

Interdisciplinary inspiration

By Peter Severinson

Most architecture students would probably have envied Miroslav Marko's life a few years ago. He finished a master's degree in architecture in his native Slovakia, and was designing for a small studio in the capital, Bratislava. The hours were long, but he had the opportunity to work on his own designs.

However, Marko says that after a while, he found he wasn't satisfied.

"The thing was, you work 12 to 16 hours a day, and all days look alike," he says. "You start losing sight of where all this is going. I didn't have a clear idea what my work should be about."



Miroslav Marko, exploring the idea of environmental architecture.

He says his road to Carleton was one of happy accidents. He had met several people from Canada in English classes and decided that was where he'd like to continue his education. He chose Carleton because of its capital location, and because the architecture program had a strong reputation.

At Carleton's post-professional architecture program, Marko decided to focus on architecture and the environment. Assistant Professor of Architecture, Michael Jemtrud, suggested Marko also take courses in environmental studies.

It was in an environmental studies course taught by Professor Nancy

Doubleday where he first felt inspired by the cultures of the Canadian North, he says, where both social life and the environment are approached from a level of honesty. At one point he traveled to Cape Dorset on Baffin Island to meet the people who made their homes there.

His research culminated in a philosophical exploration into the idea of "green" architecture.

"You have to stop picturing design and start thinking about the architect's work," he says. "What is his objective? Is it to design buildings, or to inspire people to behave in green ways?"

And with his goal to help inspire people to do just that, Marko says, he's also regained his inspiration as an architect—with many thanks to the support of his professors.