

Materiality and “l’art intégré”: Charles Daudelin’s Art in the Urban Context

Damien Fortin

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By: Damien Fortin

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Signed by the final examining committee:

_____ Chair

_____ Examiner
Dr Cynthia Hammond

_____ Examiner
Dr Nicola Pezolet

_____ Supervisor
Dr Johanne Sloan

Approved by _____
Dr Anne Whitelaw, Graduate Program Director

_____ Catherine Wild, Dean of Faculty

Date _____

ABSTRACT

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A politic of integration of art in urban spaces emerged in Quebec during the 1960s. Moving away from the art of the monument, artists in Quebec began to create contemporary art designed specifically for an urban context. Charles Daudelin was part of a new generation of artists experimenting with the possibilities of urban art, changing the relationship between art, the public and the manner both come into contact. This thesis will explore the contribution of Daudelin to the emergence of art in the urban context and to what eventually became categorized as “public art”. Inspired by Le Corbusier’s “synthèse des arts” concept, Daudelin established his own artistic practice that involved greater collaboration between artists and architects, as well as any actors involved in public projects. Using several of Daudelin’s projects as case studies, this thesis will explore how Daudelin elaborated his approach to urban art and what he referred to as “l’art intégré” – an expression he used to name the course he established and taught at L’école des beaux-arts de Montréal from 1964 to 1968.

Following a critical analysis of Daudelin’s artistic practice, this thesis will aim to establish Daudelin’s lasting contribution to public art as well as the different shortcomings of his understanding of art in an urban context. Using theoretical writing on the nature of public space and its relation to art, I will define Daudelin’s understanding of public space in the context of emerging interventions that questioned the open and democratic discourse surrounding public space.

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Introduction

From 1960 to 1966, the liberalization of Quebec under the Jean Lesage government profoundly changed the development of the province. As the state took control of health and education, setting a clear separation between the Catholic Church and the government, a growing economy and openness to the world transformed the urban landscape of Quebec's cosmopolitan center: Montreal. The need for a new urban infrastructure and the rise of a new educated middle class created many opportunities for architects, engineers, as well as artists. With the Quiet Revolution, the population of Quebec was trying to understand its own collective identity and its relation to Canada and the world. Artists, architects or designers were responding to the international development of modernism as well as to the more avant-garde movements of the 1960s. At the same time, they tried to define Quebec's place within this larger art world, looking both for the uniqueness of Quebec's culture and what it shared with the Western World.

To begin a dialogue with modernism, as an artist or an art critic is a complex and sometime contradictory process. The shifting nature of modernism through many different movements makes it quite difficult to pin point exactly what defines it as a current; compared to a school of art, there are no set rules that everybody agrees upon and if there are some for a limited time, these are quickly dismissed or ignored by artists in a different circle or geographical location. In this sense, the intersection of Quebec and modernism is a blurry line and art historians must pay attention to nuances in the shifting discourse over time.

The 1960s also marks the rise of a certain criticism of modernism as a paradigm.¹ The emphasis on an "ocular-centric" experience of art, to the detriment of other senses, was questioned as was the perceived elitism and male domination of the modernist art world.² It is in this context that the painter and sculptor Charles Daudelin (1920-2001) began his mature period as an artist. Trained in the 1940s and 1950s under the influence of Paul-Émile Borduas (1905-1960) and Alfred Pellan (1906-1988), Daudelin wanted his art practice to also mirror the new artistic developments of the 1960s.

The critique of modernism led to a revision of the approach to the architecture of official or public buildings. As art in an urban context became more common, with monumental sculptures accompanying the emergence of a new urban landscape, Daudelin saw the perfect opportunity to extend his own understanding of modernism. Instead of rejecting modernism altogether, Daudelin saw "urban art" as a perfect opportunity to work through modernist criticism and to integrate a shifting attitude toward art in his practice. Through a version of Le Corbusier's "synthèse des arts" ideas and by collaborating with architects, city planners and engineers, Daudelin aimed to change our relation to the built environment. Like other artists of his generation, he departed from the sacrosanct idea of the autonomy of art and created sculptures that are in a dialogue with their surrounding landscape. Through this approach, a focus on materiality and the expressive possibilities of industrial materials emerged and Daudelin

¹ Modernism has been criticized from different perspectives. For more, see Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Random House, 1961) or Robert Venturi's manifesto, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (1966).

² For more on the social climate for modernist women artists, see Cindy Nemser, *Art Talk: Conversation with Twelves Women Artists* (New York: Scribner, 1975). Describing Lee Krasner's work, Hans Hoffman once said: "This is so good, you would not know it was painted by a woman".

saw in those materials the potential to engage the public in a reflection on the nature of the built environment.

This thesis sets out to understand Charles Daudelin's contribution to the emergence of contemporary art in an urban context. What eventually became known as "public art", a category of art with its own issues and inner logic, evolved out of the practice of artists experimenting with a new context of creation during the 1960s and 1970s. Daudelin's own definition of "l'art intégré" and what it meant in terms of possibilities for artists working in collaboration with architects, engineers and city planners defined his approach to art in an urban context. My thesis will examine the influence of Le Corbusier (1887-1965), whom Daudelin met in the late 1940s, and I will discuss how his concept of "synthèse des arts" was partly recuperated by Daudelin.³ I will examine the similarities as well as the distinctions between Le Corbusier's and Daudelin's understandings of harmony among the arts.

To get a better grasp of Daudelin as an artist working in the 1960s and 1970s, I will take into account the larger context of the art world of the period. The 1960s can be seen as a transitional period from late modernism to more contemporary movements that contradicted or criticized modernist principles. Daudelin is part of a generation of artists that were trained in the 1940s under masters who defined modernism in Quebec such as Pellán and Borduas, but who reached maturity as artists at a time when the validity of modernist ideas were questioned. This thesis will therefore look at Daudelin's art practice in the light of this conflict between the artist's education and the reality of the contemporary art scene of the 1960s onward. I will analyze how some contemporaries of Daudelin were also interested in a greater integration of different arts into a harmonious

³ Louise Déry, "Daudelin : l'art dans la ville," in *Daudelin* (Quebec: Musée du Québec, 1997), 82.

whole – such as Julien Hébert (1917-1994), who designed the logo and furniture for Expo 67 (fig. 1), the 1967 Universal Exposition, and Jean-Paul Mousseau, who was in charge of the integration of art inside the Montreal Metro stations.

This thesis will argue that what sets Daudelin apart from his contemporaries is his interest in materiality and his exploration of industrial materials for sculpture. The possibilities inherent in material in terms of resistance, weight, elasticity, etc. determined the shape of Daudelin's sculpture. Moreover, the choice of the material was influenced by the surrounding materiality of the built environment where his sculptures were installed. Daudelin's art practice was driven by a desire to constantly explore new materials and by his desire to create a dialogue between his work and the physicality of the built environment. To achieve harmony between his work and its setting, Daudelin tried as often as possible to work in close relation with architects, engineers and city planners to reflect the relation between art and architecture in an urban context.

Lastly, I will look at Daudelin's art in urban spaces in light of the later developments of public art. I will identify the limitations of Daudelin's approach to urban art in relation to an on-going debate surrounding the nature of public art and questions about who constitutes the true "public" of public art. I will assess how Daudelin's understanding of public space differs from contemporary perspectives on public space; using Rosalyn Deutsche's and Miwon Kwon's writings of public art, I will look at Daudelin's art in relation to the discourse that supports the existence of public spaces, analyzing its exclusionary practices as well as its link to the idea of democracy inside public space.

Charles Daudelin and “l’art intégré”

Following his collaboration with architect Jean-Louis Lalonde (1923-2007) on *La maison en béton* (1962) (fig. 2), Charles Daudelin used the experience he gained in architecture to introduce a course on “les arts intégrés” at L’école des beaux-arts de Montréal. From 1964 to 1968, the year the school was incorporated into the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM), Daudelin taught students about the potential for artists working with architects.⁴ While there is little information available on the subject of the course, it seems to have evolved out of Daudelin’s own experience working alongside architecture in an urban context, creating sculptures commissioned for the erection of new buildings. From this collaboration between architects, engineers, city planners and himself, Daudelin pushed his idea of what “arts intégrés” – or integrated arts – could mean for a new generation of artists. While attempts to create a synthesis or integration of the arts had been proposed since the mid-nineteenth century, its application has varied from one movement to another. Daudelin established his own vision of an integration of the arts at a time when such ideas were being considered in relation to public buildings and government programs, to achieve a different conception of the nature of urban space.

Besides for the name of the course he created, Daudelin did not use the expression “art intégré” to describe what he was trying to achieve. Instead, he preferred to describe the relation he had with the people involved on different projects and to discuss how the shape of his artwork mirrors the needs of the other people involved, as

⁴“Biographie, les années 1958 à 1965,” accessed July 6, 2012, http://www.charlesdaudelin.org/www/Textes.php?locale=fr-CA&Article_No=14&Type_No=2.

well as the project's directives.⁵ The word "intégré", in French, often implies a technical aspect which seems to reflect Daudelin's practical approach when it came to adapting his work to the context of any project. Based on Daudelin's own projects and the use of the word "intégré", I would argue that his course must have focused on both the artistic creativity of students and a rational approach to technical concerns. Just like architects, whom Daudelin often worked in close collaboration with, he was attentive to creating works that balance aesthetic qualities and pragmatic concerns.

Daudelin incorporated an architectural dimension to his art practice almost from the beginning. Shortly after he returned from France in 1949, he started making models for the architecture firm Rother et Trudeau; Charles Trudeau hired him the same year to create murals inside the Peel Tavern which he was renovating.⁶ Even in Daudelin's paintings, there is often much attention to the sense of space in the juxtaposition of abstract shapes. In his painting *Fruits dans l'espace* (1946) (fig. 3) for example, the illusion of depth is achieved through a complex play between drawing and color. The contrast of colors that expands beyond the lines delimiting the objects creates a dynamic space in which objects are receding and advancing, shifting from background to foreground.

However, it is during the 1960s that Daudelin's focuses on collaborative projects, creating urban sculptures that are integrated into the construction of public buildings. After *La maison en béton*, Daudelin was invited by architect Dimitri Dimakopoulos (1929-1995) to create an artwork located in front of a government building in

⁵ For more see Laurent Lamy, "Daudelin. L'art intégré ou la recherche d'un accord total avec le monde," *Force 18* (1972) and Louise Déry, "Daudelin : l'art dans la ville," in *Daudelin* (Quebec: Musée du Québec, 1997).

⁶ Louise Déry, "Daudelin : l'art dans la ville," in *Daudelin* (Quebec: Musée du Québec, 1997), 84.

