

Architecture | Concordia 1

ECLIPSE

was a site exhibition produced by jake moore in the summer of 2014 that engaged the alteration of the footprint of an art gallery in response to several social, economic, and political factors. The built environment and its physical and somatic methods of construction serve as both the subject and object of this work.

3

3



































“THE FORESTS ARE ALL DEAD, I USE THIS PALACE TO LURE HUMANS INTO MY BELLY”

“THE OCCUPIERS, THEY HAVE FOOLED YOU! THIS IS NO PALACE...”¹

21

Sitting on a plane to Calgary Alberta, en route to Stronger than Stone, a conference about Indigenous monuments, I look through the film selection. It has been a long day, so I allow myself to zone out rather than work during the flight. I begin by watching a documentary about university debt. I am pleased with the selection: entertaining, but not hollywood, sort of “educational.” Next I look in the “Canadian” section, and am happy to see there is a segment from the ImagineNative film festival. I select it. The first film Kinoomaage Asin — Teaching Rock begins with images that move between disembodied cityscapes flashing by, and embodied landscapes: hands holding soil, feet in the river. White text at the bottom of the screen translates the voiceover: “are you the people? It’s a good day... My name is human being, I am from the skyworld, and you?” After this a man appears, he is walking through the woods, wearing a three piece suite, dress shoes, tie and holding a briefcase. He stops at a spot in the woods, checks his cell phone, puts it in his bag, places the bag on the ground, unbuttons his jacket, waits a few seconds then begins moving his feet while rhythmic hip hop music begins. The setting shifts to the city, and the man we first met in the forest is now porting elaborately beaded regalia, soft beaded footwear, a head dress and drum. The image moves regularly between the two sites and the man in the two types of dress. The lyrics of music reference recuperation, and connection: “...there’s rhythm in the water, there’s power in the air, we live by the drum...” Eventually the mans two identities, represented by clothing and site merge at a graffiti wall where a woman is spraying petroglyphs. He stops, takes some of the red spray paint and draws a line with it on his cheek.

The music changes to traditional singing, and the film ends the way it begins, with an image of ancient petroglyphs, but before this, the man draws his own petroglyphs on the ground, making his mark on the cities stones, creating links between this new urban space, and the traditions of his ancestors before him.

21

The second film Repercussions is an animation. It begins with a woman exiting a classical building with arched pillars. She hears music emanating from the ground (A Tribe Called Red), she goes down the steps of the building and places herself chest down on the concrete. With her ear to the cement, she prods the hard ground beneath her, it bends at her touch. She then raises her fist and hits it. The concrete gives way, she is suddenly weightless, and everything is light. A woman appears, sitting, her hair is braided, held by two circular beaded hair ornaments, she wears leather beaded clothing, and looks at her guest lovingly. Flying through the air, the woman is returned to her place on the concrete. This time, a Toronto City police woman appears at the door of the building, we see her face, it is the woman from the light world. The police station then transforms into a ritual site, warm orange light glows from inside where silhouettes of two men with long braids appear, they are playing large drums while the woman stands behind them. The space transforms one more time, the drummers are gone, and the policewoman lays on the ground, together, ears to the cement, the two women raise their fists and go together to the world of light and rhythm. ²

The Blanketing emphasizes, amongst other things, spatial violence of settlement tactics. Changes in clothing display the persistence of this violence by moving from historic to contemporary dress. The narrative begins with a family living at the base of a mountain range, enjoying the quiet open space. This is interrupted by the sight of two white men approaching by horseback. The community is alerted to the visitors, who they do not trust. When they arrive, the white mounted settlers state their intention to build a road through the territory, to accommodate movement to a nearby gold mine. He says: "I don't like the look of ya...but my boss wants me to be friends with ya...so my partner and I come up with the perfect solution to this here "savage" problem." They are then attacked, and asked: "why do you come here to spit on our land?" The desperate settler mutters, "it's a gift," dropping wool blankets on the ground. In the next scene the white settlers can't find their horses, the community appear in the woods, ready to fight. Their dress turns to urban street wear as the film ends, suggesting both a continuity of their peoples, as well as historical continuity of land based antagonisms perpetuated by settlers.

Another selection address the history of Residential schools: architectural spaces which worked in concert with the reservation system to spatialize assimilation tactics through segregation of children from their families. Almost every single film in that 50 minute selection addressed a land based social and spiritual reckoning with colonial affects: whether urbanization, segregation, or the abuses that they engendered.

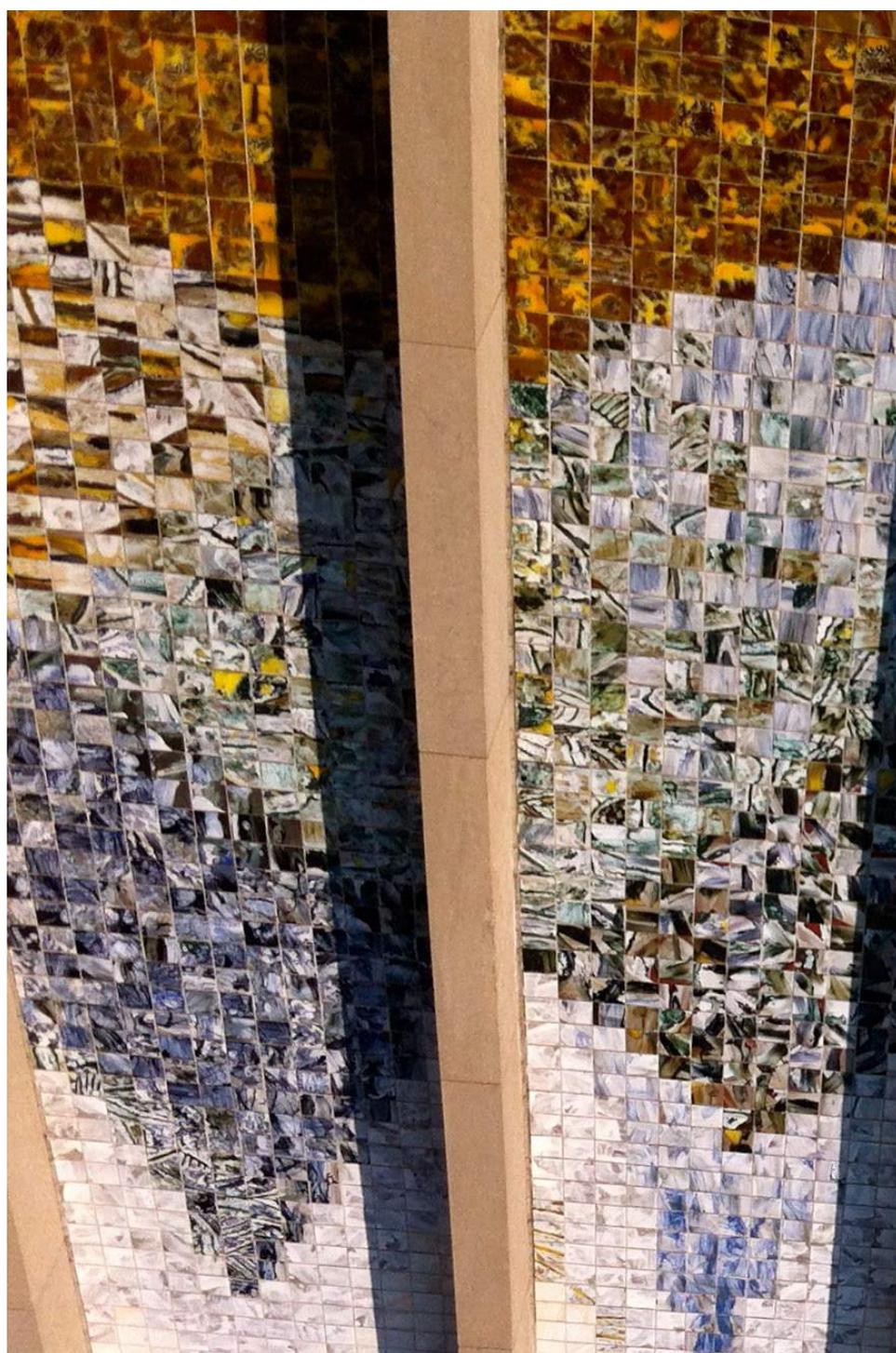
As a Montrealer, I live on unceded Mohawk and Algonquin territory, yet, as a wise woman, Ellen Gabriel once pointed out: there is nothing in our urban environment that might regularly reveal this (to me). ³Architecture and urban planning is a strange thing to think about in Canada. Living relics of colonization — the buildings, roads, trade routes, beautiful bridges, and overpasses — glory and plunder; a double edge sword, a beautiful knife. uh huh, hâw, pikiskwe: now speak! ⁴

22

22

Endnotes Sarah Nesbitt

- 1 Awakening (film from ImagineNative)
- 2 repercussions - don't know the director
- 3 Ellen Gabriel speaking at Defending the Land: Indigenous Women's Resistance to Plan Nord and Community Violence Concordia University, 2012.
- 4 Gregory Scofield, "I'll teach you Cree" in *kipocikhân: Poems New and Selected* (Nightwood Editions 2009), 141.



**THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE TEMPORARY: HOW
'MEANWHILE' SPACES ARE CREATING NEW EXPERI-
ENCES IN THE URBAN LANDSCAPE**

Cities are always changing and reconfiguring themselves. Affected by the recent economic climate, many new developments in urban centres have been put on hold or cancelled altogether leaving some variously sized holes within a city's fabric. Thankfully, life creeps into derelict spaces as best it can, as destruction breeds creation. As such, London has been privy for some years now to the phenomenon of Meanwhile Spaces: derelict bits of land awaiting a new a life that are claimed by artists, gardeners and community entrepreneurs to be put to good use while they lie in wait, making best use of 'limited edition time'. The goal is essentially to turn wasteland into productive, lively, and appealing spaces by using the enabling qualities of design rather than the prescriptive in order to bring wonder and enchantment to a derelict space. As these conceptual catalyst sites don't have historical precedence, it is ultimately here that we can begin to set up new ideals and ideas about communal space and the place of nature in our lives and our cities.

25 One such project is the Canning Town Caravanserai, established in an impoverished borough of East London currently going through a major regeneration. The site, set-up in 2012 just before the Olympics, has a short-term lease for 5 years, when construction of a mixed-use development is scheduled to begin. The site is approximately one short city block in size. One of the main goals of the Caravanserai is to function as a different type of market space since this area has seen new development encroach and eventually engulf its old market. Sellers can set-up in small and diverse kiosk spaces, ideal for young upstarts and pop-up shops that would benefit from low cost rent and very short-term leases. A second but equally important goal of this project is to create a garden party atmosphere, where a family of experience is possible on different timescales thanks to the variety of different structural elements on site: The aptly name Long Table, built simply of scaffolding, seats up to 60 people to allow for community dinner parties, which links in nicely with the stationary food van, the Oasis Café, that could host intimate cooking classes and provide lunch for hungry commuters and passers-by. The flying carpet theater is an excellent venue for unique performances of a different ilk such as music, theater, dance, spoken word and a host of other carnival arts events. The cube, a mini 'room' where three of the four walls swing open, is an ideal exhibition space or micro classroom, which has held anything from language classes, to afternoon naps,

to moments of meditation. Fourteen micro allotments, half of them wheel chair accessible, provide a small patch of garden space where locals from the nearby tower block apartments can come and grow their own vegetables and participate in the garden club activities twice a week. As the site is very near to a major transit hub, it provides an excellent opportunity for commuters to sit, relax, meet up with friends, chat with a stranger or catch a glimpse of a performance, scheduled or impromptu.

These temporary spaces require creating elements that can allow for a park to Pop-Up relatively quickly with objects that are movable and multifunctional and aim to keep spaces flexible in size and function. These elements aid in creating a loose but present framework within which different users find interest and take ownership. Not wanting to lose the community spirit that arises from this kind of project, the whole system requires being movable and preferable modular in order to suit the differing conditions and needs of future sites. Having a recognizable visual identity also allows these elements to act as the precursors to regeneration and begin to hint at the enlivening that is on its way. All materials used in the construction of the structures have been donated or sourced from skip yards, reclaimed and upcycled in innovative ways. Aesthetically, the space suggests the rough and ready look of a construction site, which increases the drama of the place and capitalizes on the idea of limited edition time. The site has also been built entirely on donated time, mostly from interns who are recent graduates in architecture and design, thus creating a mini community on site of likeminded people with a fresh vision.

25

Essentially, Meanwhile Spaces can help to speed up the regeneration process of an area by the creation of a temporary space, not hampered by dogmatic rules or longstanding traditions, that is free to suggest new kinds of experiences within the city context. To find fruitful sustainability in our cities, we further need to reconnect man to the natural environment and to nature. Only when we recognized the inherent bonds of man and nature can we really begin to foster some positive social change by creating environments that are mutually beneficial, and that connect humans to each other and to nature in a beautifully productive way.

