figure 8



**For a bronze anniversary . . . you deserve Brinton "Seigniory" carpet**

It's a very special evening. Their eighth wedding anniversary and the first day with their new carpet.

Last year, Blake was promoted to captain with the airline. Now he's flying the Bermuda run.

Sally keeps busy with the local drama group, the hospital auxiliary and . . . oh yes, their four children.

Now that they can afford it they have decided to enjoy the finer things in life. That's why they chose a Brinton "Seigniory" carpet. "Seigniory" combines all their needs at once — soft and elegant to the touch and yet durable enough to hold its beauty long after the children have grown up. The secret, of course, is Acrilan® acrylic fibre. Sally realized as soon as the salesman showed her the label that her worries were over.

Blake loves the colour and deep velvet pile.

They both love the double security of Brinton and Acrilan.

Don't wait for your next anniversary to check on Brinton quality.

**BRINTON**  
CARPETS  
BY  
**Armstrong**

08 featured in "Man in the Home" CHATELAINÉ PARK PAVILION

Brinton Seigniory Carpet. Advertisement. *Chatelaine* May 1967: 108. Print.

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