Charlottetown in 1966.⁷ The following year, he collaborated with architect Victor Pruss (b. 1917) on the construction of the Mont-Royal metro station for which he created 32 *joints verticals* (1967) (fig. 4); a series of vertical columns in aluminum paced along the metro platform.⁸ Of those projects Daudelin later said that:

“J’aime être enserré dans les limites étroites d’un projet comme dans un engrenage... En tant qu’artiste, ce travail m’oblige à travailler avec les architectes, les techniciens en éclairage ou en hydrolique, avec les ingénieurs sur leur propre terrain.”⁹

Out of this desire to use the constraints of a project as the starting point of his creative process, Daudelin created a synthesis of the arts, bringing sculpture and architecture into a dialogic relation with materiality and technology. The fact that materials such as concrete or aluminum were developed mainly for the construction industry does not mean that their application is exclusive to that field. As an artist, Daudelin demonstrates the expressive possibilities in materials often reduced to their practical applications.

Synthesis of the Arts: A Brief History

The idea of a synthesis of the arts can be traced to European currents of the late 19th and early 20th century. Richard Wagner (1813-1883) used the word *Gesamtkunstwerk*, meaning total work of art, to describe what he was trying to achieve with his romantic operas. The aim was to create a work of art that incorporates many disciplines in a unified whole such as music, dance, drama, and singing, along with

⁷ Idem, 87.

⁸ Annie Gérin, “Mont-Royal et Langelier : Daudelin souterrain,” accessed March 31, 2013, http://www.charlesdaudelin.org/www/Textes.php?locale=fr-CA&Article_No=300&Type_No=18.

⁹ Laurent Lamy, “Daudelin. L’art intégré ou la recherche d’un accord total avec le monde,” *Force 18* (1972): 47.

costume design and set decoration.¹⁰ This approach to the arts was also promoted by Russian immigrants to Germany and local German artists who were part of the Blaue Reiter group in Munich. Among them, the painter Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944) wrote extensively on creating a synthesis of the arts in which modern art would develop alongside music and theater. Kandinsky himself wrote plays between 1909 and 1911, giving them titles based on colors such as his play *Violet*, in which indications on sound and the decor are as prominent as the dialogue.¹¹

A distinctly modernist approach to the concept of *Gesamtkunstwerk* emerged with the Bauhaus school, first established in Weimar in 1919 by Walter Gropius (1883-1969). Gropius contended that artists and architects should also be craftsmen, that they should have experience working with different materials and artistic mediums, including industrial design, fashion design, theatre and music.¹² The Bauhaus upheld the importance of a collective effort in art's production and promoted the integration of new technologies to artists' practice.¹³ The Bauhaus school tried to avoid the distinction between craftsmen and artists; mass production and art production. The goal was to unify arts under a common vision. In this sense, it is ironic, considering Gropius' background as an architect, that the Bauhaus school in Weimar never had an architecture department; adding architecture to the school curriculum would seem to be the logical extension of the Bauhaus philosophy. It is only in 1928, when Hannes Meyer replaced Gropius as

¹⁰Juliet Koss, *Modernism After Wagner* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 25.

¹¹Gérard Conio, *L'avant-garde Russe et la synthèse des arts* (Lausanne: L'Age d'Homme), 106.

¹²Koss, 207.

¹³Eva Forgas, *Bauhaus: Art as Life* (Cologne: Walther König, 2012), 36.

director, that the Bauhaus school in Dessau established an architecture section and that students became involved in the construction of private houses.¹⁴

Le Corbusier and “displacement of concepts”

After the rise of Nazism, which forced the closing of the Bauhaus school in 1933, and following the Second World War, there was a return to the idea of a synthesis or total work of art at play in the post-war reconstruction period. Among the major architects involved during this period, Le Corbusier was interested in harmonizing the overall plan of reconstruction with the development of modern society.¹⁵ If the Bauhaus focused more on design, Le Corbusier wanted to place architecture as the commanding force that shapes the development of society’s physical environment. He emphasized the use of “pure forms”, a concept he had developed in his essay *Towards a New Architecture* (1923). Highly influential, the essay draws comparison between the pure forms of machines and their parts on the one hand, and the Parthenon on the other. Le Corbusier argues that architecture should be concerned by volume rather than facades; successful architecture for Le Corbusier is not achieved through decorative elements but by creating simple, harmonious forms to achieve balance between the parts of a construction.

For Le Corbusier, architecture and visual arts should emphasize the symbolic representation of our environment and offer almost a refuge against the chaotic nature of large urban centers, with its bright advertisement, movement and noise.¹⁶ Le Corbusier saw a connection between what we see and how we act. According to him, the architect “by his arrangement of forms, realises an order which is a pure creation of his spirit; by

¹⁴ “Hannes Meyer,” accessed September 2, 2013, <http://bauhaus-online.de/en/atlas/personen/hannes-meyer>.

¹⁵ Stanislaus Von Moos, *Le Corbusier: Elements of Synthesis* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 2009), 265.

¹⁶ Von Moos, 266.

forms and shapes he affects our senses to an acute degree and provokes plastic emotions; by the relationships he creates, he wakes profound echoes in us.”¹⁷ Through an exploration of “pure forms” – the simple beauty of basic geometrical shapes – modernist architecture aimed to balance the erratic nature of modern society.¹⁸

Alan Colquhoun in analysing Le Corbusier’s production as a painter versus his architectural realisations speaks of a “displacement of concepts” to describe the morphological transformation from the first medium to the latter.¹⁹ There is a similarity between Le Corbusier’s painting *Nature morte à la pile d’assiettes* (1920) (fig. 5), with its strong contours, and the sinuous lines of his *Villa Savoye* (1931) (fig. 6) from a bird’s-eye view, for example; Colquhoun points out how the general principles that govern the forms in his painting are displaced onto his architectural plans. While it is really in the post-war period that he developed his “synthèse des arts” concept, Le Corbusier, looking back at his early work, pushed the idea of a parallel between his paintings and his buildings; he tended to look at his early works in the light of his new interest in creating a greater synthesis of major arts such as painting, sculpture and architecture.²⁰ The synthesis of the arts in Le Corbusier happens through this displacement of concepts in which the principles on which visual arts are based are incorporated into his architecture plans. As he said himself: “architecture is the synthesis of the major arts. Architecture is form, volume, color, acoustics and music.”²¹ Architecture becomes the most complete form of art because it draws on all aspects of arts and applies them into the function of

¹⁷ Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture* (New York: Frederik A. Praeger, 1946), 1.

¹⁸ Von Moos, 278.

¹⁹ Alan Colquhoun, “Displacement of Concepts,” *Architectural Digest* 43 no. 4 (April 1972): 236.

²⁰ Christopher Pearson, in *The built surface* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2002): 211.

²¹ Le Corbusier in Stanislaus Von Moos, *Le Corbusier: Elements of Synthesis* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 2009), 266.

the building. The visual concerns of painters and sculptors or the attention paid to rhythm and acoustics by musicians are transposed onto the functional nature of architecture; volume, form, color, etc. are brought together under the roof of architecture to create a greater harmony of the arts.

Even though Le Corbusier's paintings seemed to morph into his architecture, he always upheld the importance of each art's autonomy. Painting or sculpture was not subordinated to architecture in his plans; the success of a project would lie in harmonizing the arts without sacrificing the autonomous quality of painting, sculpture or the building.²² In his model for the *United Nations Headquarter* (1947) for example, Le Corbusier originally intended to use a Brancusi or perhaps a Lipchitz sculpture as the focal point for the complex, creating a balance between the monumental aspect of the architecture and the human scale of the sculpture. Keeping the autonomy of each medium, Le Corbusier wanted each art to be perceived in relation to the other while maintaining their independence. Speaking of the lack of ornamentation, he justified the stark elevations of the buildings he designed by arguing that: "nous ne sommes pas, à l'heure actuel, partisans de la fresque, de la frieze, de la métope [...] Nous détachons du mur la sculpture et la peinture et les laissons seul agir avec le radium qu'elles peuvent contenir."²³

The articulation of Le Corbusier's *synthèse des arts* in the post-war period often proved to be difficult when it came to define the role of the artist versus the role of the architect. In the preface he wrote for Paul Damaz's book *Art in European Architecture: Synthèse des arts*, he described two ways in which artists and architects can work

²²Idem, 273.

²³Idem, 273.

together. The first one implies a chance encounter between an architect and an artist who happens to exemplify exactly the architect's vision when conceiving his plan; the second approach, implies a dialogue between the artist and the architect from the beginning of the project, but with the latter Le Corbusier emits a warning: "But watch out! This is where things begin to hum. Dialogue implies speaking the same language; up till now a great part of the syntax of architectural painting or sculpture has not been the preoccupation of either painter or sculptor."²⁴ In both situations, Le Corbusier seems to imply that the artist is subordinated to the architect. The influence of Le Corbusier's *synthèse des arts* reached Quebec in the 1950s. In his article *Vers une synthèse des arts majeurs* published in 1959, Jean Simard supports Le Corbusier's approach and compares his synthesis to the relation between architects and artists during the middle ages. Using the example of cathedrals, he explains how artists and architects worked together from the beginning of construction until the completion of the cathedral so that both the building and the art are conceived simultaneously.²⁵ Simard seems to present Le Corbusier's ideas with a different ideological conception of the role of the artist, a position closer to Daudelin's own understanding of the artist's role. While Le Corbusier keeps a hierarchical relation in which the artist is subordinated to the architect, Simard implies a much more leveled relation between both parties and puts forward a true sense of collaboration from the ground up.

As mention before, Le Corbusier wanted to keep the autonomy of each art and the artistic freedom of the artists he collaborated with, but the practical application of a synthesis of the arts under the guidance of the architect often worked against the

²⁴ Le Corbusier in Paul Damaz, *Art in European Architecture: Synthèse des Arts* (Whitefish: Literary Licensing, 2011): viii.

²⁵ Jean Simard, "Vers une synthèse des arts majeurs," *Liberté* 1 no. 3 (1959): 148.

autonomy of each art. By emphasizing a less hierarchical relation between artists and architects, Simard puts the emphasis on a common goal towards which artists and architects work together instead of a context in which the artist is working for the architect.²⁶ Simard's approach to a synthesis of the arts is closer to Daudelin's "art intégré" and reflects his own approach to art in an urban context. Daudelin engaged in with the architect and other people involved on a project; he does not blindly follows the architect and instead aim for a relation in which each listen to each other's concerns, both technical and aesthetic.