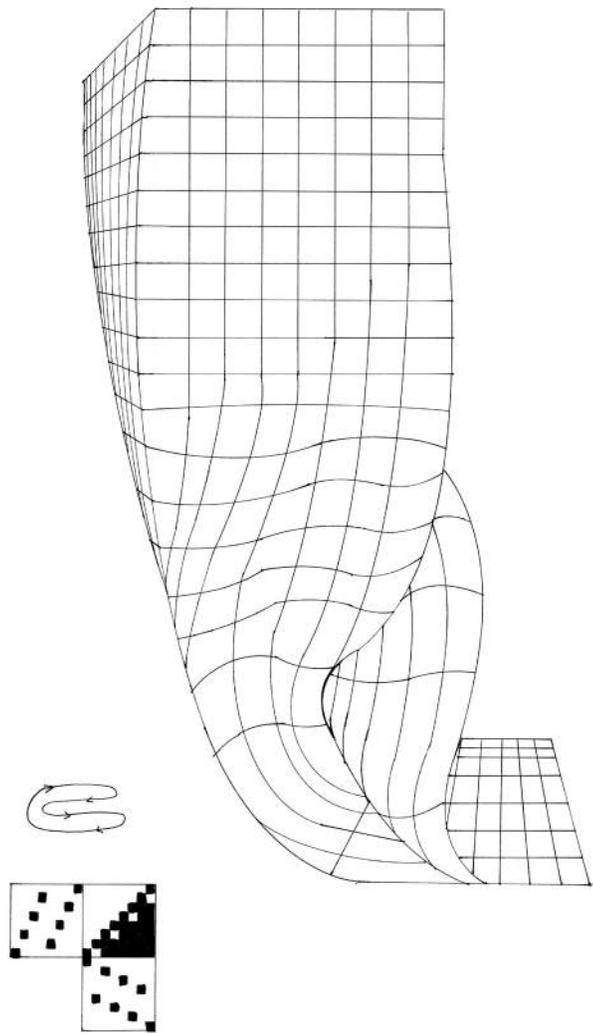


**thinner dusty forgotten planks meet flat
shiny square pieces of wood meet sky**

tttttttttttttttt

there is a distinct place (the mark of a specific year) in the sloped walls there, where the grain of the wood changes, where the differing carpentry of the differing fathers merges, marries- when they were divorcing- after he drunkenly fell off the second floor of the round lofted cabin she designed and he helped build. forty years old, he broke three ribs, in the nineties, set against circular windows, flecks of ocean, flowered curtains, heavy office chairs from the auction house and a stage and a sound system for parties. years later when she came back from Italy, hair shiny, face bright (almost unrecognizable), she got them to paint the swollen ceiling like clouds.

EX NOVO

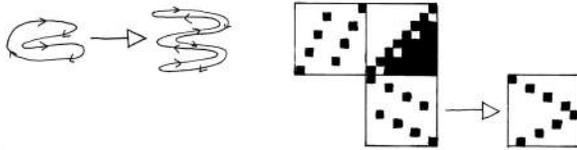
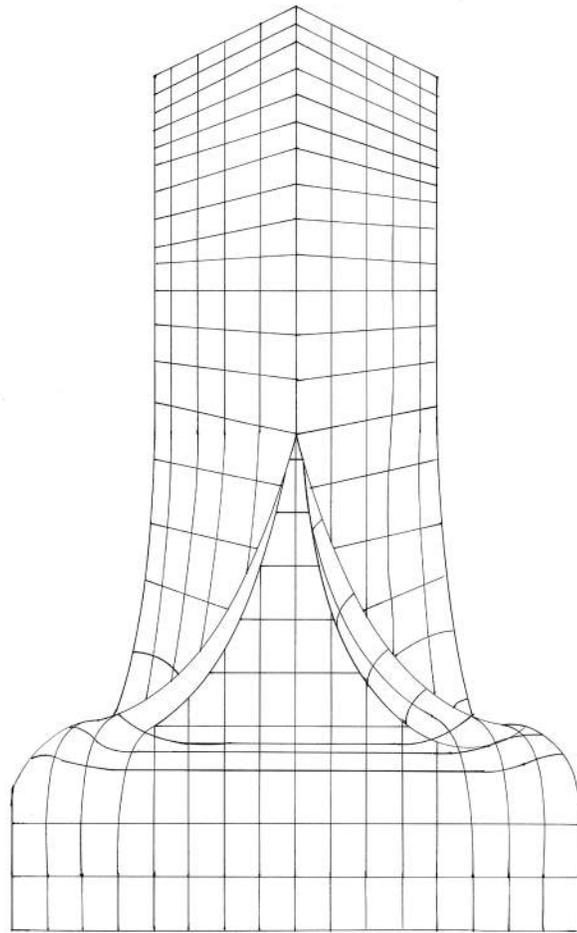


32

“[T]HE INHERENT OPPOSITION WITHIN ALL MODERN ART: THOSE WHO SEARCH INTO THE VERY BOWELS OF REALITY IN ORDER TO KNOW AND ASSIMILATE ITS VALUES AND WRETCHEDNESS; AND THOSE WHO DESIRE TO GO BEYOND REALITY, WHO WANT TO CONSTRUCT EX NOVO NEW REALITIES, NEW VALUES, AND NEW PUBLIC SYMBOLS”

-MANFREDO TAFURI, ARCHITECTURE AND UTOPIA: DESIGN AND CAPITALIST DEVELOPMENT, 1976.

32



ORATORY

I made my first journey to St-Joseph's Oratory in Montreal as a giggling 24-year old. I was unprepared for the Oratory's scale, seriousness, and didactic expressions of faith. I had never before seen the material culture of miracles (crutches from the healed), nor had I stood mere steps away from a holy relic (Frère André's preserved heart). My sister and I were both delighted and, I fear, hopelessly inappropriate throughout our giddy encounter with this icon of Montreal's architectural history.

It was the first of my more than fifteen years in Montreal. But iconic films about vernacular experience and working-class culture had paved my path to the Oratory's famous steps long before I arrived, like *La vie heureuse de Léopold Z* (1965) and *Jesus of Montréal* (1989). Neither church that appeared at key moments in these films was the Oratory. But, standing on the pale stone plaza outside the basilica, gazing over the north-west shore and the setting sun, I felt as if I had found them both in this enormous complex, a special part of the city that lives between image and matter.

Finding the Oratory was not about faith. Desperate about a sibling's illness, my parents had had the whole family baptized en masse (as it were) when I was 5 years old. I remember an awkward moment on the altar, looking out at kindly strangers, a sonorous monotone in my ears and waterdrops cold on my forehead. An otherwise shy child, I was precocious when it came to the contradictions of faith. But no minister seemed to be able to answer my questions, or even take them seriously. Although I longed for the white dress, I refused to attend my confirmation ceremony. Much like, years later, when another religion was part of the deal of sharing a life and making more life in turn. I couldn't do it.

All this to say, I don't go to the Oratory out of faith.

But I do go. A few years ago I started taking students in the context of a course at Concordia University - "Icons of Architectural History." We explored the building's architectural references - a jarring combination of Mussolini's modernism and historicist Florence - and analyzed its flows of power alongside its shopping-mall like internal circulation. We contrasted its faith-based visual culture and the commodification of the image of the Frère, now Saint André, with the sight of pilgrims from all over the world making their way up the famous stairs on their knees. It was such fun.

In time, however, the building has also worked some kind of magic on me. I say I am going to visit in order to "prepare for my class" but the truth is I simply love to go. Beyond the kitsch-filled gift shop and the excellent grilled cheese sandwich to be had in the cafeteria, there is much to enjoy. The corners where individuals seek comfort move me most. The votive candle room embraces visitors with the milky spice of incense and warm paraffin, every candle lit a golden dollop of hope, remembrance, thanks. Somehow, in this gentle space, it makes sense to light those candles. And that's what I regularly do now, for people and animal others I've lost.

Further afield, despite the ubiquitous Oratory-shaped donation boxes, pilgrims have found a way stuff bills into Frère André's tiny bedroom, sealed under glass in a chapel, itself tucked into the trees of Mont-Royal. As the founder of the Oratory, André and his lilliputian mirror and worn counterpane are reminders of how self-denial is sometimes almost intimately entwined with monumental ambition.



My favorite activity is watching how people use and mis-use the Oratory's many pathways. Visitors almost inevitably climb the stairs to André's miniscule room on the wrong side. They collide with other pilgrims (who can only leave one way), and everyone ends up doing a complicated dance over the iron bars that are supposed to guide their way. The garden of the stations of the cross are a marvel of people moving backwards, sideways, and generally being distracted by gregarious squirrels and the cats who like to sun themselves on the bent stone figures of Christ. The steep, mannerist stairs that lead from the Basilica to the plaza seem to encourage the most idiosyncrasy. Children make every use possible of the winding steps. Lovers take endless photographs of one another. I like to watch women alone, finding peace in solitude. Dogs adore all the possibilities of these stairs, not least of which includes the chance of seeing one of those squirrels, or a cat.

In the end, the Oratory has become part of my personal mat-tering map of Montreal, as much as it is part of a fascinating cultural landscape of faith, architecture, and pilgrimage. As such, I could not resist suggesting it as the first outing for the fledgling student group, Architecture/Concordia, in the fall of 2014. As usual, autumn was a stunning time to visit, and the Oratory did not fail to enchant, even as it also perplexed and confounded. This time, something new happened. In the company of these students, strangers, and lovers of architec-ture, I made my "prayer intentions" known, via a tiny slip of white paper, addressed to St Joseph. I've seen these little slips every time I've visited before, but they seemed sacred - I didn't even giggle at them during my first encounter in 1994. What had motivated me? As we walked through the com-plex, I had been talking with one of Architecture/Concordia's members, who was struggling with a parent's illness, alone. For whatever reason, that slip of paper seemed the right way to acknowledge and share her burden. It meant something to participate in this well-worn gesture, to write my wish, and tuck it in a discreet bronze box with other wishes. And then, with delight, everyone started to do the same.

One of the prayer intentions was for Architecture/Concor-dia. Let us hope that the Oratory lives up to its name, that the intention was well received by whatever moves in the firmament of air beyond the basilica's heavy dome. And as to the answer? I believe we may look forward to creating it ourselves.



“... architecture that is intended for work, easily adaptable, anti-aesthetic and marked by easily mutable signs. Here, the examples include a shed and a sign both modified to look like a simple house, and a shopping buggy corral, which (perhaps accidentally) is intended to look like a Quonset hut. They are very much about extending and complicating Venturi and Scott Brown’s Decorated Shed idea, returning that idea to its mutable and modest trappings. Continuing that idea of modest trappings, they graft Venturi/Scott Brown’s work to the tradition of New Topographic or New Documentary photographers—they were shot on a commercially available point and shoot, not altered in photoshop, and taken when driving around ex/suburban Chicago. In this way, they extend a tradition of shooting out of car windows—much like Winogrand in Los Angeles, the long trips of Shore or Friedlander, and recent work taken by Parr in Lagos. The humility of the built environments, the mutability of their forms, is matched by the humility of their medium, and the mutability of landscape under constant movement.”



**SPACE AND LANGUAGE: SEARCHING FOR THE NEW
JERUSALEM AT THE LEWIS GLUCKSMAN GALLERY**

41 Cathedrals, whether as old as Notre-Dame de Paris or as modern as Gaudí's Sagrada Família, are always massive undertakings which demand labour of all kinds. To walk into a cathedral is to marvel at the sheer manpower that enabled it to be. It is a shame then that all signs of this labour (architectural plans, maquettes, production tools) are entirely eclipsed by the finished product of the building itself. In emphasizing preparatory work, *Searching for the New Jerusalem: The Iconography of William Burges*—installed at the Lewis Glucksman Gallery in Cork, Ireland—offers a rare glimpse into the making of a cathedral. The exhibit is mostly made up of stained glass cartoons accompanied by a few sculptural maquettes all commissioned by the Gothic-enamored architect of Saint Fin Barre's Cathedral. While impressive on the whole, this exhibit is perhaps not well suited to the gallery's space and is hampered by a few questionable curatorial decisions which deeply affect the reception of the displayed objects.

Since *Searching for the New Jerusalem* was presented at the Glucksman in the context of the gallery's seasonal program on architecture,¹ it seems appropriate to begin by looking at the gallery's own design. Opened to the public in 2004, the building, which is situated on the lower campus of University College Cork (UCC), is the project of Irish architectural duo O'Donnell + Tuomey.² The construction, with its sleek form, wide windows, and its fusion of limestone and angelim wood, epitomizes avant-garde design. It belongs to a new wave of modern architecture which seeks to break away from the

classical references typically favored by museum institutions. Although it is refreshing to step into a space which is unpredictable, the building's strong irregular shape imposes itself on all artworks it houses. At times, the gallery's 'statement architecture' runs the risk of overshadowing the art it contains.³ It is evident that the Glucksman's architecture meshes best with contemporary art which, unsurprisingly, has remained the gallery's main focus over the years. In the case of *Searching for the New Jerusalem*; however, the juxtaposition of an ultra modern building with Gothic Revival imagery is slightly uncomfortable. One seems to cancel out the experience of the other. The lush ecclesiastical decoration evoked by Burges' designs are robbed of their spirituality in the Glucksman's minimalist space. Conversely, the art's conservative and authoritative nature goes against the message conveyed by the gallery's progressive architecture. Here then, art and architecture compete and the ensuing architectural mixed messages place the objects themselves in an ambiguous space.

Cathedrals, whether as old as Notre-Dame de Paris or as modern as Gaudí's Sagrada Família, are always massive undertakings which demand labour of all kinds. To walk into a cathedral is to marvel at the sheer manpower that enabled it to be. It is a shame then that all signs of this labour (architectural plans, maquettes, production tools) are entirely eclipsed by the finished product of the building itself. In emphasizing preparatory work, *Searching for the New Jerusalem: The Iconography of William Burges*—installed at the Lewis Glucksman

Gallery in Cork, Ireland—offers a rare glimpse into the making of a cathedral. The exhibit is mostly made up of stained glass cartoons accompanied by a few sculptural maquettes all commissioned by the Gothic-enamored architect of Saint Fin Barre's Cathedral. While impressive on the whole, this exhibit is perhaps not well suited to the gallery's space and is hampered by a few questionable curatorial decisions which deeply affect the reception of the displayed objects.

Since *Searching for the New Jerusalem* was presented at the Glucksman in the context of the gallery's seasonal program on architecture,¹ it seems appropriate to begin by looking at the gallery's own design. Opened to the public in 2004, the building, which is situated on the lower campus of University College Cork (UCC), is the project of Irish architectural duo O'Donnell + Tuomey.² The construction, with its sleek form, wide windows, and its fusion of limestone and angelim wood, epitomizes avant-garde design. It belongs to a new wave of modern architecture which seeks to break away from the classical references typically favored by museum institutions. Although it is refreshing to step into a space which is unpredictable, the building's strong irregular shape imposes itself on all artworks it houses. At times, the gallery's 'statement architecture' runs the risk of overshadowing the art it contains.³ It is evident that the Glucksman's architecture meshes best with contemporary art which, unsurprisingly, has remained the gallery's main focus over the years. In the case of Search-

ing for the New Jerusalem; however, the juxtaposition of an ultra modern building with Gothic Revival imagery is slightly uncomfortable. One seems to cancel out the experience of the other. The lush ecclesiastical decoration evoked by Burgess' designs are robbed of their spirituality in the Glucksman's minimalist space. Conversely, the art's conservative and authoritative nature goes against the message conveyed by the gallery's progressive architecture. Here then, art and architecture compete and the ensuing architectural mixed messages place the objects themselves in an ambiguous space.