Schism within Modernism: The Autonomy of Art

As this synthesis of the arts was explored by some architects such as Le Corbusier or Frank Lloyd Wright with his "prairie style" houses, the segregation of each medium was insisted upon by some high modernist artists and critics.²⁷ Clement Greenberg (1909-1994), arguably the most influential art critic in the United States during the 1940s and 1950s, focused on purely formal reading of artworks which depended on medium specificity. In his essay "Modernist Painting", first published in 1965, he argues that: "the essence of modernism lies in the use of the characteristic methods of a discipline to criticize the discipline itself, not in order to subvert it but in order to entrench it more firmly in its area of competence. Modernism used art to call attention to art."²⁸ The idea that an architect would be concerned with issues pertaining to sculpture or painting was irrelevant for Greenberg since every art must be medium-specific.

²⁶ For more on the reception of *synthèse des arts* in Quebec, see Joan Ockman, in *Art + Architecture: New Visions, New Perspectives* (Helsinki: Alvar Aalto Academy, 2007).

²⁷ Frank Lloyd Wright did not apply Le Corbusier's synthesis of the arts concept literally but his work sought a greater harmony between architecture and nature. For more see Neil Levine, *The Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1996).

²⁸ Clement Greenberg in Francis Frascina and Charles Harrison. ed, *Modern Art and Modernism: A Critical Anthology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1982), 5.

As the international style in architecture came to dominate the landscape of large urban centers, architecture seems to have followed a kind of “Greenbergian” model, in that an analogous approach to medium specificity in architecture was favored instead of creating a synthesis of the arts. Le Corbusier influenced the rationalism behind the international style but his harmonizing approach toward art and architecture was often lost in its development. Among examples of the new style, Mies Van Der Rohe’s *Seagram Building* (1958) (fig. 7) in New York City or I. M. Pei’s *Place Ville Marie* (1962) (fig. 8) in Montreal are dedicated to the “form follows function” ethos. If Le Corbusier’s plans can be seen as a balance between organic forms and rational planning, the later developments of the international style focused more on a pragmatic approach to architectural concerns. Ludwig Mies van der Rohe (1886-1969), for example, designed buildings that explore the possibilities of modern materials such as sheet glass, concrete or reinforced steel. He often referred to his style as “skin and bones”, meaning that his architecture leaves the basic framework supporting the building visible.²⁹ Mies saw his rational approach and use of modern material as expressing what is specific to the modern era, just as classical architecture defines the spirit of Ancient Greece.

1960s: Modernism Under Attack

At the beginning of the 1960s, a critique of modernist art and architecture pointing out the failure of different projects started spreading among scholars and critics. The international style of architecture was criticized for creating environments disconnected from social life.³⁰ By creating a style deemed “international”, architects

²⁹ For more on Mies van der Rohe’s approach to architecture, see Philip Johnson’s seminal book on the architect. Philip Johnson, *Mies van der Rohe* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1953).

³⁰ Eleanor Morris, *British Town Planning and Urban Design: Principles and Policy* (London: Longman, 1997), 107.

erected buildings that lack the cultural specificity of the space they occupied. Jane Jacobs' book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, originally published in 1961, went so far as to imply that modernist urban planning rejected the city altogether.³¹ Rational urban planning and architecture devoid of ornamentations failed to respond to the complex layered network of relations that constitute a society.

The critique of modernist urban planning and architecture led to new initiatives that aimed to correct the alienating effect of failed modernist projects. The 1960s saw the emergence of government policies that aimed to integrate art with the urban environment. As Tom Finkelpearl writes in his introduction to *Dialogues in Public Art* (2001), architects were sometime vilified for having created an austere built environment.³² Commissions for large urban sculptures multiplied and artists were brought into the development of plazas and squares to compensate from a sense of alienation from the physical environment. Through artistic interventions, the bleak or austere modernist skyline could become more welcoming. The potential of art to create an experiential dimension in what were otherwise rational and functional spaces allowed the public to have an expressive response to the surrounding environment.

La maison en béton

It is in this context of urban renewal that Daudelin and Lalonde's *Maison en béton* (1963) can be seen as an experiment in domestic architecture – as an attempt to reinterpret the manner in which architecture introduces new modes of construction. The project originated in a contest that Lalonde won in 1961 to design an affordable house that would fill the needs of an average middle class family with children. The house

³¹ Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Random House, 1961), 16.

³² Tom Finkelpearl, *Dialogues in Public Art* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001), ix.

explores the possibility of using concrete as the main building material, and so all the exterior walls are made of exposed concrete slabs. As his contribution to this design, Daudelin conceived of two exterior murals. The first one, on the front elevation, consists of a series of rectangular shapes, linked in a wavy pattern which breaks the monotony of the grey slabs. The second one, realized on the yard side of the house, is more playful and represents musicians and their instruments. The two murals complement each other: the first one is abstract and more decorative in spirit while the latter is figurative and expressive; introducing a sense of narrative in the space where children would play.

Following the completion of the house, the newspaper *La Presse* dedicated a twelve page booklet on the house titled: “La demeure de l’avenir? Réalité d’aujourd’hui!”³³ The newness of the design, mostly due to the extensive use of concrete, interested the press, which nevertheless perceived an alien aspect to the house, as if it was not of its time. Concrete has been used as a construction material, under different forms, for a long time but it is its proliferation for walls, sidewalks and even monuments in the 20th century that changed our relation to this material. Daudelin and Lalonde are not introducing a new material but rather, acknowledging its ubiquity. Lalonde used the concrete for its technical qualities; it is a cheap and malleable material perfect for creating an entire house without raising the cost of production. But by using the walls as canvases, Daudelin brought out the expressive quality of the material. This treatment of the concrete opens up a space for a dialogue between the public and the house.

Daudelin never specifically referred to Le Corbusier’s “synthèse des arts” in interviews or in writing, preferring to talk about integration or collaboration.

³³ Valérie Vézina, accessed April 18, 2013, <http://maison.lapresse.ca/habitation/presentation-speciale/201109/26/01-4451427-la-demeure-de-lavenir.php>.

Nevertheless, it is very likely that he was familiar with Le Corbusier's theory of architecture since he met him while he was in France in the late 1940s. He was also in frequent contact with Fernand Léger (1881-1955) who he met in Montréal in 1943.³⁴ Léger had worked with Le Corbusier on *L'Esprit Nouveau Pavilion* (1925) (fig. 9) and had therefore been part of Le Corbusier's attempt to achieve a synthesis of arts, integrating fine arts and design and trying to balance each art without compromising their respective autonomy.³⁵ Through Léger and later Le Corbusier himself, Daudelin must have been aware of *L'esprit nouveau* ideas but it is significant that he departed from it by compromising the autonomy of each art. The murals blur the distinction between the architectural structure and the art. The "displacement of concepts" that characterizes Le Corbusier's synthesis of the arts is replaced by a more direct interaction between art and architecture. Through his murals, Daudelin explores the opposition between concrete as a mere construction material and concrete as an artistic medium.

In an article that explores the use of concrete for 20th century war memorials, Adrian Forty points out that the advent of concrete implies a loss for the art of masonry.³⁶ Not only is masonry traditional for the exterior walls of houses, and is symbolically attached to the idea of dwelling, there is also a marker of identity in the labor it requires. Using machine cut concrete slabs removes the human trace that lies at the heart of labour, symbolically connecting people through the shared experience of work, and the basic exchange of services on which societies depend. As Forty writes: "the concrete surroundings do not invite any kind of reflections on history, or even on the passage of

³⁴ Éloi de Grandmont, "Daudelin. Prix de peinture," *Le Canada*, April 17, 1946.

³⁵ Le Corbusier in Stanislaus Von Moos, *Le Corbusier: Elements of Synthesis* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 2009), 270.

³⁶ *Idem*, 80.

time; memory, if there be such a thing, is of the moment, it cannot be captured or preserved, and this the permanent newness of the concrete seems to acknowledge.”³⁷ To use concrete for a house signals a break with tradition at the same time as it opens new possibilities; instead of fostering a link with past production, concrete focuses on the immediate, and the technological possibilities that the future holds.

The ubiquitous nature of concrete in urban landscapes is such that we rarely stop to realize how it determines the organisation of urban spaces. By shifting its application to domestic architecture and interacting with the material, *La maison en béton* introduces rather than imposes a different form of modernist architecture. Daudelin and Lalonde do not assume that the public will automatically embrace new modes of construction; rather, they tried to ease the transition from traditional materials to an extensive use of concrete. Daudelin worked against the idea that art should be medium specific and instead attempted to bridge the gap between the language of architecture and its structural concerns.

In so many ways, architects and urban planners organize our response to the new technologies that are used in the creation of our physical environment. Daudelin realized the determining importance that architecture has on how we perceive our environment. He expressed his desire to be a part of the process in an interview with Gilles Hénault when he said: “[En faisant] de la sculpture qui participe à la rue, ou à un environnement ou à un édifice, j’ai l’impression que je m’implique plus dans la société.”³⁸ Daudelin’s murals evoke the collaborative effort that resulted in *La maison en béton* and other urban

³⁷ Adrian Forty, “Concrete and Memory,” In *Urban Memory, History and Amnesia in the Modern City* (New York: Routledge), 93.

³⁸ Gilles Hénault, “L’atelier de Charles Daudelin, entretien avec Gilles Hénault,” *Radio-Canada*, March 31, 1981, 13.

projects. A sense of human interaction with the material and of a dialogue between the architect and the artist breaks the alienating effect of what would have otherwise been a bleak house at odds with our cultural understanding of domestic architecture.

Daudelin and Materiality

This discussion regarding concrete can be expanded to include other materials. Whether it is Muntz metal or painted steel, Daudelin meditates on the nature of the material, its purpose and its properties to present it in a different light. Through the material of his sculptures, Daudelin invites the viewer to reflect upon those same materials we encounter every day. Daudelin enhances their expressive quality and creates a space for the viewer to interact with the urban environment's materiality; in the process, users are meant to feel welcome in the new landscape instead of feeling like it is imposed upon them. What originally started with a concrete house in the 1960s was sustained over the course of Daudelin's career to include other materials. Instead of using them only for their practical applications, he explored their qualities for artistic purposes; this is an element rarely considered by engineers and architects, hence the importance of collaboration from the ground up.

Materiality is a central force in Daudelin's practice. It is the overarching principle that links his gallery-oriented sculptures to his urban sculptures. Shapes emerge from the distinct qualities of materials. The point of departure that separates both aspects of his practice is the incorporation of modern construction technologies, and responsiveness to the urban environment in the latter while the former kind of sculptures can be seen as autonomous objects. The sculpture's forms are determined by the qualities specific to the material used but also by the immediate space it will occupy as well as its larger context.

The final work is a testimony to Daudelin's process, working with the materiality of his artwork and the surrounding technologies that constitute the built environment.

Poulia

Speaking of his sculpture-fountain *Poulia* (1966) (fig. 10) created for the plaza of a government building in Charlottetown, Daudelin said: “[...] J’ai travaillé en relation directe avec l’architecte et les formes sont le résultat à la fois du coût des matériaux, de mes contraintes d’atelier, de l’emplacement des édifices, des rapports d’échelle et de la visibilité qu’on peut avoir de la sculpture.”³⁹ The final shape of *Poulia* was contingent on the parameters of the project and not solely dependent on the intention of the artist. To get a good sense of *Poulia* as an art object, one must also take into consideration the surrounding, its materiality and get a sense of the dialogue that Daudelin articulated around *Poulia* and the built environment. The impact of the artwork expands beyond its circular T-shape towers and the water basin around it to include the sense of space created by the government building it accompanies. In the end, Daudelin's artistic vision encompasses the possibilities he saw both in terms of space and material, but the work is also a manifestation of the relationship between himself and the architect involved in the government building's construction.

Set close to the edge of a fifteen meter square water basin, *Poulia* rises proportionally to a height of 335 cm and extends to an area of almost five meters. Daudelin was invited to create the work by the architect Dimitri Dimakopoulos who he had met the previous year while teaching at L'École des beaux-arts de Montréal.⁴⁰ As with his bronze sculptures, Daudelin used cast iron to create a textured effect. The uneven

³⁹ Louise Déry, “Daudelin : l’art dans la ville,” in *Daudelin* (Quebec: Musée du Québec, 1997), 87.

⁴⁰ Idem, 87.

surface of the sculpture looks rough as if pressure and friction had been applied to certain areas; Daudelin leaves visible traces of his action in shaping the cast iron. The nine T-shapes installed asymmetrically, with the smaller ones on top of the others, mirror the title of the work. *Poulia*, which means bird in Greek, is referenced in the stylized “wings” of each shape extending horizontally. The organic quality of *Poulia*’s shape can be associated to a flock of birds beginning their ascension. However, the sculpture emphasizes the idea of movement rather than a figurative representation of birds. In the modernist tradition, Daudelin reduced the form to its most basic expression just as Greek is a root for the French language.

Aside from the reference to birds in the title, the organic quality of Daudelin’s sculpture also springs from his treatment of cast iron. The gritty surface of the ferrous alloy allowed Daudelin to demonstrate the transformative aspect of matter. As the writer and poet Robert Marteau wrote in an article about *Poulia*: “Tout ce métal vibre : il est minéral, roche, rocher qu’ont perforé les trombes et les érosions.”⁴¹ Daudelin emphasizes the raw and unfinished materiality of his work and wants the viewer to pay attention to it. Iron, an element found in nature, has been heated, oxidized, liquefied and then cooled down. It is in the control of those different processes that the creative impulse of the artist is seen: how much heat is concentrated, how the metal will drip and when the form will be fixed in its rigid cooled down shape, all depend on Daudelin’s decisions.

In addition to those technical aspects that an industrial worker with a good knowledge of metal might notice, the fountain aspect of the work, give the impression that the textured cast iron is a result of erosion – due to the jets of water hitting the surface. Here Daudelin not only references the process of shaping cast iron but also the

⁴¹ Robert Marteau, “Charles Daudelin conquiert sa liberté,” *Le Jour*, Montréal, 13 avril 1974, V-6.

natural way in which materials assumes a given form. One is reminded of French chemist Antoine Lavoissier famous maxim: “rien ne se perd, rien ne se crée, tout ce transforme.”⁴² Perhaps interesting to note, in relation to Daudelin’s title, is the fact that Lavoisier adapted his maxim from a similar line attributed to the ancient Greek philosopher Anaxagoras. In any case, what is more relevant is Daudelin’s exploration of the material and how he uses the possibilities offered by cast iron to make the viewer aware of the materiality of the built environment. Cast iron, like the concrete of the government’s building is matter shaped by nature and by human action; architects use its strengths and practicality while Daudelin explores its aesthetic qualities as well as its limits in terms of shape, texture or load bearing capacity.

It is not surprising that Dimakopoulos invited Daudelin to collaborate with him in Charlottetown since both men seem to have shared concerns for material and the way that architecture builds a sense of space. Several visual elements shared by the building and the sculpture-fountain suggest a close attention to what each other was doing. For the exterior walls of the building, Dimakopoulos used concrete mixed with powdered red stone native to Prince-Edward Island, which gives a pink color to the elevation and the building’s sides. To harmonize the sculpture with the architecture, Daudelin oxidized the cast iron which gives it a dark red color similar to rust, which seems even more appropriate since the sculpture is also a fountain and water has the same rusting effect on metal. The smooth transition from pink to red is reinforced by the well-balanced proportion between the work and the building. Speaking of *Poulia* in an interview for La

⁴² The maxim is well known in francophone Quebec as it is often taught to highschool chemistry students. The first Triennale Québécoise organized by the Musée d’art Contemporain de Montréal was organized around the theme: “Rien ne se perd, rien ne se crée, tout ce transforme”, <http://www.macm.org/expositions/la-triennale-quebecoise/>

Presse, Dimakopoulos saw the sculpture as a “focal point” towards which the lines of the building converge.⁴³

The relation between the building and Daudelin’s sculpture does not merely rest on the visual cues that link one to the other. While the colors, materials and proportions all work together to turn the sculpture into a “focal point”, each could be seen as representing a separate branch of modernism. Dimakopoulos’ building with its lack of ornamentations and its emphasis on balance rather than symmetry recalls the influence of the international style of architecture. Both wings on each side of the central section are unequal since function determines the form and not some pre-conceived idea about symmetry in architecture. The hard-edge lines of the building’s three rectangular sections contrast with Daudelin’s organic forms. The surrealist influence in Daudelin’s sculpture is at odds with the pragmatism associated with modernist architecture of the 1940s and 1950s.

Out of the relation between Daudelin and Dimakopoulos on the Charlottetown project, we see a new attempt to create a synthesis of the arts. The severe architecture of the international style is revisited to reflect the multitude of experiences that a space can trigger. Architecture, instead of focusing solely on questions of volume, form, balance, etc., takes into consideration the effect that its presence has on users. The imposing monolithic aspect of the architecture is brought into motion by *Poulia*. As the T shapes act as focal points to the building, the water jets of the fountain constantly blur and transform the view of both constructions.

It can be said that with *Poulia* Daudelin applied what Le Corbusier had often planned but was rarely able to realize. As mentioned before, the *United Nation*

⁴³ “Un monument de Daudelin pour Charlottetown,” *La Presse*, 1 November 1966.

Headquarters was supposed to include an exterior sculpture than would create a tension with the architecture. Daudelin's approach reflects the influence of Le Corbusier's synthesis of the arts but from the perspective of the artist instead of the architect. Le Corbusier's model was adapted by Daudelin to fit his own needs and also to change the relationship between artists and architects; the idea of a synthesis of the arts could lead to a greater interaction between the two professions.

Materiality and the Avant-Garde

It is not surprising that Daudelin began experimenting with materials in the 1960s. Around the same period, avant-garde artists had begun using eclectic materials to create what art historian and critic Max Kozloff called "soft sculpture."⁴⁴ What Kozloff means is not merely that sculpture is not hard or resistant anymore but that artists were expanding the possibilities that sculpture offers by exploring any available material to create three dimensional artworks. Foam, plastic and other "soft" materials were used to create sculptures whose shape seems conditional on their setting. A change of pressure or the effect of gravity could potentially modify the overall shape of a Robert Morris' felt sculpture for example, leaving the object in a precarious state. While marble and bronze sculptures from Ancient Greece have survived the test of time, many soft sculptures will degrade in time and eventually disappear even with the best care of curators. Therefore, one wonders why artists would create artworks that will fade away, and what it is that they aim to express while the sculpture still exists.

⁴⁴ Max Kozloff, 'The poetics of softness', in *American sculpture of the Sixties*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, 1967, p 26: "I mean soft in the literal sense of easily yielding to physical pressure. A soft thing can be poked, molded, squeezed, scrunched. In a word, its surface is elastic, and its densities are scandalously rearrangeable."

Even though Daudelin's sculptures stayed true to sculpture traditional solidity, creating works that will resist the ravages of time, he shares with the neo-avant garde Kozloff was writing about an interest in exploring those materials that are components or parts of our built environment. Because of its omnipresence, we tend to be oblivious to the concrete on which we walk or the polymers used to wrap our food. In a sense, artists in the 1960s were responding to the new materiality that informed their everyday experiences. Curator Lucinda Ward, discussing an exhibition held at the Australian National Gallery which brought together such artists as Morris, Richard Serra and Eva Hesse, notes that by drawing attention to the nature of the material used, artists whose work is associated to "soft sculpture" were emphasizing process over product.⁴⁵ Daudelin has a similar interest in process and the transformation of materials; he shifts the paradigms through which we approach the built environment so that we think critically, not about the end result, but about the means through which materials come to define the space in which we move and the physical nature of that space.

While Daudelin's sculpture is devoid of obvious references to the body, there is nevertheless a sense of corporeality to it. In 1967, Michael Fried, when discussing aspects of modernist, abstract sculpture as compared to painting, pointed out that:

"this additional dimension of physical existence is vitally important—not because it allows sculpture to continue to suggest recognisable images, or gives it a large range of formal possibilities—but because the three-dimensionality of sculpture corresponds to the phenomenological framework in which we exist, move, perceive, experience, and communicate with others."⁴⁶

However, that is not to say that Fried was a supporter of minimal art. On the contrary, his keen understanding of minimal art and the way it functions only serve to strengthen his

⁴⁵ Lucinda Ward, *Soft Sculpture* (Canberra: Australian National Gallery, 2009), 4.

⁴⁶ Michael Fried, *Art and objecthood: essays and reviews* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 274.

harsh criticism of such artworks. While Fried acknowledges that sculpture exists in the same phenomenological framework as our sense of reality, he does not appreciate the “situational” quality of minimalism.⁴⁷ For him, an artwork should be self-contained and autonomous; creating art that incorporates its environment in the experience of the artwork blurs the boundary between where the artwork starts and where it ends. The ambiguity of minimal art remains faulty for Fried since it fails to circumscribe the artistic gesture; instead it remains in a floating state between the objects and its surrounding.