This dissonance is heightened by the fact that the exhibit's curator, Richard Wood, sought to replicate the cathedral's floor plan in the installation's layout. This creates quite the clash because, while the highly ordered program of Saint Fin Barre's Cathedral leads its visitor along a controlled linear narrative, O'Donnell + Tuomey's building works in the opposite direction by allowing the viewer to roam at will; to take control of their gallery experience. Furthermore, in replicating Saint Fin Barre's layout, Wood wanted to make a clear distinction between the cathedral's exterior and its interior by separating the gallery with a dividing wall. In the space representing outside, Wood placed the plaster maquettes which stand for the sculpture adorning the cathedral's West Front. On the other side of the wall, the curator installed the different stained glass and mosaic cartoons. Although this divider reveals an attempt to endow the objects with a much-needed context,



43 paired with the Glucksman's irregular spacing of windows it unfortunately prevents natural light from reaching the cartoons; leaving them in obscurity. Where the viewer should experience a sense of illumination, they get darkness.

Moreover, this wall, the exhibition's ecclesiastic layout, and the looping of church bell recordings provide the wrong frame for the study of these preparatory objects. In emulating the cathedral's spatial arrangement, the cartoons and maquettes become merely indexical, pointing directly to the windows, floor and sculptures which they rehearse. However, it is important to remember that these objects probably never even made it to Saint Fin Barre's site; rather they belong to the craftsman's workshop and it is this aspect of them which is unique. In my opinion, Wood lost an opportunity to highlight the labour of trade guilds by opting for the more obvious connection between the pieces and the cathedral itself. In effect, the show speaks of the cartoons and maquettes as if discussing the finished objects they represent. Iconography is, unsurprisingly, the subject instead of trade and skill. However, these works aren't particularly suited to discuss the iconography of Saint Fin Barre's because they only represent a fraction of the cathedral's complex scheme. If the interest is iconography, then one only has to walk down to the cathedral and study it there. By stubbornly focusing on the thematic aspect of the pieces, Wood doesn't exploit the interim nature of the works which could be used to spark a discussion on the workings of a Gothic Revival guild. There is ample room to ex-

plore, for example, the 18th century 'rediscovery' of medieval stained glass techniques and the technological advancements that allowed them to resurface. Instead, the exhibit is akin to a guided tour of Saint Fin Barre's except with much less to look at and devoid of atmospheric context. The craftsman is severely under-stressed in this configuration and, as we will see, in the exhibit's language.

The rhetoric the curator chose to adopt for the show focuses on the genius of William Burges. It echoes much of the academic literature which tends to present the 'masters' of the Gothic Revival as the saviors of British style.⁴ Burges himself is consistently described by scholars old and new as a brilliant and enthusiastic architect, perhaps a little controlling, but his overbearingness is justified because his "total spiritual concern seems to have been with architectural beauty and [...] this was his sole aim in life, the one thing he searched for."⁵ His work in Cork, to cite a few examples, is lauded as a building who embodies "the quality and beauty of the noble fantasy of founder and architect,"⁶ "one of the most perfect churches of modern times."⁷ This attitude is taken up by Searching for the New Jerusalem which dubs Saint Fin Barre's Cathedral "the product of the genius of Burges."⁸ Although Burges is proclaimed a prodigy, his 'genius' is never properly explained; the viewer is just meant to take it at face value. This recalls authoritative art historical narratives which the Glucksman, as an institution, seems to be trying to move away from. This typical approach further obscures the cathedral's laborers in favor of

43

the God-like figure of the architect. Although it is briefly explained in the exhibit's introductory panel, the viewer quickly loses sight of the fact that the very objects on display were not created by Burges at all. The cartoons are the work of Frederick Weekes and Horatio Lonsdale, whose own personal vision is often explained away as "stylistically a replica of [Burges'] own."⁹ The maquettes for their part were created by Thomas Nicholls.¹⁰ This means that the mythic traces of the artist's hand—such as the pencil marks and tea stains on the cartoons, and the fingerprints on the plaster models—which the exhibit claims lend the pieces a "ravishing sensitivity,"¹¹ are not the architect's at all, but those of his employees. Here again, Wood chose a familiar rhetoric for his exhibit: that of architectural genius which praises the overseeing designer and values the workman inasmuch as he can faithfully bring the prodigal master's vision to life. As such, this discourse isn't true to the objects themselves which are born from the hands of craftsmen, not an architect.

This genius rhetoric feeds into another problematic aspect of the exhibit's language which is perhaps more subtle: the critique of Protestant aesthetic. It is no secret that religious affiliation has always been a hot topic in Ireland. Today, Protestants and Catholics co-exist in Cork on the whole peacefully, but religion is still a delicate subject. Considering this, it seems inappropriate for the Glucksman Gallery to align itself so clearly with the Catholic side. Although Cork was largely Catholic

in the 19th century, "it was controlled by Anglicans"¹² who were its wealthiest citizens. Saint Fin Barre's Cathedral was, and still is, their parish. This means that, in accepting to carry out the commission, Burges had to reign in his extravagant impulses in order to please his Protestant patrons which had strict rules about the representation of anything divine. For example, Protestant aesthetics frowned upon depictions of the crucifixion, so Burges was made to portray the deposition instead.¹³ Searching for the New Jerusalem considers such adjustments damaging interventions in what would otherwise be a perfect iconographic scheme. This is evident in its presentation of the Christ maquette, a figure which was fervently rejected by Burges' patrons. Wood's essay (partially replicated in the gallery) declares the rejected piece a precious emblem of Burges' talent and laments the supposed meddling of Protestant scruples.¹⁴ The inclusion of the Christ model in the exhibit is meant to provide the viewer with "a glimpse of what we have been denied."¹⁵ The implication of this language is that the architect's genius was lost on his Anglican employers who, in interfering, have robbed later generations of Burges' cohesive vision. This is quite harsh towards the patrons of Saint Fin Barre's who were, after all, hiring an architect to realize their need for a church. Burges himself probably didn't expect to have free reign over the design of the cathedral; no architect does. It is perfectly normal that his plans were made to conform to the beliefs of his patrons. By presenting such alterations as negative, Searching for the New Jerusa-

45 lem draws attention away from the works themselves and reopens the eternal (and exhausted) debate between Protestants and Catholics. Considering that the exhibit was mounted in conjunction with Saint Fin Barre's, it is surprising that the cathedral's current congregation didn't react against the tone of such commentary. What is the point of taking such a political stance in the context of a collaborative endeavor?

Although *Searching for the New Jerusalem* does an admirable job of bringing to light objects that the public rarely has access to, it fails to highlight the true nature of these pieces. Had their draft-like qualities been emphasized and the credit been duly given to craftsmen instead of to a 'genius' architect, the exhibit would have been much more innovative in its approach. Instead, by relying on age-old conventions, the curator re-iterated genius myths which feed into a not-so-subtle attack on Protestant aesthetics. The gallery's architecture, as a liberal and modern building, is somewhat at odds with the conservative imagery and heavy rhetoric of the exhibit. This example demonstrates that all spatial and discursive decisions taken by the curator have a powerful effect on the reception of the artworks themselves. It also shows that, in our day, traditional formats may even be inappropriate for the display of conservative styles like the Gothic Revival—though this period was marked by its return to traditional ways

Endnotes Stéphanie Hornstein

- 1 Lewis Glucksman Gallery, *Seasonal Brochure* (Cork, 2013-2014), 1.
- 2 Gemma Tipton, "Art House," *Irish Arts Review* 21.4 (Winter, 2004): 128.
- 3 *Ibid.*, 130.
- 4 Martin Harrison, *Victorian Stained Glass* (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1980), 15-27.
- 5 Hilary Pyle, "The Decoration of Cork Cathedral," *Irish Arts Review* (1989-1990): 30.
- 6 *Ibid.*, 34.
- 7 J. Mordaunt Crook, *William Burges and the High Victorian Dream* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 208.
- 8 Richard Wood, "Searching for the New Jerusalem: The Iconography of St. Fin Barre's Cathedral," in *Searching for the New Jerusalem: The Iconography of William Burges* (Cork, Ireland: Saint Fin Barre's Cathedral and the Lewis Glucksman Gallery, 2013), 9.
- 9 Pyle, "The Decoration of Cork Cathedral," 30.
- 10 Wood, "Searching for the New Jerusalem," 9.
- 11 *Ibid.*, 10.
- 12 Crook, *William Burges and the High Victorian Dream*, 196.
- 13 Wood, "Searching for the New Jerusalem," 12.
- 14 *Ibid.*, 10.
- 15 *Ibid.*





**BLENDING WITH NATURE: ALVAR AALTO'S
VILLA MAIREA**

During the first half of the twentieth century, Finland endured a transition into modernity that affected not only its politics and economy, but also its geographical and architectural aesthetic.¹ Finish architect, interior designer, and artist, Alvar Aalto (1898-1976), epitomized this very evolution in his collaboration with nature, industry, and humanism throughout his career. During his studies at the Helsinki University of Technology, the reintroduction of neoclassicism under the National Romantic style attempted to revive Finland's own cultural affinities based on national historicism and Western art.² By the imposition of the Bauhaus and mass production in Germany, modernity introduced concepts of formalism and structuralism in Finland to which Aalto adapted his designs. While it seems that much of his aesthetic was derived from external influences, much of his architectural integrity was a direct product of his personal experimentation with material and form through his drawings, paintings, glasswork, and furniture constructions. A prime example of his synthesis of formal and abstract elements is the Villa Mairea realized in Noormakku, Finland in 1938. The integration of nature and landscape as pertaining to an essential understanding of design as both function and representation reveals Alvar Aalto's true expertise in this work. Villa Mairea imbues the very definition of movement as being a continuous flow through space, a structural and decorative metaphor for landscape, and a functional approach to material.

51

51

Villa Mairea was a private residence for Maire and Harry Gullichsen who told Aalto to treat it as an experimentation, enabling him to apply his unique principals towards constructive form.³ The frame of the house is L-shaped and it is structurally composed of three levels at the entrance side and two at the west garden side facing the pool and sauna.⁴ While the total work is meticulously designed according to the varying levels, there are specific free-form areas such as the exterior basement level and the higher level studio space.⁵ In his drawings, the appearance of the villa both on the exterior planes and the interior viewed from an outside perspective seems complex and multi-faceted. The system of stories is not consistent through the edifice itself which creates the effect of a series of raised platforms and spaces that are structurally distant yet have been nonetheless puzzled together. This consequentially allows for fluid spaces within the villa both visually and physically as the occupant moves through the seemingly unassociated areas while creating a coherent path.⁶ This phenomena can be placed within a larger context of Aalto's work as being very distinct from the formalities of architecture at the time. Eeva-Liisa Pelkonen argues that, "If the model that dominated modernist architectural discourse was based on establishing unambiguous relationships between form, function, and structure, Aalto's abstract forms were laden with open-ended functional, representational, and experiential ramifications."⁷

In terms of suggesting functional space within this work, Aalto creates the sense of separate rooms inside of a large common area. The most evident example for this is the entrance to the living room which is established as its own unit first from the four steps in the hall leading up to it, and second by the wooden platform ceiling that is abruptly cut in perfect alignment with the last step in the hall. As one turns the corner to the left further into the living space, one gets the sense of a separate room from a more narrow opening between two jutting wall corners belonging to enclosed rooms. Aalto makes reference to a large, open living room of a traditional Scandinavian farmhouse called a "tupa" in which columns from the ceiling mark the boundaries for different areas of activity.⁸ The tree-like columns bound with rattan and birch wood⁹, while they pragmatically stand as means of support, function as a sort of anonymous inhibitor or consequential obstacle in that a person must maneuver through the space by going around the columns.

This sense of fluidity and motion throughout a common, yet divided central space translates directly to the individual forms designed and ultimately appropriated to exterior elements. A first impression of this occurs at the very entrance of the villa which is an extension of the edifice itself as one must walk through this semi-open passageway in order to cross into a fully enclosed interior. The sense of fluidity appears in the roof of this entrance which is an asymmetrical, round-edge block that contrasts the box-like windows protruding from the equally cubist shape of the front facade.¹⁰ The pool similarly takes a rather random, oblong shape opposing the more perpendicular components of the back facade. These fluid, serpentine lines appear contained in their only configuration which gives them a subtle yet very noticeable quality, uncannily reminiscent of some of Aalto's drawings for his glasswork. He submitted vase designs for the Karhula-littala Glass Design Competition in 1936 which were very abstract compositions depicting clear, simple curvilinear formations that would ultimately translate into a three-dimensional, translucent vase.¹¹ These drawings were not mere sketches, but actual applications of colored lines on distinct planes in the background so as to reveal Aalto's creative process as well as his more intuitive approach to form.¹² Such treatment of line also recalls the undulating walls of the Finnish Pavilion at the New York World's Fair that Aalto designed during the same years as Villa Mairea.¹³

Such affinity for curved, organic lines also played a significant role in his wood furniture designs which emerged in light of “flexible standardization”, a method of achieving efficient and versatile materials for production.¹⁴ During the mid 1930’s, Aalto’s interest in mass production was increasingly intensified by the changing industry, but his humanist ideas regarding manufacture counteracted the modern rationalist practices that revealed a more cold-edge rectilinearity.¹⁵ Part of this rejection included Aalto’s use of wood instead of steel which was a cheaper material to bend since it did not require heat.¹⁶ After experimenting with birch wood, the Paimio chair was realized by constructing a rigid frame with plywood and narrow strips of laminated birch bentwood.¹⁷ The chair was springy and very curvy, a design that revealed his adept ability to unite strong form with malleable material to produce a complete organic quality. Aalto’s approach towards this method was influenced by László Moholy-Nagy’s theory on form in which “technology existed in a reciprocal relationship with materials and nature.”¹⁸ Aalto seemed to have applied this not only in his chair, but also in Villa Mairea where material and nature worked synonymously to depict architectural forms that were integrated in the surrounding landscape.