In common with many post-minimal art practices, Daudelin’s work is meant to be experienced rather than merely observed. By positioning his sculptures in relation to the architectural surroundings, *Poulia* extends beyond the physical object and exists as well in the space between the architecture and the sculpture. Daudelin diffuses his work in the urban landscape; therefore, his work is not solely experienced visually since any reproduction lacks that important part of *Poulia* which lies in its three dimensionality, as well as its relation to the built environment. The aesthetic experience of the artwork involves the larger context of this dialogue that Daudelin creates between his work and Dimakopoulos’. There is an important phenomenological aspect of seeing the sculpture-fountain first hand and having to walk around it to see it from its different angles. Since *Poulia* is not centered right in the middle of the water basin, some sides of the sculpture are inadvertently given prominence over others. Some angles can be observed up close while others only at a distance; some have the government building as a background while others have the opened plaza. Therefore, a complete 360 view of the work allows one to compare and contrast the work in relation to the architecture but also to see what makes the sculpture unique as a work of art.

⁴⁷ Idem, 127.

1960s: Art in Quebec

The Quebec of the 1960s was an ideal milieu for artists such as Daudelin, interested in exploring new ground. Francine Couture in her book *Les arts visuels au Québec dans les années soixantes* explains how the rapid development of society, which required new office towers, airports, and even a network of universities, brought the disciplines of engineering and art closer.⁴⁸ A new educated class of the population was affirming its identity and art played a central role in defining the collective identity of the changing population of Quebec.⁴⁹ As the transformation of urban centers institutionalized modernist architecture throughout the province, there was a revitalisation of the historical avant-gardes by a group of artists and critics that were criticizing the institutionalization of art.⁵⁰ Marcelle Ferron (1924-2001), for example, became dissatisfied with the gallery system. She did not want her art to be limited to a “cultural elite” and sought new modes of expression outside art institutions that would be more likely to reach a wider audience.⁵¹

The modernisation of Quebec during that period created a unique conjuncture in the province: as a network of cultural institutions was supporting the basis of Modernism, a wave of artists and cultural critics were re-evaluating its premises. In this context, artists such as Daudelin could intervene in the landscape of modernist architecture while also responding to voices that promoted a new approach to urbanism.

⁴⁸ Francine Couture, *Les arts visuels au Québec dans les années soixantes: La reconnaissance de la modernité* (Montreal: VLB, 1993), 231.

⁴⁹ For more on the subject see Marcel Fournier “A Society in Motion: The Quiet Revolution and the Rise of the Middle Class,” in *The 60s: Montreal Thinks Big* (Vancouver: D&M Adult, 2004) 31-52.

⁵⁰ *Idem*, 241.

⁵¹ Gilles Lapointe in *Oeuvres à la rue* (Montreal: Galerie de l’UQAM, 2010), 19.

The liberalization of the province by the Lesage government opened Quebec to the world and Montreal was becoming a true cosmopolitan city.⁵² The need for a new infrastructure created many opportunities for artists and architects to redefine the nature of their relationship. The construction of the metro system and the Expo 67 for examples, multiplied the number of possibilities for artists interested in creating art in an urban context. While not all focused on materiality like Daudelin, there was nevertheless an interest in creating a certain synthesis of arts. As was the case with Le Corbusier's approach, here too architecture played a major part in the harmonization of the fine arts.

The integrated approach to art and architecture was favored by Jean-Paul Mousseau (1927-1991) when he was put in charge of the artistic direction of the Montreal metro construction. Mousseau asked that the budget for artworks be directly included in the construction budget and that the installation of art be integrated into the architecture of each station.⁵³ Mousseau and Daudelin had met while both were students of Borduas at L'école du meuble in the 1940s and they had exhibited together. Daudelin had also worked on the conception of artworks for the Mont-Royal metro station in 1966 as he was teaching his course.⁵⁴ Whether or not Mousseau was influenced by Daudelin is hard to determine but it is clear that he was open to the idea of creating a synthesis of arts in which different media would be conjoined to the architecture of each metro station.

A similar interest in a synthesis of the arts was part of Julien Hébert's work for the Expo 67; Hébert is responsible for designing the logo of the universal exhibition held in Montreal. The circular motif of stylized people holding hands and rejoicing was used as

⁵² André Lortie, *The 60s: Montreal Thinks Big* (Madeira Park: D&M Adult, 2004), 36.

⁵³ Annie Gérin, "Mont-Royal et Langelier : Daudelin souterrain," accessed March 31, 2013, http://www.charlesdaudelin.org/www/Textes.php?locale=fr-CA&Article_No=300&Type_No=18.

⁵⁴ "Charles Daudelin," accessed March 31, 2013, <http://www.metrodemontreal.com/art/daudelin/>.

the official logo and was reproduced on pamphlets, souvenirs such as glasses, coasters, shirts, etc. More interesting though is the way in which Hébert referenced his own design for the furniture he also created for Expo 67.⁵⁵ The angles in the chairs and tables reference the Expo logo; Hébert explored his design across different objects and using different materials, resulting in a sense of harmony, a unified whole. The visitor would have a sense that Hébert's furniture was connected since all the visual cues he created for the exhibition point to a similar idea.

According to Martin Racine in his essay "The Ambiguous Modernity of Designer Julien Hébert", Hébert's modernism did not necessarily break with the past and start from scratch; on the contrary, he aimed with his design of the Expo 67 logo to logically extend the traditional craft of Quebec into the modernist period.⁵⁶ While Quebec artists participated in the development of modernism and were aware of the supposed universalism of abstract forms, especially in relation to the international style in architecture, they articulated it differently.

32 joints verticals

Daudelin, like Hébert, created a tension in his work between the universal aspects of Modernism and the specificity of Quebec's socio-cultural context. When the architect Victor Pruss invited him to create an artwork that would be integrated into the design of the Mont-Royal metro station, Daudelin created *32 joints verticals* (1966). The general directive for the inclusion of art in the metro was to make the whole metro system a book

⁵⁵ Martin Racine in Rhona Richman and Johanne Sloan, Ed., *Expo 67: Not Just a Souvenir* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 91.

⁵⁶ Idem, 94.

of images related to the history of Montreal and Quebec.⁵⁷ Blatantly ignoring this mandate, Daudelin created a series of vertical sculptures, each consisting of 32 aluminum joints. The disarmingly simple minimalist sculptures are spaced at equal intervals on the Mont-Royal metro platform and are all 1.74 meters high, the average height of an adult man.⁵⁸ The height of each column gives a human scale to the Metro platform while the material he used is aluminum: a material made in the province and a source of economic pride for Quebec. As with Hébert's logo, there is an articulation of what is essential to humankind as well as a link to Quebec's cultural context.

Instead of adding some visual reminder of the history of Quebec to the station, Daudelin explored the experience of the metro system and its peculiar underground architecture. Each aluminum column with its regular spacing creates points of reference to measure spatial distance along the platform. The columns are markers of the relation of the human body to the length of the platform. From a phenomenological perspective, the underground, windowless station creates a situation in which our body stands awkwardly in relation to the vast space. Daudelin's intervention, as simple as it is, cancelled the alienating effect of an ill-defined space.

The columns add a human proportion to the platform and situate the body in space by acting as a visual referent.³² *jointures verticales* stands as an example of the site-specificity of Daudelin's urban sculptures. Instead of creating an autonomous work of art, he uses the setting of this form of underground architecture and what it implies about the

⁵⁷ The mandate was established by the first artistic director of the Montreal Metro: Robert Lapalme. Many artists including Yves Robillard and Marcelle Ferron opposed Lapalme's artistic plan. For more see Judith Bradette Brassard, Jean-Paul Mousseau artiste public : Étude de la station de métro Peel, de l'église Saint-Maurice-de-Duverney et de la Mousse spachthèque de Montréal (MA Thesis, Université du Québec à Montréal, 2008).

⁵⁸ Annie Gérin, Mont-Royal et Langelier : Daudelin souterrain, accessed April 18, 2013, http://www.charlesdaudelin.org/www/Textes.php?locale=fr-CA&Article_No=300&Type_No=18.

way the space is experienced. Creating a synthesis or integration of the arts for Daudelin does not merely imply the harmony of formal elements but also that the entire spatial and urban context is taken into consideration by the artist.

The Emergence of “Public Art”

Daudelin’s urban sculptures are evidence of how artists were experimenting with the possibilities of public space throughout the 1960s and 1970s. The re-location of contemporary art in the public sphere gave birth to this new category known as “public art”. As public art became a category of its own, artists and critics began to analyze who the true “public” of public art might be, and what it is that sets public art apart from art located within institutions. More ephemeral or performance based artworks brought new possibilities that spoke to the fleeting nature of the public who appreciates public art. Questions regarding the relation of identity to the built environment led to more confrontational artworks that are not merely an embellishment of the city’s landscape. Instead, by the 1980s many artists focused on the power structures that maintain public space to identify who is allowed and who is forbidden access to public space. The possibility that art can reveal or articulate the discourse that surrounds public space changed the nature of art in an urban context.

Art historians and critics were interested as well to explore the dominant discourse that supports the creation of public art and how artists respond to it. Rosalyn Deutsche published articles during the 1980s and 1990s about the emergence of public space and its relation to artistic interventions.⁵⁹ Miwon Kwon’s book, *One Place After an*

⁵⁹ Rosalyn Deutsche, *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1998). In this book, Deutsche collects her essays dealing with public art. Deutsche raises many questions regarding the aesthetic debates about public art from a socio-historical and feminist perspective. *Evictions* sets those debates within the broader struggle over the meaning of democracy.

Other (2004), looks at the development of “site-specific” art and how it intersects with public art among other categories of art.⁶⁰ The perspective of artists who worked within public space was collected by Tom Finkelpearl in interviews for his book *Dialogues in Public Art* (2001); Finkelpearl’s introduction essay points to the changing attitude towards public art from its early conception in the 1960s to its emergence as a distinct art category in the 1980s.⁶¹ Artists and critics became increasingly interested in analyzing what is accepted as “successful” public art projects and more controversial projects described as “failures”.

Deutsche’s *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics* points to the complexity of society suggesting that each group that enters public space has a different perspective, and a very different experience of it⁶²; she uses a multi-disciplinary perspective to grasp how the experience of each group is influenced by their position within public space at different moments in time. Deutsche has been one of the most important art historians and critics to address public art and its relation to social and political debate. Her seminal book is key in understanding the discourse that maintains public space and the underlying implications about who has access or is denied access to it. She uses the term “urban-aesthetic” to describe the discourse she speaks against in her critique of public space politics.⁶³ The rhetoric of the urban-aesthetic discourse pushes a certain idea of “openness” and “accessibility”, Deutsche writes, and assumes that everybody has a

⁶⁰ Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2004). Kwon compares her definition of “site-specificity” to what Deutsche’s call “urban-aesthetic”; meaning that to understand the spatio-social concerns of art, one must approach it from the multi-disciplinary perspective which Deutsche elaborated in her articles.