The house embodies a forest metaphor first with the interior treatment of the stairwell supported by a random sequence of vertical wooden poles, resembling a cluster of trees, that mirror another set of adjacent pillars (Fig. 1).¹⁹ The wooden panelling on the ceiling above provide an equally organic addition to the “forest” which abstracts the practical appearance of the staircase to create an imaginative internal environment. Off of the living room, the library exhibits its own woodland motif with a partially translucent frieze of short wood slats positioned in a fragmented, rippling motion above the book shelves, establishing privacy and enabling vertical glimpses of light to shine through from the adjacent room. In the exterior, the villa entrance reveals the image of a forest canopy with the dense, heavy roof that appears to hover over the flimsy-looking poles underneath, while the sauna area in the back facade completely imbues a biomorphic quality. The vernacular sauna is constructed with a series of thin wooden columns fastened together under a timber construction that blends in with the earthy woodland landscape. The well-balanced appropriation of bamboo and plants also reflects Japanese architecture which reinforces a sense of contact with nature and living organisms, a concept that influenced Aalto and distinguished his own intuitive style from Rationalism.²⁰

The perceptual synthesis of all the earthbound elements in Villa Mairea, including the living room, the library, the entrance, and sauna, instates Aalto's effort to physically and metaphorically integrate Finland's valuable Nordic landscape. According to Pelkonen, the Finnish landscape is most prevalent in Aalto's treatment of form: "the organic line is considered in some way a true expression of his national origins and is often linked to an essentialized notion of Finland as a place of flowing rivers, rolling hills, and leafy rural scenery, a notion that dominated the country's image abroad."²¹ It is evident that the natural material and vernacular references in the villa's design bring forth a soft, whole, and rounded experience which is based on pure feeling rather than higher intellect. Such emphasis on emotion both in the occupant's experience and in Aalto's design input is synonymous with an overall sense of national pride, an apolitical affinity for Finland which is most true and untainted through a tangible connection with nature. Part of this is associated with the economic changes in Finland at the time when increasing production and manufacture became a determining factor in not only a successful industry, but also a more potent international image.²²

The same dynamic was simultaneously occurring in Germany with the emergence of the Bauhaus and Walter Gropius' innovative theories towards mass production.²³ Aalto and the Bauhaus exhibited different styles but, being at the forefront of modernity, both shared a theoretical understanding related to "dynamism," a term mostly studied by Moholy-Nagy and later reinvented by Aalto into "biodynamism."²⁴ Dynamism was a means of departure from the classical aesthetic as opposed to modern lifestyle, and was driven by the notion that art, including architecture, was rooted in life. Thus human movements were to be translated into spacial design in order to create an experience: "Architecture is no longer to be understood as a mathematical construction but as a set of relationships that allow a variety of sensory experiences to occur."²⁵ The study of human movement and temporal units consequentially came into play within national housing efforts towards an efficient yet comfortable living environment. Aalto's biodynamism further observed a societal change in which the separation of country and urban living was no longer applicable. As a result, spacial organization and movement depended on principles in nature which was an "outcome of the interplay of multiple forces—natural, social, and economic."²⁶ This essentially differentiates the German approach to modern architecture from Aalto's more vernacular, environmentally-conscious designs. In Villa Mairea, Aalto places organic materials and human space at the same existential levels while also establishing an outward experience in which the occupant integrates with the forest interior of the house that in turn blends in with the surrounding landscape. The villa is a man-made construction that extracts and compounds natural elements, but is also a human conception that itself imitates the green, bushy, and woody organisms of the surrounding homeland.

In retrospective, Villa Mairea is among a diverse series of designs that Aalto produced during his lifetime. While it imbues much of Aalto's known influences including Moholy-Nagy's theories and Japan's traditional aesthetic, it somehow projects a completely different outlook on spacial living than his other modernist works. The dominant construct of the villa revolves around nature and Finnish landscape, where the opposition of vertical wood elements and curvilinear forms function in unison to create an all-encompassing experience for the occupant. Material, notably birch, represents a national and industrial asset all the while replicating human existence as it is a natural, earthbound organism, that ages and eventually perishes. Aalto thus brings forth a dynamic construction that offers an intrinsically multi-dimensional perspective. In terms of this particular work, Aalto advocates home living as a continuous experience versus a mere event. This entails humble simplicity which is a step away from the classical ideals of Nordic Romanticism, and visual roundedness that was so lacking in the rigid aesthetic of Rationalism. Ultimately, Villa Mairea embodies a visual and philosophical digression from both the past as well as the typical conceptions of modernity in Europe during the first half of the twentieth century.

Endnotes

- Sienna MacArthur
- 1 Eeva-Liisa Pelkonen, *Alvar Aalto: Architecture, Modernity, and Geopolitics*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009.) 40
 - 2 Ibid.
 - 3 Göran Schildt. Alvar Aalto Foundation, "Alvar Aalto's Architecture." Last modified 2005. accessed November 3, 2013, <http://www.alvaraalto.fi/net/villa_mairea/en/29.htm>.
 - 4 Göran Schildt. Alvar Aalto Foundation, "Alvar Aalto's Architecture." Last modified 2005. accessed November 3, 2013, <<http://file.alvaraalto.fi/search.php?id=478>>.
 - 5 Göran Schildt. Alvar Aalto Foundation, "Alvar Aalto's Architecture." Last modified 2005. accessed November 3, 2013, <<http://file.alvaraalto.fi/search.php?id=478>>.
 - 6 Marc Treib, "Aalto's Nature," *Alvar Aalto: Between Humanism and Materialism*, (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1998.) 54-55
 - 7 Eeva-Liisa Pelkonen, *Alvar Aalto: Architecture, Modernity, and Geopolitics*, 153.
 - 8 Megan Sveivan, ArchDaily, "AD Classics: Villa Mairea / Alvar Aalto." Last modified October 28, 2010, accessed November 3, 2013 <<http://www.archdaily.com/85390/>>.
 - 9 John Wilson. "2. 'What is it like 30 years later?' An assessment of Alvar Aalto's work." *RSA Journal*. no.5463 (1995): 52-62, accessed November 2, 2013, <<http://0-www.jstor.org/mercury.concordia.ca/stable/41376875>>. 57.
 - 10 John Wilson. "2. 'What is it like 30 years later?' An assessment of Alvar Aalto's work." *RSA Journal*. no. 5463 (1995): 52-62, accessed November 2, 2013, <<http://0-www.jstor.org/mercury.concordia.ca/stable/41376875>>. 55.
 - 11 Göran Schildt, *Alvar Aalto: The Decisive Years*, (New York: Rizzoli International Publications Inc., 1986). 138-139.
 - 12 Juhani Pallasmaa, "Alvar Aalto: Toward a Synthetic Functionalism," *Alvar Aalto: Between Humanism and Materialism* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1998.) 31
 - 13 Peter Reed, ed., *Alvar Aalto: Between Humanism and Materialism*, (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1998.) 31.
 - 14 Juhani Pallasmaa, "Alvar Aalto: Toward a Synthetic Functionalism," *Alvar Aalto: Between Humanism and Materialism* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1998.) 31.
 - 15 Ibid.
 - 16 Göran Schildt, *Alvar Aalto: The Decisive Years*, (New York: Rizzoli International Publications Inc., 1986.) 79
 - 17 Ibid., 79-80.
 - 18 Eeva-Liisa Pelkonen, *Alvar Aalto: Architecture, Modernity, and Geopolitics*. 149.
 - 19 John Wilson. "2. 'What is it like 30 years later?' An assessment of Alvar Aalto's work." *RSA Journal*. no. 5463 (1995): 52-62, accessed November 2, 2013, <<http://0-www.jstor.org/mercury.concordia.ca/stable/41376875>>. 56.
 - 20 Göran Schildt, *Alvar Aalto: The Decisive Years*. 114.
 - 21 Eeva-Liisa Pelkonen, *Alvar Aalto: Architecture, Modernity, and Geopolitics*. 143
 - 22 Ibid., 144.
 - 23 Ibid.
 - 24 Ibid., 103.
 - 25 Ibid., 105.
 - 26 Ibid., 109.

LIVED CITIES: A PERFORMATIVE ARCHITECTURE

Moving to a new city reveals with precision the effects of architectural landscapes on how one acts, thinks, and lives. Settling in a new visual and physical environment, I've realized how permeable I am to its structure – how I am directed where to look, or how to move through space. It will all be quickly assimilated, as biking past those buildings everyday will make them recede to a uniform background. Yet curiosity was instilled, and lingers – how, in fact, is architecture performed, politically and personally? Martin Bressani's concept of an architecture of affect and the international project "Architecture of Peace" allow to explore architecture's political and personal possibilities, to ultimately reflect upon Montreal's place in midst of all those ideas.

Cities are shaped by the multiple pasts of the people that lived and passed through them. Layered individual and public stories generate atmospheres and create an immersive environment in which we feel the "soul" of a city. The concept of an architecture of affect refers to those felt layers, as architecture is also constitutive of this environment. Affect is a dynamic reality, it is "the investment of energy that anchors people in particular practices, identities and meanings" (Bressani 161). It is not a reaction to a particular event, but rather feelings in movement, fluid and dissipated emotions. Contextualized but not individual, architectural affect permeates our attitude by situating us within a particular climate. For Bressani, it is a "total environment in which subject and object coincide" (Ibid.). This coincidence points to the interactivity between the visitor and an architectural work. One does not only unidirectionally enjoy a structure, but lives the aesthetic, affective enjoyment of inhabitation, of one's self in comparison with, or within a structure. Whether as an individual building or as a whole cityscape, our environment is architectural and is constantly performed through us, the subject inhabiting it.

Bressani's concept can be extrapolated to the international project Architecture of Peace, an intervention funded by the Archis organisation. At the juncture of peace intervention, urbanism, and architecture, this project suggests new reconciliations for cities that have been and remain divided by an ethnic, political or religious conflict. One of the prevailing ideas of the project is to create a third space in which both sides of the division can interact on new terms. An unclassifiable space could open and neutralize the established "Us vs Them" dichotomy. Architecturally, it evokes the opening of the structure, the rehabilitation of sensitive places, the revealing of common foundations. Mostar (Bosnia and Herzegovina) is a good example. A city divided between a Western and Eastern side, respectively held by opposing military forces in 1991, it was subject to an 18-month siege before the independence of Bosnia and Herzegovina, during which many buildings were destroyed or damaged by bombs. Today, the city still bears the markings of this division, and the tension between Croats and Bosnians is strongly felt. Singling out places of public importance, the project sought to reinvest public memory by artistically mapping out public places, in the hope of giving communal importance and enjoyment to both sides of the city. An abandoned department store that resonated with the conflict was re-purposed into a playful public square that showcased paintings of children playing and the noise of laughter over loudspeakers, inviting different generations to rethink the affect of the place (Carabelli 4). With some architectural changes, public spaces can be re-invested to change their known affect. Not only in Mostar, but elsewhere as well, it is with the reconstruction and the rearrangement of communal spaces that the Architecture of Peace project allows for new possibilities of thought.

This project shows how architecture can be empathic towards its own environment and inhabitants. Architecture configures material reality purposefully, it defines the space in which we evolve and our function within it. But it also reveals how we should see or care about our environment. By building structures that maintained an indeterminacy of space and encouraged circulation, the Mostar project team reinvested the affect of the city. Revealing physical foundations of buildings showed a common history that predated the cultural clash between Bosnians and Croats in 1992-1993, prompting an opening and linking of spaces in people's minds.

58 Montreal is its own divided city – French and English cohabit peacefully in comparison to the conflict in Mostar, but language can still be a source of tension, or categorization, even in daily interactions. Some neighbourhoods of the city are identified with one language or the other, and some still show marks of the previously stronger divide between French and English communities. The influx of a large student population changes those dynamics, but getting a coffee in Rosemont-La Petite Patrie will remain a widely different experience than getting one in Westmount. Are they architecturally different? How do you identify yourself with your neighbourhood? The city is full of communal spaces, with constant and rich French-English interaction. But after having inhabited the two sides – French and English schools, literary or theater scenes – it seems to me that there is still a certain bilingual silence, or lack of discussion, that could perhaps be helped by the elaboration of new architectural spaces that escape the English or French attribution. It would also be interesting to see how gentrification factors in this discussion. The emotional understanding of urban spaces is in constant evolution. Is our contemporary understanding of the city different from the one Montrealers had, say, 20, or 40 years ago? Buildings can be dynamic environments that hold multi-dimensional controversies (Yaneva 107). It thus seems natural to look meaningfully at one's environment.

Architecture resists or allows our visual and affective integration, it can create new affective sites, transform old ones or identify forgotten ones. The example of Mostar invites us to think of how we experience architecture and its affect in Montreal – the different neighbourhoods, the different languages – and of how one can re-invest public memory within shared spaces, to open the dividing lines of our city. The theme of how architecture affectively and politically influences our lives is not new. But I believe reminding oneself of the effects of architecture is important not only for political reasons, but also for the conscious aesthetic enjoyment of our respective cities.

58

Bibliography Sophie Bisping

"Architecture of Peace - Case Studies: (Re)Collecting Mostar." Architecture of Peace. N.p., n.d. Web. 20 Oct. 2014. <<http://architectureofpeace.org>>.

Bressani, Martin. "Towards a Digital Theory of Affect." Ed. Chandler Ahrens, Axel Schmitzberger, and Michael Wen-Sen. Su. ACADIA 2010: Life In:formation: On Responsive Information and Variations in Architecture: Catalogue of the 30th Annual Conference of the Association for Computer Aided Design in Architecture, ACADIA. New York, NY: ACADIA, 2010. 159-63. Print.

Carabelli, Giulia. Introduction to (Re)Collecting Mostar. Academia.edu: 2013. Web. 20 Oct. 2014.

Yaneva, Albena. Mapping Controversies in Architecture. Burlington: Ashgate Pub., 2012. Print.

MAISON TÉMOIN, VAL DAVID, QC, 2013.



C'est pas facile l'immigration, hein; on est pas à plaindre OK, mais bon, quand même... J'aurais jamais pu penser que, oui, dès la première nuit à mon arrivée en Amérique du Nord ça allait me taper sur les nerfs, direct – j'aurais pu me contenter de dire au Canada, au Québec, ou encore, si vraiment je voulais être précis, à Montréal. Mais non c'est à la grandeur du territoire, un territoire qui est un continent si on doit encore le rappeler. Et pas n'importe lequel, c'est l'AMÉRIQUE bordel!

Au début, je pensais que je n'avais pas eu de chance, que j'avais atterri dans la mauvaise ville, que c'était de ma faute, que j'aurais dû me renseigner un peu plus sur les forums de voyageurs avant de faire le grand saut. D'autres auraient été horrifiés de la découverte avant moi et auraient prévenu. Alors dès que j'en ai eu l'occasion, je l'ai visité ce reste de continent à la recherche de ce manque qui hante ma nouvelle existence – New York, Philadelphie, San Francisco, Los Angeles, même Vegas et sa profusion de tout et n'importe quoi –, et non, là non plus il n'y en avait pas.

Un après-midi d'automne, près de quatre ans après mon arrivée, alors que je continuais ma quête plus au nord de Montréal, je traversais des kilomètres presque ininterrompus de banlieues résidentielles. Commentant chaque lot de maisons : elles étaient moches! Plus hideuses les unes que les autres. Toutes sorties du même catalogue. J'imaginai la vie de leurs habitants, affreusement similaires et ennuyantes. Quand soudain, au loin un groupe de maisons témoin a retenu mon attention. Ce que je cherchais depuis si longtemps. Il fallait que je le vois. Mon salut se trouvait-il dans une minable maisons de banlieue? J'étais à la fois ébahi et horrifié en sortant presque en courant de la voiture. Je ne m'en suis pas rendu compte tout de suite tant j'étais excité. Il a fallu que je m'approche au point de pouvoir les toucher. À L'IMPOSTURE! Ils étaient vissés. On ne pouvait pas les fermer. Comme sur un dessin d'enfant, ils étaient disproportionnés, ne pouvant même pas couvrir toute la surface des fenêtres. Ils servaient juste à compléter l'identité de l'idée d'une maison. Une décoration, juste pour faire comme. Cette fois-ci, je devais m'y résigner, mes nuits auront ce goût amer encore longtemps. Celui du tungstène et du néon. Car, oui, si la lumière avait un goût, les nuits de semaine, il serait évidemment amer. Il n'y a pas de volet en Amérique.

“IDEAL BODY BUILDER MEASUREMENTS REPRESENTS STATISTICS FROM JOE WEIDER’S CHART FOR “IDEAL BODYBUILDER MEASUREMENTS” AT A SCALE OF 1:6. ... A CASTE MADE FROM THE CHEST AND BACK OF A MAN, PRODUCED JUST BEFORE HE BEGAN A CYCLE OF STEROIDS. THESE PHOTOGRAPHS ARE RECORDS OF THE OBJECTS WHICH CAME FROM THE SCULPTURE-MAKING, BUT THEY ALSO LOOK TOWARD AN ASPIRATIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON BUILDING A BODY.”



MYCOARCHITECTURE: ECOLOGICAL WISDOM AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Without modifications to the social and material environment, there can be no change in mentalities. Here, we are in the presence of a circle that leads me to postulate the necessity of founding an "ecosophy" that would link environmental ecology to social ecology and to mental ecology. —Félix Guattari

In the summer of 2014, a 40-foot tall tri-cylindrical tower made of mushrooms sprouted among New York's built environment. Designed by architect David Benjamin and his firm The Living, the structure known as Hy-Fi was erected in the courtyard of MoMA PS1 as the official selection for this year's Young Architect Program. When the exhibition closed in early September, the entire building was composted into nutrient rich soil and distributed to local community gardens. While this biodegradability parallels other architects' attempts to address aspects of sustainability, the integration of mushrooms has connected architecture (albeit inadvertently) to a prehistoric ecological network increasingly relevant to the discourse of contemporaneity. Hy-Fi received widespread critical acclaim, which in turn has demanded an exploration of the implications of mycoarchitecture.

65

Today, mushrooms are replacing Styrofoam as biodegradable packing material, and are used for cleaning oil spills, filtering contaminated water, mining precious metals from disposed electronics, insulating walls, bio-illuminating advertisements and urban space, altering perception, guiding spiritual pursuits, treating illness and feeding the masses. Mycoarchitecture, despite the profound implicative potential, is adolescent, experimental and merely another manifestation in a sea of ethnomycological collaborations, i.e., relationships between humans and fungi.

65

To further explore the metaphoric complexities of this partnership we must differentiate between a mushroom as a classic cap-and-stem morphological model and a mushroom as the organism itself: the mycelium, which consists of a web-like network of thousands of tiny threads, called hyphae (hence Benjamin's title, Hy-Fi). This binary is analogous to fruit trees; just as apples are products of a tree, mushrooms are the fruiting bodies of mycelium. They are classified in the kingdom Fungi, which has a closer evolutionary lineage to humans than to plants. One of the evident similarities is the way in which we generate energy—by eating, as opposed to synthesizing energy from the sun like plants.

66

66

However, instead of ingesting food and digesting it inside their bodies, fungi are exoenzymatic, which means they secrete digestive enzymes outside of themselves thus growing into their food source. Fungi are essentially encased in a giant stomach.

Confining these stomachs to a desired shape or mold while providing ample food is the basis for engineering mycomaterials such as the 10,000 mushroom bricks needed to construct Hy-Fi. In order to manufacture them, David Benjamin collaborated with the biomaterial company Ecovative. They collected agricultural byproducts (in this case corn husks) and packed them into brick-shaped molds to be inoculated with spores and devoured by mycelium. After about five days the bricks were dried and cured, and transformed into what Adam Fisher in Time magazine describes as “nontoxic, fireproof, mold- and water-resistant, heat retaining insulation, stronger, pound for pound, than concrete”.

While appearing to be novel and ingenious, the theoretical framework behind mushrooms in the built environment is not inherently innovative, so much as a reapplication and re-contextualization of the deep-seated ecological role of fungi in the natural environment—which is to say fundamental in the balancing of powers. Mushrooms have the capacity to colonize the roots of vascular plants to facilitate nutrient transfers between species. I believe these underground ecological networks can be regarded as metaphors for contemporary socio-political exchange. Mushrooms are also essential recyclers of organic material; without them, we would suffocate in a mountain of debris. By understanding and embracing these *modi operandi*, we can employ fungi in the built environment to efficiently manage urban waste. It is a boundless collaboration with profound implications for artists and architects grappling with issues of socio-economic and environmental sustainability.







**THE NEW RELIGIOUS MONUMENT: POST-CONCILIAR EFFECTS
ON THE ITALIAN POPULATION OF ST-LEONARD**

The 1960's marked the Catholic Church as a time of hardship. There were many unsettling ideas floating around regarding monetary scandals and it was overall a time of instability. Furthermore, the global social context was shifting. People were less interested in what harsh catholic doctrine had to prescribe but rather, were axed on creating of a sense of community within the Church. Modern rational principals were implemented in fields as construction. Moreover, in the province of Québec, secularization of the State was put into effect and the Church's position was destabilized. From this arose the Second Vatican Council with the goal to renew and simplify liturgical text. Coincidentally, new Italian immigrants were building communities in St-Leonard, Montreal and were desperately seeking a binding agent to unite them. The events that followed were revolutionary in spirit and marked the community for years to come.

Choosing the appropriate social climate:

Montreal; the modern spirit of a city

The context of Montreal in the 1960's was prosperous and progressive. The city was thriving from all angles. At the forefront of this change was Prime Minister Jean Lesage who demanded reforms throughout society. Certain political measures were put into place and there was an imposing sense of nationalism in the midst. Nationalistic government programs and regulations were enforced, which allowed for greater social security regimes. Montreal's financial district was growing and gaining international importance. Montreal ranked as a World-Class city. Despite instability in the global economic markets, Montreal still remained the incontestable metropolis of Canada. Many projects began to see the light of day and exemplified this notion of progress. Skyscrapers such as Place Ville Marie and The Stock Exchange became crucial buildings for this forward-looking city¹ The city also focused on ideas of mobility, connectivity between the city and its suburbs, and the increasing need of an automotive-centric society. Large scale infrastructural endeavors were built such as the Metropolitan expressway and the Turcotte Interchange. The latter are monumental structures and symbols aspiring to Montreal's progressive vision which still stands today. The stimulating culture scene was equally an important condition of the 1960's. Montreal hosted the 1967 World Exhibition through which it opened its door to the world. On a cultural front, this event attracted brilliant architects from abroad and also employed talented men and women to design, plan and build the national pavilions. Overall, the social, political and economic climate of Montreal epitomized a modern city and a capacity to provoke change.

At the very core of these modern tendencies was the quiet revolution taking place in the province of Québec. The Lesage government had slowly begun the process of secularization, affecting most levels of society.² One of the most important sectors the secular movement was targeting was the education system. As a realm in which the minds of tomorrow are shaped, the impact was felt for decades to come. Schools became a place where liberating ideas were welcome and post-secondary education became more accessible. Religious groups were irrelevant in an educational setting which gave way to a professional based culture. The steady separation of the Church and the state also underlined the decline of the Church's power with respect to larger societal issues. From this regard, for the Church to remain relevant in Québec, it was imperative to realign its directive measures. In parallel to Montreal's social-economic situation, in fact 6000km away, was the commencement of a Catholic Reform.³ At the beginning of the 1960's, the Vatican had been under scrutiny. The need for action was imminent and necessary. A council was formed to assess the current status of the Church. The task for the Second Vatican Council organized by Pope John XXIII was simple: to "present better the precious deposit of Christian doctrine in order to make it more accessible to the Christian faithful and to all good will."⁴ This surfaced at a moment when the Catholic Church felt pressure from all around the world to modernize its internal structure. The way faith is passed on to each generation has to be adapted and articulated anew so they can understand it for themselves. The Catholic supremacy had the obligation to reconfigure its values and to comprehend the inherent social situation it was a part of.

*"There is an urgent need for a stronger apologetic faith-not in terms of proving faith, but in terms of faith gaining a foothold in the crucible of human experience and of being in touch with the surrounding culture. A faith that is not rooted in human experience is a faith in danger of appearing abstract and becoming ideological."*⁵

In a way, the decline of the Church in Québec was proof that action needed to happen to ensure its survival. The Church needed to digress from its institutional state and embed itself in everyday culture. It should target communities and work on a smaller scale to effectively bring meaning to people's lives. There was a demand for the Church to acknowledge contemporary cultural realities and open itself to the world and societal differences. The catholic doctrine was in need of major change.

*"A faith which does not become culture is a faith which has not been fully received, nor thoroughly thought through, nor fully lived out."*⁶ John Paul II

The 1960's for an Italian immigrant

Coincidentally, the influx of Italian immigrants in the 1960's was at an all time high. In 1960, the amount of Italians was of 450 000, five times more than the in the previous decade.⁷ Post-World War II, Italians fled to North America for the chance of a better future for their family. Montreal being a booming metropolitan city was a major attraction for them. Arriving with nothing but their skillful hands and their hard-working mentality, they began working manual jobs around the city. A high percentage of the first Italians settled in the Quartier Latin district in proximity to their work.⁸ As the railway expanded towards the north, industries followed suit and so did the Italians. Settling in what is known as Little Italy, they began to establish themselves and prosper as much as they could as industrial workers. Since native Canadians generally refused to work these types of jobs, immigrant workers adequately and gladly filled the positions.⁹ They had their hands in everything, from the erection of the Metropolitan, to building pavilions at the World Expo, to the railway; Italians were known for their rigor and strength.

From then on, Italian labour workers continued gaining wealth and began to make their way into the construction business. As such, they continued migrating towards the north of the island and developing what was then a rural area. The development of this area was an untouched haven for the Italians. Strangely enough, the houses they built were a cross between the Italian villa with its ornate marble sculptural garden, and the traditional Montreal duplex. This type of home showcased how the Italians deemed it necessary to integrate themselves in the North American society yet maintain their identity. St-Leonard became the ultimate location for new Italian immigrants to settle. The sense of community amongst the young arrivals was strong and they were very generous towards each other. However, this new developing neighborhood was in need of a parish.

74

74

Building a new catholic monument; the beginning

As the Italians in St-Leonard strengthened in numbers, so did the need for a space for congregation. Coming from mostly the south of Italy where living conditions post WWII were pitiable, they arrived to Canada with strong catholic faith. Father Giovanni Triacca arrived in Montreal in 1960 where he was summoned by the "Missione Cattolica Italiana Nostra Signora di Pompei" (The Italian Catholic Mission of Our Lady of Pompei).¹⁰ His main purpose was to bring together the Italians and instill within them a renewed religious spirit. He arrived in Canada with nothing more than a dream; a dream to congregate Italians and celebrate the holy spirit.¹¹ He worked hard to gather the Italians and this proved to be difficult without a proper space to assemble. The first Italian families he married were wed in French parishes, in a language foreign to them. The impulse for a space of their own was evident.

By July 23, 1961, enough money had been raised to build a modest rectory which would house a chapel. This new congregating space was to serve the Italian immigrants of St-Leonard for the following six years. The Italians saw this space as a home away from home. The 4000 strong community rejoiced in the Catholic sermon despite its location. ¹² For them, this space was of their making and that in itself was valuable.