⁶¹ Tom Finkelpearl, *Dialogues in Public Art: Interviews with Vito Acconci, John Ahearn...* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2001). Finkelpearl’s book looks at a broad range of public art and effectively creates a dialogue between artists’ experience working within public space and art historians analyzing the development of public art as a whole.

⁶² Deutsche, XIII.

⁶³ Deutsche, XIII.

democratic and equal access to public space. In her critique of this position, Deutsche proposes that we enter public space as a privilege and not as a right; the site of public space and its users are determined as much by exclusionary practices than by installing artworks and furniture to fill shared urban spaces.⁶⁴

The last section of Deutsche's book deals specifically with the interplay of democracy and public art. Using the controversy surrounding the installation and the removal of Richard Serra's *Tilted Arc* (1981) (fig. 11), she analyzes how the language of democracy and freedom of expression were used by both sides to decide the fate of the sculpture. For Deutsche, the site-specificity of public art has a political value that resides beyond the artwork.⁶⁵ The removal of *Tilted Arc* might be perceived as a victory for conservative groups in America, but it also points to the fact that to call public art "democratic" subjects public art to the will of a perceived majority.

The dominant discourse of public space not only ignores the exclusionary practices at play but also works to suppress them. The urban-aesthetic model counters the heterogeneity of society by presenting public space as naturalized and conflict free. However, for Deutsche, conflict is synonymous with the existence of public space.⁶⁶ She draws on Henri Lefebvre and what he called "the production of space" to develop her argument. Lefebvre believed that the organization of space in a city is the product of uneven social relations.⁶⁷ Similarly, Deutsche argues that the urban-aesthetic model supports the city officials' discourse of tradition and community and suppresses the voice of marginalized groups. In this context of creation, artists are often asked to be complicit

⁶⁴ Deutsche, XIV.

⁶⁵ Deutsche, 264.

⁶⁶ Deutsche, XIV.

⁶⁷ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991), 4. See also Henri Lefebvre, *The Survival of Capitalism* (London: Allison & Busby, 1976).

rather than challenge the dominant discourse surrounding public space. Deutsche criticizes the type of public art that reduces art to mere decorations or useful objects such as benches and tables. This kind of “useful” public art failed to account for the multitude of experiences of different groups. The crowd that uses the space during business hours is not the same as the one that uses the park at night, for example, when it can become a resting place for the vagrant community; the latter group might also feel unwelcomed in such public spaces during the day.

It is not surprising that this particular urban-aesthetic model often coincides with the urban renewal programs undertaken in particular cities. The gentrification of working class neighborhoods often results in the displacement of lower income populations who can no longer afford the cost of living. The middle class and the upper class replace, through new real estate developments, the people who can no longer afford to live in those neighborhoods. The inclusion of public spaces such as squares, plazas, parks, fountains, etc. masks the exclusionary aspect of urban renewal. The urban-aesthetic model is applied to new developments and, in the process, pushes out marginalized groups. The rhetoric of “openness” and of a “democratic access” to public space accompanies the exclusionary practices set in motion.

Agora: The Urban Renewal of Square Viger

While the criticism of public art described above was developed in response to certain areas of New York City and other American cities, the issues raised by Deutsche and Kwon among other critics are also relevant to the development of public art in Canada. In this regard, I want to look at Daudelin’s *Agora* as part of the re-planning of the Square Viger from 1975 to 1984, and its relation to public art debates. Is *Agora* an

example of a project that failed to take into account the sociopolitical reality of the site? Was Daudelin complicit in suppressing the power struggles that shaped this specific public space? What is it that eluded Daudelin and the other artists that participated in the construction of the Square Viger? There is a gap between the intended use of Square Viger and its recuperation by Montreal's homeless community; why is it that the actors involved did not foresee this particular turn of events?

Before considering *Agora* in relation to public art debates, however, I will present Daudelin's participation in Square Viger as part of his career development since the 1960s and also give a brief history of the site. The space occupied by Square Viger has been a public space since the 19th century; it once was a conventional park with trees and pathways winding in between.⁶⁸ However, as car traffic increased, the need to widen streets and the construction of the Ville-Marie Expressway beginning in 1972 threatened the existence of the park. While the city originally wanted to keep as many trees as possible, it became evident that all trees would need to be cut down to make way for the new highway.⁶⁹ Nevertheless, the city decided to keep Square Viger as a public space and decided to re-build the Square Viger on top of the highway. By the mid-1970s, city officials began to look for artists who could revamp the site alongside architects and urban planners. The total area of Square Viger project is marked out by Saint-Denis Street, Viger Avenue, St-André Street and St-Antoine Street; from west to east, the site is divided in three sections by intersecting streets between Saint-Denis and St-André. Early on it was decided that Montreal would commission one artist for each section of the

⁶⁸ For more information on the history of Square Viger see Margaret Boyce, "Visual Art/Public Art and Urban Development: A Case Study of Montreal 1967-1992" (PhD Diss., McGill University, Montreal, 2002). Boyce provides a thorough history of the site and the administrative decisions and actions that determined its transformation over the years.

⁶⁹ Boyce, 440.

project to design not only the square's landscape, but the architectural and sculptural elements as well. The three artists selected were Charles Daudelin, Claude Théberge, and Peter Gnass and construction began in 1981.⁷⁰

Daudelin was selected for the conception of the westernmost section referred simply as "lot A". City officials decided that lot A would be an agora and asked urban planner Michel Stanisic to design a general plan. Margaret Boyce, who outlines the relation between artists and Montreal municipal administration in her doctoral thesis, uses the Square Viger as one of her case studies. She describes Stanisic's original plan as follows:

Two ventilation towers were identified within the western city block (St. Denis to Berri Streets), which had an agora occupying the centre of the place, and vegetation surrounding each of its sides, as a buffer zone. The park, in the middle of the three city blocks, had rest areas equipped with decorative pergolas. There was to be a monument in the centre of the park, where trees and vegetation were abundant. Finally, the city block more to the east included benches, trees... That area, the longer of the three, was internally divided into zones, presumably for distinct activities... When one looks at the original plan... one has a solid impression of dense vegetation amidst a sea of concrete and tar.⁷¹

As the title suggests, the square was imagined as a place where people would gather; where terraces could pop up during the summer along other communal activities. Daudelin however, took much liberty with Stanisic's plan and created an imposing architectural structure with different levels and sections for people to gather; he also

⁷⁰ Lindsay Ann Cory, "AgoraPHILIA: A Place for Assembly in Square Viger, Montreal" (MA thesis, Concordia University, 2012) 31.

⁷¹ Boyce, 714-715.

created a fountain, *Mastodo* (1984) (fig. 12), which would act as a focal point for the structure.⁷²

The predominant use of concrete and the fortress like quality of *Agora* demonstrates the influence of brutalist architecture.⁷³ The concrete walls create different sections within the structure and several pergolas and terraces define areas where different groups can gather but remain separate. Visually, the brutalist style of *Agora* complements the Ville-Marie Expressway. Highways are a key development in the history of modernism and both the expressway and *Agora* make extensive use of concrete. Just like he did on *La maison en béton* in the 1960s, Daudelin's Square Viger explores concrete for artistic purposes in an environment where it has been used for practical purposes. The utilitarian use of concrete for the Ville-Marie Expressway is counterbalanced by *Agora's* use of concrete for expressive purposes. Here again, Daudelin questions the materiality of the urban landscape and invites viewers to reconsider the potential of concrete; as an artist, he introduces a sense of playfulness normally foreign to concrete and its association to heavy industry.

Daudelin was the only artist part of the Square Viger project whose lot had been completely gutted; the other two lots still had traces of past constructions that the artists needed to work around. In the case of lot A, however, the space had been used as a

⁷² "Biographie: Les années 1974 à 1997," accessed July 11, 2013, http://www.charlesdaudelin.org/www/Textes.php?locale=fr-CA&Article_No=16&Type_No=2.

⁷³ In the 1980s, brutalism became almost the de facto style of Canadian civic and cultural institutions. In this sense, Daudelin reiterates the growing dominance of the style in Canada. Interesting to note, brutalism was also applied to describe artists in the 1950s such as Jean Dubuffet, Eduardo Paozzoli or Nigel Henderson; Henderson collaborated with architects on projects as well. For more, see Réjean Legault's *The Idea of Brutalism in Canadian Architecture in Architecture and the Canadian Fabric* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011).

parking lot since the 1960s and was therefore completely gutted.⁷⁴ It offered a blank canvas for Daudelin to create his agora and install his fountain. Among the pergolas and terraces, Daudelin's square can be seen as three sections linked through passages and stairs. Daudelin had in mind Stanisic's plan while conceiving *Agora*; as the original document states: "besides being a meeting place, the site would house temporary open-air exhibitions, and would become a square for cultural and artistic activities."⁷⁵ The original maquette of Daudelin's *Agora* is on display at the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec. The scale model clearly shows areas where tables, chairs and benches could be installed; some rectangular strips look like an area where people could play the game "pétanque", which is quite popular in the province. From a bird's-eye view, the maquette gives the impression of a place where people would gather in small groups to play chess or to chat; they could bring food and drinks or play cards. As with Daudelin's previous urban projects, people were meant to interact with the work. The movement of people going through the agora was to animate the project and define the nature of the concrete structure.

Continuing with his "art intégré" approach to art in an urban context, Daudelin collaborated with Montreal's urban planner, Michel Stanisic, as well as the architect firm that oversaw the technical details and the safety of the design. Though he was allowed to take many liberties with Stanisic's design, one aspect that was not negotiable was the incorporation of ventilation towers that needed to be installed on his square; it was imperative that the design integrate the towers so that they could remain accessible for

⁷⁴ Margaret Boyce, "Visual Art/Public Art and Urban Development: A Case Study of Montreal 1967-1992" (PhD Diss., McGill University, Montreal, 2002) 707.

⁷⁵ Boyce, 725.

maintenance.⁷⁶ Comparing the maquette to the final plan, it is evident that Daudelin also had to abandon the idea of using wood for the pergolas, using concrete exclusively. Moreover, the structure had to be smaller in scale for safety and cost efficiency.⁷⁷ Stanistic, however, was very critical of Daudelin's final design. In a letter from the parks department, Stanistic writes:

En voulant lui donner un caractère multifonctionnel (agora + casse-croûte + bistrot + espace de jeux, social, etc.) il [Daudelin] n'a pas réussi à composer un ensemble architecturalement harmonieux ; plusieurs éléments dominants se font concurrence, pas seulement sur le plan fonctionnel mais aussi sur le plan architectural.⁷⁸

Whether or not one agrees with Stanistic's critique of *Agora*, the project was an opportunity for Daudelin to perfect what he had developed during *La maison en béton* project with Lalonde and in Charlottetown with Dimakopoulos. Daudelin's square was meant to seamlessly integrate the city into his agora. The concrete blended well with the Ville-Marie Expressway and the surrounding streets, and his design incorporated the ventilation towers as required. *Agora* exemplifies Daudelin's desire to create art whose form and function justify its inclusion in the space it occupies, as if the structure had naturally grown out of its surroundings. Reading interviews with the artist, it is clear that he wanted to participate in the creation of a more compelling environment. When speaking of *Agora* and sculpture in general, Daudelin stated that: "les sculptures énormes qui enjambent les autoroutes, c'est parfois juste un pont. Ça pourrait être autre chose!"⁷⁹ The monumental scale of the original maquette is reminiscent of another maquette of a sculpture that was never realized: *Couteau dans le ciel* (1965) (fig. 13).