Finally, it was in 1964 that a design was proposed to be built. The architect Frederick “Tex” Dawson (B.Arch 1950, McGill University) and his associates at the time presented a proposal that was never seen before. Such a design for a church hadn’t been seen in Montreal nor by any of the clergy members. It is no surprise that some traditionalist had their fair share of animosity towards it. The plan was simple in nature consisting of a single, central space for congregation. Its cohesive design allowed for 600 parishioners to fully participate in the sermon. The interior was pure, with clean lines and stripped of any religious symbols or excessive ornamentation. However, given the social spirit of the time, this visionary holy architecture did have its place in this progressive city. What is significant for conceptualizing a church of this kind is that how it represents the shift occurring with the Second Vatican Council and how it embodies its social context. Approval given was by Cardinal Leger¹³ and he surprisingly thought highly of the concept and even though it steered away from traditional design.

November 1966 marked the beginning of what was to be a great endeavor, the construction of Our Lady of Pompei. Tex Dawson’s firm won the bid for the church, along with Pisapia Construction, a local Italian building firm who had already built ten parishes around the city. Many of the workers who played a large role in the building of the church were from the local Italian community. This exemplified the notion that by joining forces, Italians would be able to forge a place for themselves and their families. Eugene Steciuk, who worked for Dawson at the time, was project manager and collaborated closely with the men on site. He speaks of numerous accounts of the Italians and their work ethic to build this church¹⁴. After six months, the scaffolding for the exuberant roof was in place. The engineer Felix M. Kraus was responsible for the roof structure. The only precedents for this kind of structure were to be found in South America. Félix Candela was a pioneer of thin-shell concrete roofs and had been experimenting with its varying design capabilities for a decade. After consulting Candela, Kraus implemented the construction technique and ingeniously adapted it to Montreal’s weather condition. Applying an innovative design to a church was as radical.¹⁵ The shift from a traditional Latin cross plan, considered the norm, demonstrated the community’s eagerness for a change. Steciuk explains that “when the original design was proposed, the elderly bucked at it, they wanted something Neo-Classical. The new people thought it was fantastic. The young kids were so amused they called it the bat cave.”¹⁶

Once the initial excavation and scaffolding system was put in place, it was time for the thin shelled concrete to be filled. Prior to pouring, a field inspection was carrying out. The entire roof was covered in thousands of steel rods and every piece was accounted for.¹⁷ The 48 foot high, dense forest of studs, remained strong as they began pouring the thick concrete. Five thousand pounds of concrete was damped into place and finally, after 28 hours of round-the-clock work, the self supported roof was cast. What made this labour even more strenuous was with each pour, two to four men had to pound it between the joints. One Italian worker named Flavio was working on the roof from the very beginning and when he arrived home, according to an account his wife told Steciuk, he had fallen flat into his plate of food. This showed how hard the Italians were willing to work to build a new symbol of their faith. This was a labour of love; love for their community and love of their faith.

Through technological advances, the Lady of Pompei's design was positioned as a forward-looking church. Clearly aware of the imminent societal realm it was in, it smoothly integrated itself in the newly established Italian community. The symbolism behind the shape for this roof is also striking.¹⁸ It consist of four vaulted concrete shells, expanding in the direction of the cardinal points, which symbolizes universality. The Church, after the Second Vatican Council resumed, was precisely trying to do that. It needed not only to soar towards the heavens and towards God, but to extends itself to the entire world. In this way, all four poles were addressed equally, without any preference. Furthermore, by expressing through a very simple gesture the way in which the roof structure is held, Pompei alluded to the tendencies of the post-conciliar church as well. The four exterior columns support the roof and are visible from the outside. This clear reading of the structure demonstrates the Church's new modern spirit, one that is stripped from complexity and concealment.

Following the roof, the lateral non-supporting walls were constructed. They were composed of three varying shades of brick which followed the concept that materials chosen should be of simple nature. Luxurious materials were only the used in the most important places of the church. The plan is also central and the congregation is embraced by its womb-like shape.¹⁹ There is a sense of congruity amongst the pews, whereas the previous traditional Latin crosses evoked a hierarchy, the new design eliminated this. This space is one of community and equality, where Italians can feel united with their faith. This modern adaptation to the Neo-Classical church plan was reflected in the new liturgy. Present Father Mario Titotto who took great interest in Pompei's history described the curvature of the brick walls as arms that came together to gather the parishioners.²⁰ In this regard, the plan underlined an important change in the liturgy. The priest delivers the mass facing the audience in the church. By seeing the priest's face during the ceremony, the congregation becomes part of the ritual, a change which was emphasized by the uniting architecture.

Many elements of Our Lady of Pompei were influenced by older classical models. This is mostly due to its timing; designed at the cusp of the Second Vatican Council's decree, it embodied modern ideologies yet remained grounded by traditional characteristics. For example, the plan has three points of entry, the three doors leading the chapel followed by the paths leading to the altar.²¹ The branching of these paths symbolize the trinity; The Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. This is a traditional feature of a Catholic church; its use at Our Lady of Pompei clearly demonstrates the interstitial state of the Church's reform. The over-all plan of the church is also worth noting. Although it is centralized, it is also fish-like in shape, alluding to early Christian symbols of Christ. In this subtle manner, it turns to the past as a reference. Another significant element of Pompei's interior design is the balustrade. Traditionally used during communion, the parishioners would gather around and lean against it while the priest blessed them with the host. Post-conciliar liturgy however states that the congregation stand, reunite in front of the altar where the priest steps down and hands them the communion at an equal stand point.²² In this regard, the balustrade has lost its functional qualities and is now simply an added visual element to delineate the altar.

Balancing with the traditional, the church aspires to pursue modern issues and attempts to unite programmatic elements to strengthen its presence. For one, the baptistery is integrated into the design. The baptismal fount is where young babies become inaugurated within the Catholic religion through a ceremonial blessing with holy water. The curved walls of the baptistery cradle it and it becomes part of the daily church activities once again. In a way, this crucial element represents the prospering church of tomorrow. Integrating the baptismal fount once more in the modern design is a strategic way to ensure a future of the Catholic faith. Another critical programmatic element added to the design is the crying room.²³ Prior to the reforms of the Second Vatican Council, if a parent brought their child to mass and they became distracting, parents were politely asked to leave. They were said to be disrupting a religious ceremony and disrespecting God. With the addition of a crying room, young families were actively included in participating in the mass. If a child began to cry or was too excited, they would simply find refuge in this room at the back which maintained visual connectivity to the mass through a glass pane. This simple intervention was enough to ensure that young children became accustomed to church life. In this manner, Pompei's design was one of high collectivity, opposed to segregation. It evoked a sense of openness to the world of the 1960's and was embedded in the social realities. Furthermore, the screen behind the altar was also an new concept. Where before the ornamentation around the altar was highly religious and sacred, decorated with gold and symbols, it was now replaced with a modest curtain. This fabric delimits the back of the altar and is meant to be changed seasonally. The change in color announces the passing of time and connects the interior of the church to its exterior climate. In a way, this became a personable alteration of the church and demonstrated it's malleability towards time as an essence of God.²⁴

Ultimately, it was through the addition a parish hall in the basement that la Madonna di Pompei acquired its huge importance in the community. The room, with a capacity of 600 people, would see all walks of life pass through it on a daily basis. It was accessible seven days a week and it housed a range of activities from religious to non-holy activities. For instance, it was a place for feasting during Easter celebration and could be transformed for a concert hall. Utilized daily for sport recreation as well, it was a shared place for children, teens, and retirees to gather. For the Italian immigrants, this was their very own community center.²⁵ A place where parents could feel safe leaving their children under the watchful eye of the councillors and of God.

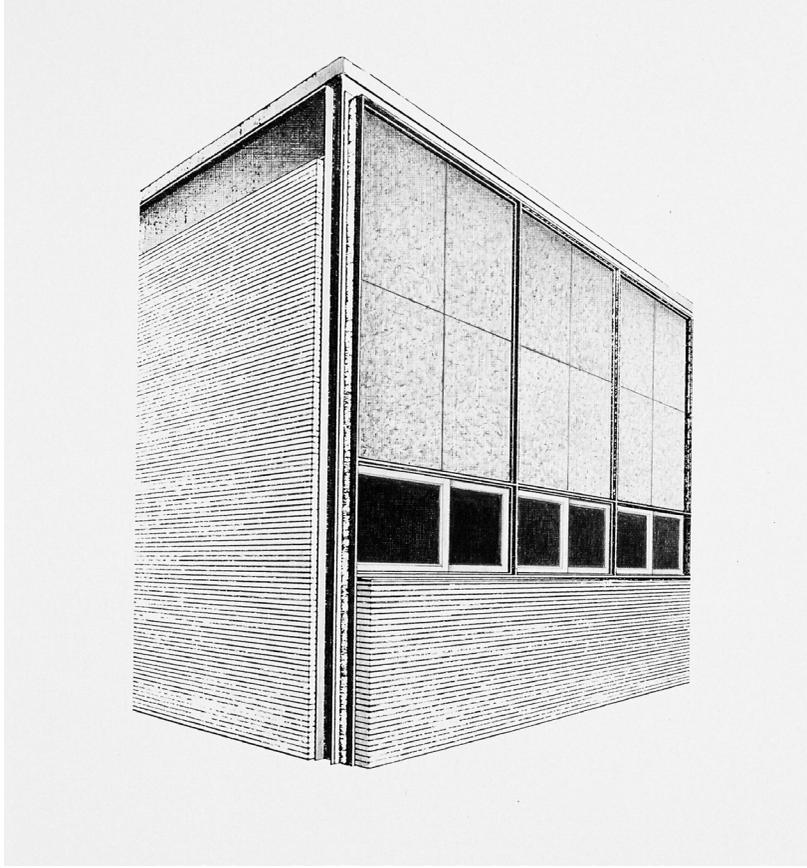
To conclude, the Madonna of Pompei church instilled a new, community oriented faith to the new Italian immigrants of St-Leonard. This parish not only had a religious role in shaping their lives but was at the very heart of their daily routines. Its exuberant and ephemeral design captivated people from kilometers away and maintained its responsibility as a focal point in the community. The repercussions of the Second Vatican Council resulted in the need for a more localized church, accustomed to the needs of its parish all the while maintaining an open eye towards the future was a must. The effect the Madonna di Pompei had on the Italian population is evident through looking at the wedding book at the time. The church hosted four to six weddings every Saturday, which the priests described as complete scheduling insanity yet a sign of the church's valued presence in the community. The entire church was full and the gatherings expanded beyond the walls to the front steps. The Italians felt a true sense of belonging with this parish that could also be seen in the 20 mosaic medallions planted in the terrazzo flooring, depicting the regions of Italy. The church's response to the community's need was evident and the Italian's rejoiced in having their own place of worship. This renewed spirit of the liturgy persevered for years to come.

Endnotes Martina Amato

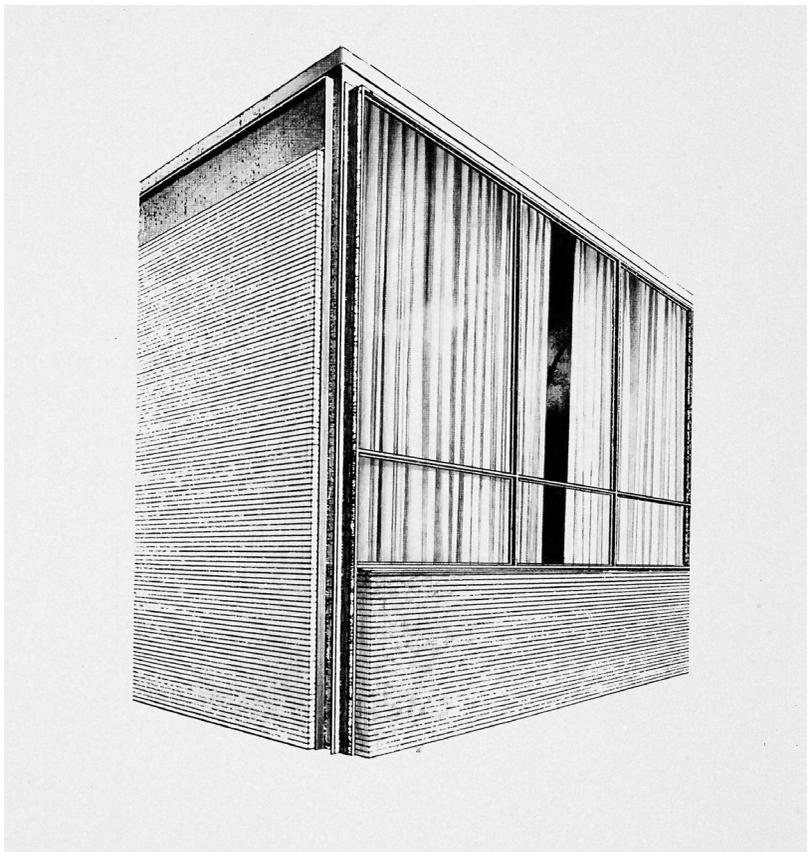
- 1 Andre Lortie, "Montreal 1960: The Singularities of a Metropolitan Archetype," in *The 60s Montreal thinks big*, ed. Andre Lortie (Montreal: Douglas & McIntyre, 2005), 80.
- 2 Marcel Fournier, "A Society in Motion: The Quiet Revolution and the Rise of the Middle Class," in *The 60s Montreal thinks big*, ed. Andre Lortie (Montreal: Douglas & McIntyre, 2005), 37.
- 3 Yves Congar, *Laity, Church and World*, trans. Donald Attwater (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1960), 23.
- 4 Marcel Metzger, *History of the Liturgy*, trans. Madeleine Beaumont (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1997), 100.
- 5 J.M.R Tillard OP, "The Church," in *Commentary on the Catherchism of the Catholic Church*, ed. Michael J. Walsh (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1994), 203
- 6 Tillard, *Commentary on the Catherchism of the Catholic Church*, 178.
- 7 "The Italians in Montreal," Accessed on March 15, 2013 <http://www.geog.mcgill.ca/grad/demartinis/THE%20ITALIANS%20IN%20MONTREAL.htm>
- 8 "Neighbourhood Little Italy." Accessed on March 20, 2013. <http://www.memorablemontreal.com/accessibleQA/en/histoire.php?quartier=4>
- 9 "Symbol of Resurgence". Accessed on February 1, 2013. <http://www.accenti.ca/news-archives-issue-19/feature-symbol-of-resurgence-montreal-s-casa-d-italia-pasquale-l-iacobacci>
- 10 "Inaugurazione della Chiesa Madonna di Pompei" (Montreal, 1967), 15.
- 11 Father Mario Titotto interview by Martina Fernanda Amato, March 2013.
- 12 "Inaugurazione della Chiesa Madonna di Pompei", 30.
- 13 Eugene Steciuk (retired architect) interview by Martina Fernanda Amato, March 2013.
- 14 Eugene Steciuk (retired architect) interview by Martina Fernanda Amato, March 2013
- 15 Father Daniel Dupont interview by Martina Fernanda Amato, March 2013
- 16 Eugene Steciuk (retired architect) interview by Martina Fernanda Amato, March 2013
- 17 Eugene Steciuk (retired architect) interview by Martina Fernanda Amato, March 2013
- 18 Father Mario Titotto interview, March 2013
- 19 Eugene Steciuk (retired architect) interview by Martina Fernanda Amato, March 2013
- 20 Father Mario Titotto interview by Martina Fernanda Amato, March 2013.
- 21 Peter E. Fink, "The Liturgy and Eucharist in the Catechism," in *The Universal Catechism Reader*, ed. Thomas J. Reese (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1990), 106.
- 22 Timothy McCarthy, *The Postconciliar Christian* (New York: P. J. Kennedy & Sons, 1967), 8.
- 23 Eugene Steciuk (retired architect) interview by Martina Fernanda Amato, March 2013
- 24 Dermont A. Lane, "The Doctrine of Faith," in *Commentary on the Catherchism of the Catholic Church*, ed. Michael J. Walsh (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1994), 45
- 25 Father Mario Titotto interview by Martina Fernanda Amato, March 2013

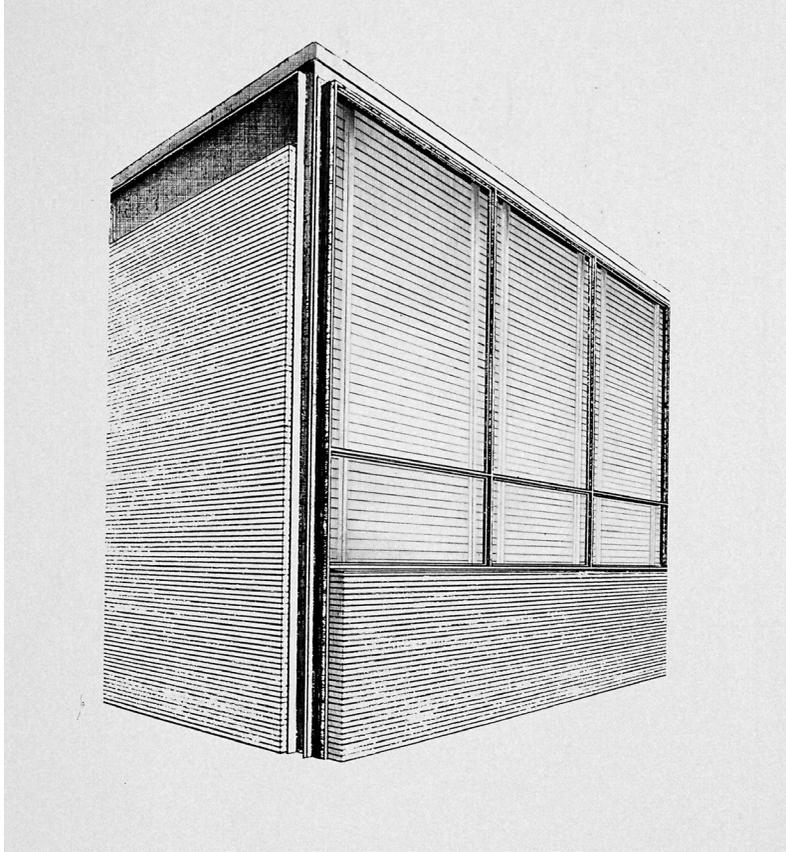
Bibliography Martina Amato

- A. Lane, Dermont. "The Doctrine of Faith." In *Commentary on the Catherchism of the Catholic Church*, edited by Michael J. Walsh Collegeville, 36-49. The Liturgical Press, 1994.
- Buckley, Francis J. "Children and the Catechism." In *The Universal Catechism Reader*, edited by Thomas J. Reese New York, 187-200. Harper Collins Publishers, 1990.
- Cahill, Lisa Sowle. "Sex, Gender, and Bioethics in the Catechism." In *The Universal Catechism Reader*, edited by Thomas J. Reese New York, 166-183. Harper Collins Publishers, 1990.
- "The Catholic Liturgical Library." Accessed March 30, 2013. <http://www.catholicliturgy.com/index.cfm/FuseAction/store-Review/Index/15/SubIndex/0/BookIndex/12>
- Congar, Yves. *Laity, Church and World*. Translated by Donald Attwater. London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1960.
- Fink, Peter E. "The Liturgy and Eucharist in the Catechism." In *The Universal Catechism Reader*, edited by Thomas J. Reese New York, 95-108. Harper Collins Publishers, 1990.
- Fournier, Marcel, "The Singularities of a Metropolitan Archetype," in *The 60s Montreal thinks big*, ed. Andre Lortie (Montreal: Douglas & McIntyre, 2005), 75-147.
- "Inaugurazione della Chiesa Madonna di Pompei." Montreal, 1967.
- "Italian "Enemy Aliens": How Canada Declared War on Its Own Citizens." Accessed on February 20, 2013. <http://www.accenti.ca/library/online-features/how-canada-declared-war-on-its-own-citizens-by-michael-mirolla>
- "The Italians in Montreal." Accessed on March 15, 2013. <http://www.geog.mcgill.ca/grad/demartinis/THE%20ITALIANS%20IN%20MONTREAL.htm>
- Lortie, Andre, "A Society in Motion: The Quiet Revolution and the Rise of the Middle Class," in *The 60s Montreal thinks big*, ed. Andre Lortie (Montreal: Douglas & McIntyre, 2005), 31-75.
- McCarthy, Timothy. *The Postconciliar Christian*. New York: P. J. Kennedy & Sons, 1967.
- Metzger, Marcel. *History of the Liturgy*. Translated by Madeleine Beaumont. Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1997
- "Neighbourhood Little Italy." Accessed on March 20, 2013. <http://www.memorablemontreal.com/accessibleQA/en/histoire.php?quartier=4>
- "Symbol of Resurgence". Accessed on February 1, 2013. <http://www.accenti.ca/news-archives-issue-19/feature-symbol-of-resurgence-montreal-s-casa-d-italia-pasquale-l-iacobacci>
- Tillard, OP J.M.R. "The Church." In *Commentary on the Catherchism of the Catholic Church*, edited by Michael J. Walsh Collegeville, 178-204. The Liturgical Press, 1994.



_Untitled7_1997









**THE ARCHITECTURE OF WAITING: ISSUES OF "SICK CARE" IN THE CONCORDIA
HEALTH CLINIC WAITING ROOM**

**"85% OF PEOPLE AGREE THAT BETTER QUALITY BUILDINGS AND PUBLIC
SPACES IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF PEOPLE'S LIVES." -MORI/CABE¹**

Walking into a health clinic, and spending any amount of time in the waiting room, is a generally disagreeable shared experience – cause for sentiments of impatience, annoyance, even anger. Those in waiting room often feel disrespected – as they wait, precious time is elapsing. This is further problematized by the fact that the people waiting in these spaces are there to get well – they are sick, and await treatment and care. With these ideas in mind, this essay will argue that, ultimately, hospitals and clinics fail to design, and overall, utilize their spaces in a way that allows for patients to feel at-ease within them – to allow for what feels like an actually “healthy” experience.² For the purpose of this study, the Concordia University Health Clinic waiting room (Fig. 1) will be examined. The Health Clinic waiting room³ will be the means of discussing issues faced by users within such spaces. This waiting room will be utilized as an example of a built environment within the larger discussions on medicine, and issues of privacy, public space, surveillance, and notions of illness and health. Research on waiting rooms has shown the inherent aversion to such spaces within the human condition, and this essay will attempt to unpack this unease.⁴ Furthermore, successful plans for the future of such spaces will be discussed, with the end-goal of offering light onto the re-orientation of these spaces to better suit the needs of the users, and in effect, to make the waiting experience a “healthier” one.

This study originates as part of a series of personal visits to the Health Clinic, starting at the end of May 2014 and following through until fall 2014. Within five minutes of walking into the waiting room during one of the visits, I realized that I knew a handful of people in the room. I began thinking about notions of privacy in public spaces. After the experience, I started to discuss issues with waiting rooms with others, and received numerous responses. “...There is general agreement that the waiting periods are perceived as long, uneventful, and stressful.”⁵ What was it about these specific spaces that proved to be so problematic? And if many of us feel this way, why are we not provided with alternatives?

Let us first examine the built environment of the Health Clinic. With windows along the main wall, providing natural light, and a bright blue wall across from that (which is said allow for feelings of calm and serenity),⁶ the waiting room has chairs along its periphery and in the middle, all facing inwards (Fig. 1). There is a smaller seating area in upon first entry of the space as well – this space is quite possibly the only seating area which has some semblance of privacy from the rest of the room. The small space and larger space are separated by two wooden table structures, where water, the check-in computer, pamphlets, and the garbage and recycling bins are located. The floor of the space is made of a grey flooring, and the walls are white with the exception of the blue wall. There are two large televisions in the space, coming down from the ceilings. There are a few plants and lighting fixture made of up four cubicle lampshades – these could be seen as minimal attempts to make the space more aesthetically pleasing.

There are four receptionists behind a glass partition, and each receptionist is separated by cubicle-like walls which utterly negate any sense of privacy - the person on either side of the visitor can easily hear the very private reasons for one's to the Health Clinic. When sitting down, there is a panoptic view⁷ of the co-waiters, and into the receptionists' space, behind the glass partition. Often, guests sit across from one another – for the most part, the experience is met with awkward attempts at avoiding eye contact. One acquaintance who I met while waiting in the clinic mentioned that the waiting room had a kind of "fishbowl" feel to it.⁸ The sense of the "fishbowl" begins within the first encounter of the space, and continues until the private space of the doctor's office.

There is a very present feeling of a lack of humanity here – the only humans who have answers for the patients are behind a pane of glass, or in their offices, while the visitors, the “waiters,” feel like cattle in the waiting room. Upon entering the Health Clinic, guests are expected to notice a computer screen, tucked into a counter top on their left. On the computer screen, the guest presses a button based on their specific circumstance, and a number is subsequently printed out. Here, users begin their experience as though they are merely another number in the plethora of people waiting. “...it’s the place and time we have to truly realize that we’re just another piece of meat on the healthcare conveyer belt, not an individual who requires individual care.”⁹ After receiving a number, the guest waits until their number flashes on the various screens around the room – at which point only then do they speak with an actual human.

In the clinic, watching and being watched, the guest watches time stand still until the nurse or doctor finally calls out their name for everyone to hear. If sitting by the windows, the guest has the opportunity to stare out onto Guy Street and de Maisonneuve Boulevard in downtown Montreal, from the second floor of Concordia’s GM Building. Again, the user can continue to act of watching, although here it is an act of looking out, and so this could be the one way which the “waiter” might escape from the feeling of being watched. In speaking with a few people on the topic of being watched/watching, this quote resonated with me: “I don’t think it’s enjoyable to feel everyone is watching each other, or to feel the need to sit next to someone and go a step further to talk to them. People prefer sitting in areas where they feel they can have some privacy. Take one of my experiences for example, I went to Stat Care because I had an allergic reaction where my eyes were all swollen, I didn’t mind going until I realised what I looked like, and then had the entire clinic staring at me and some pointing at me. It was uncomfortable and made the experience even more difficult!”¹⁰

This could be considered what Michel Foucault wrote of in his book, *The Birth of the Clinic*, the concept of the “patient gaze” – clinics became a place where patients were observed and understood.¹¹ Furthermore, Foucault’s discussion on the question “What’s the matter with you?” typical of 18th century dialogues between the doctor and patient – is still pervasive in clinics today – though I would argue that this question is being asked in the minds of the “watchers” in the waiting room about their fellow “waiters.”¹² This “constant gaze” erodes the visitor’s privacy in the public sphere of the clinic.¹³ The only people not visible to those in the waiting room are the “lucky ones” whose numbers have been called, who are with doctors or nurses (now being watched and observed by professionals instead). Here we see a very specific hierarchy within the waiting room.

In thinking about hierarchies, and subsequently power, the waiting experience seems to recall the Foucauldian concept of punishment: the waiting is a disciplinary punishment for one's illness, for not being a "healthy" individual.¹⁴ Once the patient is seen by the doctor, outside of the public's eye and the Panopticon, we are on the road to recovery – to being "healthy." This goes back to the history of the waiting room, where such spaces were originally used to house the homeless and drunks off the street (out of the public eye and into a different public eye) – the Outpatient Room. "Contemporaries in fact described hospitals as supplements or alternatives to the workhouse, and it seems that hospitals were meant to do for sickness what workhouses were to do for poverty."¹⁵ In the Outpatient Room, these people would be allowed to recover – to get "better" and "healthy."¹⁶ Of note within the clinic is the pervasive idea of prevention, and "health" – how to be "healthy" and how to prevent disease (stay "healthy"). The clinic pushes the idea of a "healthy individual" – at the Concordia Health Clinic, the only major attempts at diverting and distracting oneself are a couple of televisions which play "health facts" and "tips" on loop, and on the blue wall, brochures about common ailments and diseases, which nobody ever seems to pick up. These are seen as attempts to enforce the ideals of what it means to be "healthy" – similarly to public service videos about personal hygiene on Youtube.¹⁷ On the Health Clinic's website, a quote is bolded for good measure: "Health and wellness are essential to student success. Health Services is just one of many student services that put your needs first. Step through our doors and see how we can keep you healthy inside and out."¹⁸ Ultimately, the waiting room is not a space where you would actually want to be if you were severely in pain, trauma, or ill – but, these are the spaces to which we are forced to go. In order to see a doctor or a nurse, we are subjected to writings on pamphlets of how to "get better" while we sit idly in uncomfortable chairs. The idea of health is totally void here – we are not getting "healthy" sitting in such spaces, but the people who we're waiting to see will get us onto the road to recovery. Almost not surprisingly, then, is the fact that waiting rooms such as the Health Clinic are designed for conventionally "healthy" and "able" people – those who can easily sit down in uncomfortable chairs (and wait for an undetermined amount of time). These chairs were not designed with someone with body aches in mind. Furthermore, the waiting room was clearly not designed for wheelchair accessibility, as rearranging the chairs would be required if a person in a wheelchair was waiting in the clinic – this is the same for the receptionists' desks and also the corridors to the doctor's offices. In fact, the doctor's offices are also specifically made for able-bodied people.