⁷⁶ Cory, 33.

⁷⁷ Boyce, 720.

⁷⁸ Michel Stanistic, *Letter October 23, 1975*, Montreal City Archives, 1.

⁷⁹ Charles Daudelin in Boyce, 454.

The large sculpture, which would have been installed over a road like a giant arch, would have operated as a marker of space by using “la symbolique fonctionnelle du portail qui marque le passage d’un lieu à un autre.”⁸⁰ The monumental scale of *Agora*’s maquette and the fact that it also over a road point to a similar idea in both projects.

As I previously mentioned, the fountain *Mastodo* acted as the focal point of *Agora*. Daudelin wanted to use the water to grow plants such as mint or basil; clover was to cover parts of the ground as well as honey locust and European linden.⁸¹ Eventually, the vegetation would cover the structure until it become partly organic and partly man made. Unfortunately, the lack of maintenance by the city led to wild vegetation covering *Agora*’s walls and contributed to the feeling that the space had been abandoned. The bunker like design came to look uninviting or cold but the original intention was to create a small oasis above the Ville-Marie Expressway; *Mastodo*, water and vegetation would have unified the structure and create an harmony between all *Agora*’s sections.

Altogether, Daudelin’s *Agora* has over twenty pergolas. Some are fully roofed while others are partly roofed or completely open; the total area of the square is 125 meters square and the greenery, while unmaintained by the city, nevertheless overtakes the structure during the summer. The fountain that Daudelin designed was originally meant to be kinetic and to operate as a timekeeper. *Mastodo* consists of a large bronze dish into which water would have accumulated until the weight made it tip over; the water would have then flowed through a series of small pools and eventually dropped from a platform like a waterfall. Every fifteen minutes approximately, the dish would

⁸⁰ Charles Daudelin in Gilles Hénault, “Charles Daudelin,” *L’atelier* (radio show), transcribed by Maison de Radio-Canada, March 31, 1981, 10. See also Patrick Schupp, “Charles Daudelin,” *Architecture-Bâtiment-Construction* 22 no 254 (June 1967), 36-38.

⁸¹ Margaret Boyce, “Visual Art/Public Art and Urban Development: A Case Study of Montreal 1967-1992” (PhD Diss., McGill University, Montreal, 2002) 745.

have filled up and tipped, making noise as the water would have cascaded and gave a sense of time to the users of the square. The dish is large enough to contain 1363 liters of water before it tipped and so we can imagine that the sound it made every time must have been quite loud. Like the bells of a church, it must have been impossible to hear the water flow and not to be reminded of the passage of time. Unfortunately, the mechanism that would have pumped water needed maintenance and the city never invested in repairing it once it broke.⁸² Now *Mastodo* is beyond repair and the sculpture only fills with water when it rains.

The other two artists selected for the remaining lots were Claude Th  berge for “lot B” and Peter Gnass for “lot C”. Th  berge created a circular design with trees and benches here and there. In the middle of lot B – later call “parc Viger” to distinguish it from Square Viger – he installed his sculpture *Force* (1985) (fig. 14) which consisting of two rows of granite blocks. The sculpture looks like two separated parts of a massive block that would have been cut in the middle. The interior sides of the parts are rough and uneven as if a brutal force had rushed through the sculpture, hence the title. For lot C, referred to as “parc Viger   quip  ”, Gnass designed a playground for children and created a large fountain titled *Jeux d’enfants* (1984) (fig. 15). Gnass’ fountain consists of several steel poles placed in the fountain’s basin. The poles are equipped with spouts and the water goes up the poles and then rains down in the basin. More playful in character, Gnass’ design was conceived so that children could play with the water during hot summer days.

⁸² For more information on the technical details of *Agora* and *Mastodo*, refer to Boyce’s doctoral thesis or Louise D  ry in *Daudelin* (Quebec: Mus  e du Qu  bec, 1997).

Daudelin's collaborative approach was not limited to his relation with city officials, Michel Stanisic and the architects. Rather, he extended it to also take into consideration the designs conceived by Théberge and Gnass. There is a certain harmony between the design of *Agora* and the two other sections of the Square Viger project. An underlying theme organizes the three sections. The thematic organization seems to have come from the artists since no official documents mention the necessity to link the three sections.⁸³ While I could not find any documents relating to a meeting between Daudelin, Théberge and Gnass, I know that Claude Théberge, Like Daudelin, was interested in integrating art and architecture; in the 1960s, Théberge had a studio dedicated to "integrated art" and used it to conceive many of his murals that were commissioned for the Montreal metro.⁸⁴ It is possible, therefore, that the organization of the three sections evolved out of Théberge's and Daudelin's interest in collaborative projects, and also included Gnass in the process.

Boyce interviewed Daudelin for her doctoral thesis on the political and artistic climate in Montreal from the late 1960s to the early 1990s. She uses the Square Viger project as a case study to ground her analysis of the relation between the political class and artists. In the interview Daudelin says that the public users of the space were the main variable that shaped his design. He admits that the structure he built was a bit eccentric and contributed to the strained relationship with the city over the course of the project. However *Agora's* structure, in its eclecticism, was meant to be ambiguous so that

⁸³ Directives given to the artists by the city were always general recommendations or about technical aspects. For example, in a letter from Stanisic to one of his colleague, he writes: "Selon notre programme, l'îlot [...] doit être aménagé dans un concept entre un parc classique (où la verdure domine) et une place urbaine contemporaine (où le béton domine)." See letter, Stanisic to Desrosiers, to Claprood, 23 Octobre 1975, City of Montreal Parks Departement.

⁸⁴ "Claude Théberge," Galerie d'art St-Vincent de Paul, accessed June 20, 2013, <http://galeriessvp.com/fr/artiste.php?artiste=32>.

the users could always discover new ways to use the site. Describing the project, Daudelin said:

“Au lieu de faire avec des paliers, j’avais fait ces pentes-là, c’était en béton, comme une grande glissade, comme une... rampe, mais pleine largeur, comme pour les handicapés, mais comment je vous dirais ça? Dans cette pente-là il y avait des trous, ronds...et puis ça redevenait comme une marche, mais c’était un siège. C’était un petit fauteuil... Avec la pente, on avait des petites côtés [sic],...puis c’est sûr que descendre dans ça, ben, c’est vrais que ça aurait été un casse-gueule, mais enfin! Mais, on avait des sièges. Tandis que là, c’est dans les marches, et dans les paliers qu’on peut s’asseoir. Non ... il y avait des côtés un peufous!”⁸⁵

As he points out, nothing was ever meant to be exactly as it seems; people were invited to explore *Agora* and determine for themselves how the structure operates, and re-imagine its purpose.

When the square opened to the public in the spring of 1984, the possibilities envisioned by the artists and the city officials were rejected by the population of Montreal. Reactions to *Agora* were mostly negative and the project became a prime example of everything people hated about modernist architecture. Problems with the site had emerged even before its opening. In November 1980, Jean-Pierre Bonhomme wrote an article for *La Presse* titled “La forme du nouveau Square Viger demeure indécise”, outlining problems in the planning and the construction process. Bonhomme writes that “Le service d’urbanisme de Montréal comte une douzaine d’urbanistes; aucun d’entre eux n’a par contre de formation particulière en paysagisme.”⁸⁶, pointing to a lack of expertise. Even though the square officially opened in the spring of 1984, many problems associated with *Agora*’s and *Mastodo*’s design meant that construction workers

⁸⁵ Margaret Boyce, “Visual Art/Public Art and Urban Development: A Case Study of Montreal 1967-1992” (PhD Diss., McGill University, Montreal, 2002) 744.

⁸⁶ Jean-Pierre Bonhomme, “La forme du nouveau Square Viger demeure indécise,” *La Presse*, November 14, 1980.

were still on site. The bronze dish part of *Mastodo* cracked; water was dripping from the pergolas onto benches even several days after it rained; and a fence had to be installed around the fountain due to safety concerns.⁸⁷

The nature of the criticism, both by the public and art critics, stemmed from a rejection of brutalist architecture and the fact that, because intended users rejected Square Viger, it became an haven for drug addicts and homeless people. Following the opening of the square, Louis Martin wrote a highly critical but very relevant article on all three sections of the project. Martin writes that the Viger project “surprend par son hostilité et sa lourdeur” and that “comme dans la majorité des réalisations gouvernementales à Montréal, la critique a été écartée et l’opinion publique ignorée.”⁸⁸ In 1985, Jean-Pierre Marsan, an architect and urban planner, described the project in a *Le Devoir* article as a “dépotoir à sculptures.”⁸⁹ Some years later, in 1989, art historian Lise Lamarche included the Square Viger in an article titled “Des sculptures intolérables”; Lamarche’s article, and Martin’s to some extent, point to the way that Square Viger became a symbol of failed governmental projects in public spaces.⁹⁰

Today, the criticism of Square Viger revolves mainly around the same issues as when it opened in 1984, but the perspective on the homeless community on site has shifted. When discussing the future of Square Viger, journalists and art critics are more apt to include the voice of the homeless in the debate. In a February 2012 coverage on Square Viger, Radio-Canada’s Davide Gentile interviewed art historian Rose-Marie Goulet; the president of the Old Montreal residents association, Christine Caron; as well

⁸⁷ Boyce, 781-782.

⁸⁸ Louis Martin, “Charles Daudelin, Peter Gnass, Claude Théberge,” *Parachute* 36 (sept-oct-nov, 1984): 53.

⁸⁹ Jean-Pierre Marsan, “Traces et tracés,” *Le Devoir*, November 8, 1985.