One of the issues that I think are specific to Concordia's Health Clinic is the fact that, typically, one will walk in and immediately know at least one other person waiting to be seen - by virtue of the fact that Concordia's community is fairly to be tight knit, even for such a large university. These run-ins put the already on-edge user into further unease: no one wants to see someone that they know when they are feeling ill.¹⁹ The run-ins with fellow Concordians is all but pleasurable – met with head nods and/or some simple conversation where no one has the heart to actually discuss each other's reason for being there. This furthers the divide between private and public – being private in a public place. Bathrooms, and clinics, are places where most people go to be private, but they can have very public encounters which are difficult and often disagreeable to navigate.

Anmarie Adams writes that "in order to achieve the necessary degree of control, both scientists and surgeons need highly specialized, purpose-built spaces. Both derive their special powers from the settings in which they work."²⁰ However, due to clinics usually being built with purpose in mind, rather than people, there are many issues with waiting rooms which are specific to design: many users complain of the uncomfortable chairs,²¹ a total lack of "distractions" (especially for small children),²² overhead fluorescent lighting,²³ as well as tacky paint choices and a general lack of aesthetics.²⁴ Clinics are often small, crammed with chairs too close to other people, and the temperature of the room is too cold. While albeit practical and purpose-built, the clinic's design creates the feeling of a sterile environment, which only further reminds the patient that they are unimportant, that their precious time is inconsequential, and that they do not deserve to sit and wait in a nice space (which is completely unlike a spa, yoga studio lounge, or even an airport) because they are unhealthy.²⁵

In my discussions on social media, many of the same issues arose for most people: the hatred of waiting, the dislike of feeling idle, and the annoyance, boredom, and impatience that follows.²⁶ Users felt as though there is a lost opportunity cost in waiting.²⁷ From my research, another issue was brought up: the fear of neglect, of literally dying in the waiting room,²⁸ which is heightened by the fact that most people within these spaces feel nervous about germs, and that they will get sick simply by waiting there.²⁹ The idea that waiting rooms are contaminated spaces was even further emphasized when one hospital decided to ban magazines for fear of spreading sickness.³⁰



Rebecca Onie cogently asked a room at a TEDMED Talk: “What if our healthcare system kept us healthy?”³¹

“So every day [in the United States] three million patients pass through about 150,000 clinic waiting rooms in this country. And what do they do when they’re there? They sit, they watch the goldfish in the fish tank, they read extremely old copies of Good Housekeeping magazine. But mostly we all just sit there forever, waiting. How did we get here where we devote hundreds of acres and thousands of hours to waiting? What if we had a waiting room where you don’t just sit when you’re sick, but where you go to get healthy?”³²

This goes back to the notion of the waiting room as not being a place for “health” – that it is in fact a place of “sickness.” Onie suggests that we could be creating clinical spaces that allow for knowledge about actual health – where to find good, healthy, inexpensive food for those experiencing poverty and malnutrition, where to find jobs for differently-abled people or people in need, who to talk to in terms of finding an exercise plan, where to go if we are depressed, pregnant, or suicidal.³³ Nearly all of these issues are faced by students, as well as the poverty-stricken people that Onie speaks about in her talk.³⁴ Concordia’s Health Clinic is part of a larger network, Concordia Health Services, which does provide access to a nutritionist, the Downtown and Loyola campus gyms, mental health, and career planning, which is a good step – however, in the Health Clinic waiting room, all you see is pamphlets on disease. The information about the other services are scattered elsewhere around campus, leaving students on their own in terms of finding what they need. Yet again, improvements could be made in order to allow for a better built environment that promotes education on these services – something to be expected of an educational institution with so many services to be offered.

When searching online for the “best waiting rooms,” Google also suggests searches for “best waiting room music,” “best waiting room magazines,” “best waiting room toys,” “best waiting room colors,” and “best waiting room chairs.”³⁵ Many of these searches provide example of excellent suggestions and beginnings into ways that hospitals and clinics can improve their designs for their users. “No matter the specific location or function, waiting rooms set the tone for the healthcare experience. When we enter a waiting room, we immediately become aware of the surrounding sights, sounds and smells.”³⁶ Within these spaces, there is a heightened need and importance towards aesthetics, lighting, exterior views, comfortable seating, clean furnishings, calming artwork and music, plants, and productive distractions, while taking into account issues of accessibility. “If properly designed, waiting rooms support an important part of healing and wellness.”³⁷ Ultimately, tolerance for time spent waiting depends on the perceived value for which we wait,³⁸ and in that waiting time, patients should feel free from surveillance, comfortable in their seating and in their privacy. Even small things like human interaction upon arrival,³⁹ or being offered something small, for free, such as a hot beverage, or on a larger scale, interactive pillows designed by muf, could be leaps and bounds better than the current state of sterile, cold environment.⁴⁰

Healthcare designers have been looking at the designs of other spaces, such as airports and malls, for improvements made to medical spaces. One might argue that this pushes for consumerism within these spaces. While I agree that we should consider distancing medical practice from consumerist tendencies, I also would argue that airports and malls do have many positive attributes in terms of offering a catered experience to the individual’s needs. Such spaces have taken steps towards creating a pleasurable experience – through artwork, aesthetics, design, music, human interaction, and many other creative avenues that allow for a happier and, I would argue, healthier user. Moreover, as Onie states, we should be calling for spaces which offer a productive and full experience of real health – where there is access to knowledgeable people and information that can direct patients towards other a holistic understanding of health. Good health is not simply about going to an office, waiting to see a doctor, and being prescribed medication – and our medical spaces should not be reinforcing these ideas. Waiting rooms can be comfortable spaces, where learning continues outside the doctor’s office, allowing the patient more control over their own health. This is, in my eyes, the next step in terms of a better shared experience: tangible approaches to healthcare, rather than the continued promotion of sick care.

1 McCabe: Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, "Radical Improvements to Hospital Design," *Healthy Hospitals*, cabc, 2003

2 I have used the word healthy in quotations for this essay. Society's ideas of health are inherently warped, and our healthcare system does little to provide care for "health," rather, it provides what many argue to be "sick care."

3 Unless otherwise stated, in writing "the Health Clinic," I am referring to Concordia University

4 For the purpose of this study, I conducted discussions over Facebook and Reddit – see Annex 1 and 2.

5 Dr. Debajyoti Pati, "Influence of Positive Distractions on Children in Two Waiting Areas," *Health Environments and Research Journal*, 4, no. 3 (2011): 124

6 Parisa Zraati, "Colour Consideration In Waiting Area in Hospital," Paper presented at International Conference of Research into Design, Indian Institute of Technology, Madras, Chennai, January 2013

7 Dr. Thomas Strickland, "Spaces of Sickness and Health," (lecture, Concordia University, Montreal, QC, July 22, 2014).

8 Zoe Wonfor, in conversation with the author, July 2014.

9 Audrey Em, in discussion on a Facebook post, July 2014. See Annex 1 for full discussion and answers

10 Olivia Faulconbridge, in discussion with the author, July 2014

11 Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*, Translated by A.M. Sheridan, Travistock Publications Limited, 1973. vx.

12 Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic*. xviii.

13 Ibid., 55; Dr. Debajyoti Pati, "Influence of Positive Distractions," 137.

14 These concepts can be furthered in Michel Foucault's 1977 book, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. (New York: Pantheon Books).

15 Adrian Forty, "The Modern Hospital in England and France: The Social and Medical Uses of Architecture," *Buildings and Society*, Edited by Anthony King, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980. 68.

16 Dr. Thomas Strickland, "Spaces of Sickness and Health," (lecture: walking tour, Concordia University, Montreal, QC, August 14, 2014).

17 Dr. Thomas Strickland, "Spaces of Sickness and Health," (July 22, 2014). As seen and discussed in Dr. Strickland's Art History course, the "Personal Hygiene (circa 1950)" Youtube video (from the Prelinger Archives of San Francisco, USA) of the U.S. Army (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ccn2Polb3Rw>) was one of a series of videos released by the U.S. Army in the 1950s on personal hygiene and health. Now on Youtube, a quick search for "personal hygiene" shows a number of educational videos about the personal hygiene for children, grooming, products, routines, and more. The pervasive culture around the topic of cleanliness, "health" and being a "healthy" member of society continues to remain present in our visual culture today.

18 Concordia University, "Health Services," Concordia University, last accessed August 19, 2014.

19 Crystal Harrison, in discussion with the author, July 2014. Crystal mentioned that she had once walked into the Health Clinic during the 2013-2014 winter semester. She was feeling incredible pain in her abdomen, and waited to be seen by a doctor for a few hours. When she left, she received a message on Facebook from an acquaintance, who was upset that she had not said hello to him. "I didn't see him, because I wasn't paying attention to the people in the waiting room. I was in too much pain to notice something a few feet away, did he really expect me to say hi to him?"

20 Annmarie Adams and Thomas Schlich, "Design for Control," *Medical History*, 50 (2006): 309

21 Evie Haugland, in discussion on Facebook post, July 2014; Laura Bergeron, in discussion with the author, July 2014.

22 See Reddit conversation in Annex 2 with "candyxmuffin."

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid; Olivia Faulconbridge, in discussion with the author, July 2014

25 Laura Bergeron, July 2014; Olivia Faulconbridge, July 2014

26 Asieh Harati, in discussion on Facebook post, July 2014.

27 David Clarkson, in discussion on Facebook post, July 2014; Sylvie Larocque, in discussion on Facebook post, July 2014.

28 Michael Castillo, "Man Found Dead in NYC Hospital Waiting Room More than 8 Hours after Entering," *CBSNews*, last updated January 24, 2014, last accessed August 19, 2014.

29 Melissa Lemieux, in discussion on Facebook post, July 2014

30 Dakshana Bascaramurty, "Hospital Bans Waiting-Room Magazines," *The Globe and Mail*, last updated on August 23, 2012, last accessed on August 19, 2014.

31 Rebecca Onie, "What if our Healthcare System kept us Healthy?" Filmed April 2012, TEDMED video, 16:31. From Transcript by Timothy Covell. Last accessed on August 19, 2014

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid.

35 Google search conducted on 16/08/2014.

36 Christine Guzzo Vickery, "Clinic Design: The Waiting Room," *Healthcare Design Magazine*, last updated March 26, 2012, last accessed August 19, 2014

37 Ibid.

38 Fuelfor, "The Waiting Experience: Reducing the Pain of the Healthcare Wait," Fuelfor, 2014, last accessed August 19, 2014

39 Carolyn Shierhorn, "Waiting Rooms, too, Can Promote Patient Health," *The Do*, last updated May 1, 2014, last accessed August 19, 2014

40 David Fried, "Lessons from Waiting Rooms," *The Profitable Practice*, last updated November 19, 2012, last accessed August 19, 2014; cabc: Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, "Radical Improvements to Hospital Design," *Healthy Hospitals*, cabc, 2003.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adams, Annmarie and Thomas Schlich. "Design for Control." *Medical History*, 50 (2006): 303-324.

Bascaramurty, Dakshana. "Hospital Bans Waiting-Room Magazines." *The Globe and Mail*. Last updated on August 23, 2012. Last accessed on August 19, 2014.

CABE. "Radical Improvements to Hospital Design." *Healthy Hospitals*. CABE: Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, 2003.

Castillo, Michael. "Man Found Dead in NYC Hospital Waiting Room More than 8 Hours after Entering." *CBSNews*. Last updated January 24, 2014. Last accessed August 19, 2014.

Concordia University. "Health Services." Concordia University. Last accessed August 19, 2014.

Forty, Adrian. "The Modern Hospital in England and France: The Social and Medical Uses of Architecture." *Buildings and Society*. Ed. Anthony King. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980.

Foucault, Michel. *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*. Translated by

A.M. Sheridan. Travistock Publications Limited, 1973.

Fried, David. "Lessons from Waiting Rooms." *The Profitable Practice*. Last updated November 19, 2012. Last accessed August 19, 2014.

Fuelfor. "The Waiting Experience: Reducing the Pain of the Healthcare Wait." Fuelfor. Last updated 2014. Last accessed August 19, 2014.

Guzzo Vickery, Christine. "Clinic Design: The Waiting Room." *Healthcare Design Magazine*. Last updated March 26, 2012. Last accessed August 19, 2014.

Onie, Rebecca. "What if our Healthcare System kept us Healthy?" Filmed April 2012, TEDMED video, 16:31. From Transcript by Timothy Covell. Last accessed August 19, 2014.

Pati, Dr. Debajyoti. "Influence of Positive Distractions on Children in Two Waiting Areas." *Health Environments and Research Journal (HERD)*, 4, no. 3 (2011): 124-140.

Shierhorn, Carolyn. "Waiting Rooms, too, Can Promote Patient Health." *The Do*. Last updated May 1, 2014. Last accessed August 19, 2014.

Strickland, Dr. Thomas. "Spaces of Sickness and Health." Lectures. Concordia University, Montreal, QC, July 22 & August 14, 2014.

Zraati, Parisa. "Colour Consideration in Waiting Areas in Hospitals." Paper presented at International Conference of Research into Design, Indian Institute of Technology, Madras, Chennai, January 2013.

TURCOT