⁹⁰ See Lise Lamarche, “Des sculptures intolérables,” *Espace Sculpture* 5 no. 3 (1989): 9.

as homeless residents of the Square Viger. This points to a third issue that was often ignored in the original criticism; the value of Square Viger is not only debated on an art historical ground or in the context of real estate development, but also brings to light the site's potential as a kind of alternative infrastructure for the disenfranchised. As a homeless man noted to Gentile in his interview, Square Viger's location near the St-Luc Hospital is convenient for those who need regular visits to a doctor or get hurt and the site is also close to charitable organisms such as L'accueil Bonneau or La maison du père.⁹¹ Moreover, as Lindsay Cory argues in her M.A. thesis on Square Viger, the "enclosing walls and harsh atmosphere of traditional homeless shelters would bring feelings of entrapment in an unsafe place, which are thereby proliferating various mental anxiety issues."⁹² While it is not an ideal solution to homelessness, Square Viger has its own qualities and merits that deserved to be taken seriously.

The issue of neighborhood gentrification is a bigger concern than it used to be when discussing Square Viger. Patrick Lejtényi, in an article for the *Mirror* published in 2004, agrees that the square is an ugly claustrophobic space but then goes on to write that:

... the Ville-Marie borough brain trust approved plans to demolish the self-enclosed, little-used park [...] and replace it with what people normally associate with parks: seven-million dollars' worth of trees, grass, pathways and open borders.⁹³

The cynical tone of Lejtényi's article points to a growing frustration with urban renewal and the manner in which it pushes out lower income populations in favor of pleasant greenery and bourgeois commercialism. The inclusion of a voice for the homeless

⁹¹ Davide Gentile, "Montréal s'apprêterait à raser une portion du square Viger" CBC Radio Canada (24 Feb. 2012).

⁹² Idem, 55.

⁹³ Patrick Lejtényi, "Viger Square Transformed," *Montreal Mirror*, 10 aug.-26 sept. 2004.

community changed the discourse around their presence in Square Viger from a mere nuisance to the proof that larger social inequalities are implied in the renewal of the area.

In the 30 years since the opening of the square, architecture styles have changed and brutalism has been historicized. In this regard, art critics such as Marian Scott or Rose-Marie Goulet argue that we should save Square Viger because it is a great example of Quebec's history of modernism; whether we appreciate this kind of architecture or not, it is a testimony to 1980s architecture and therefore should remain.⁹⁴ While valid, I would argue that the argument nevertheless maintains the status quo of Square Viger; saving the Square Viger requires an intervention that considers both the art historical value of the site and addresses the social implications of destroying it for its residents. Even though a homeless community resides and actively uses Square Viger, the existence of this site cannot be regarded as a solution to homelessness in Montreal, and preserving it solely for its historical importance ignores the greater social issue.

Sadly, the debate surrounding Square Viger now seems futile since the city of Montreal has decided to destroy *Agora*. Peter Gnass's furniture for the square he designed was removed in the early 1990s and the city has informed Charles Daudelin's family in February 2012 that *Mastodo* will have to be relocated.⁹⁵ While there is no official agenda detailing how and when *Agora* will be destroyed, the decision seems final and public consultation will most likely not take place; questions regarding who is the true public of public art remains. *Agora*'s marginalized users are still largely ignored by

⁹⁴ For more on the historical value of Square Viger, see Marian Scott, "Is this the end of an architectural era?" *The Gazette*, Feb. 24, 2012. See also, Rose-Marie Goulet in Davide Gentile, "Montréal s'apprêterait à raser une portion du square Viger" CBC Radio Canada (24 Feb. 2012).

⁹⁵ *Idem*.

Montreal officials which points out, as Deutsche argues, that the dominant discourse supported by the urban-aesthetic model suppresses dissident voices.

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Daudelin's approach to urban art was engaged with modernist formalist concerns of balance; purity of forms; and volume. In this sense, *Agora* can be seen as an extension of modernism into the urban context. Miwon Kwon's book *One Place After an Other* (2004), when discussing "useful" public art, writes that artists and city officials "seemed to think that the more an artwork disappeared into the site, either by appropriating urban street furniture... or by mimicking familiar architectural elements...the greater its social value would be."⁹⁶ While there is some "social value" to Daudelin's *Agora*, the unpredictability of what happened with the Square Viger points to something that eludes the actors involved in such projects. Square Viger points to a gap between the conception of public art and its incorporation within the public sphere.

The negative reception of *Agora* brings to light the different shortcomings of Daudelin's approach to public art. The transition from monumental, static sculptures to time-based or ephemeral public art in the 1980s parallels the erosion of formalism as the driving force of contemporary art. Moreover, the sacrosanct "autonomy" of art was challenged by artists who, beginning in the 1960s, were interested in the relation between art and its environment. A reconsideration of how site, art and viewers are brought together within the public sphere paved the way for a new critical ground. Instead of transposing the experience of the gallery space into the urban context, artists began to explore what is unique about public space, as a context for the reception for art, and as a site what forces at play determine its shape.

⁹⁶ Miwon Kwon, *One Place After an Other* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2004), 69.

The kind of sculptures or structures that Daudelin proposed for an urban context was perhaps limited with regard to the complexity of communities and questions of collective identity. *Agora* proposes an artistic experience, with people observing and walking through the brutalist concrete structure, and assumes that the kind of public which enjoys small café, terraces, communal activities, etc. will naturally come to the square. However, the renewal of a site does not guarantee that the already existing vagrant community will leave and be smoothly replaced by a middle class, per se. There is a gap between *Agora* and the socio-historical reality of Square Viger. Though it was gutted before construction began, the Square Viger site was never a blank canvas but a site on which a marginal subset of Montrealers dwell.

New Forms of Public Art Emerge

If *Agora* points to problems pertaining to Daudelin's integrated approach to public art, it was at this very time that a new generation of artists began to reconsider the role of public art along with a new critical framework for public space. During the 1980s, for instance, Polish artist Krzysztof Wodiczko (b. 1943) created a series of projections around the world with critical socio-political undertones. Wodiczko was in Montreal in 1985, the year following the opening of *Agora*, for a projection on the elevation of Place Ville-Marie. The projection was part of the first edition of the contemporary art event *Les cent jours d'art contemporain de Montréal* curated by René Blouin, Claude Gosselin and Normand Thériault; the annual exhibition has been described by art historian Francine Couture as the perfect event to explore new modes of artistic creation.⁹⁷

⁹⁷ Francine Couture, *Expositions collectives et montréalisation de l'art contemporain, Exposer l'art contemporain du Québec* (Montréal : Centre de diffusion 3D, 2003), 55.

Together, Blouin, Gosselin and Thériault were open to artists experimenting with new forms of art and new contexts of reception.

Wodiczko's projection consists of two photographs of bloody fists projected on the concrete elevation of Place Ville-Marie. The hands are those of a South African protester after a clash with police during an anti-apartheid protest.⁹⁸ The political regime of Apartheid was attacked through different projections on other buildings whose history or function supported a colonialist discourse; a more famous projection took place in Trafalgar Square in London the same year onto the High Commission of South Africa Building (fig. 16).

Wodiczko's public interventions bring to light the normally invisible link between our built environment and the discourse of politics, money, and power that are embedded in the built environment that determine the shape of public space. Compared to Daudelin's approach, Wodiczko points to the many layers of activities and the different kinds of "public" that share public space. While Daudelin approached the public as a kind of unified whole with each individual approaching public space and public art from a similar perspective, Wodiczko's confrontational projections regard public space as already permeated with conflict and discord.

It is interesting to note that Wodiczko's intervention in Montreal happens in the early years of Quebec's 1% program, which requires that 1% of the total cost of construction of a public building be reserved for the integration of an artwork. At the beginning, the program focused on anchoring permanently an artwork to the architecture; Wodiczko's projection, immaterial and temporary, foreshadows the different possibilities

⁹⁸ Melvin Charney, *Canada, XLII Biennale di Venezia, 1986, Krzysztof Wodiczko* (Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 1986), 13.

for the integration of art and architecture that the 1% program began to explore in the 1990s.⁹⁹ As artists and critics were reconsidering the relation between public art and its reception, Wodiczko's projections contributed to shifting our understanding of public art, something the 1% program would eventually mirrored to favor the development of contemporary public art in Quebec.

It is ironic considering Daudelin's insistence on collaboration and his intention to use the specificity of a site as the starting point of his creative process, that he ignored the existing community of *Agora's* site. While Daudelin was conscious that art outside the gallery context has its own kind of constraints and possibilities, he nevertheless treated public space as something neutral; a space that is mute and onto which the artist expresses himself.

While Daudelin's integration of art and architecture had its flaws, it is important to keep in mind that artists who were exploring the possibilities of public space for contemporary art, beginning in the 1960s, were experimenting and did not share the present-day perspective on public art. Today, public space has been theorized and succeeding generations of artists were able to build upon what had been done before them. They can approach the public-art paradigm with a better sense of what sets its paradigms apart from art within institutions. While it is easy to criticize modernism for its elitist, cold, or alienating effects, the artists behind those projects nevertheless wanted to communicate something to the greater public and not keep art within a niche of educated amateurs.

⁹⁹ Lianne Nadeau et al., *Vingt ans d'intégration des arts à l'architecture et à l'environnement : 1981-2001*, (Québec: Gouvernement du Québec, 2004), 22-23.

The collaborative efforts of Daudelin were meant to create a greater cohesion between the built environment and the artworks surrounding it. Through discussions with architects, engineers, city planners, etc., Daudelin hoped to create art that engaged the public in a reflection on the materiality of the city. Through his urban sculptures, Daudelin wanted the public to appropriate those places deemed public for itself instead of considering them as nothing more than transient spaces; only useful for us as we move from one point to the other and nothing more. Some of Daudelin's projects were more successful than others but I want to argue that each reveals the complex relation between the built environment and the layers of social interactions that determine the relationship of public users and the spaces they move through. He aimed to create artworks that would lead to a reflection on the effect that the built environment has upon its public users and how art can complement the urban landscape.

The Square Viger project stands as an example of the shortcomings of Daudelin's approach to public art but is not necessarily a failure, at least not in the eyes of every individual or group who encounters *Agora*. The role of the artist in the relation between art and the public space changed considerably between the 1960s and the 1980s but it does not mean that early artists were blind to the socio-political factors that allowed them to create the public realm in the first place. Daudelin, amongst others of his generation, desired to change our perspective on modernism and its heritage in a positive way. The formalist aspect of his sculptures does not mean that they were not engaged socially as Daudelin created art that engaged his viewers visually and set up a dialogue between the inhabitants of the city and the materiality of their environment.

Through materiality Daudelin was able to sustain modernism into the 1960s and to respond to its criticism. As Quebec, with Montreal as its socio-economic capital entered a rapid modernisation of its material infrastructure, Daudelin used the multiplication of opportunities to work in an urban context, while shifting our understanding of the relation between architecture and art. While his work did not sever all ties with the modernist ethos, Daudelin moved more freely from medium to medium, displacing the autonomy of art. Daudelin positioned his work's meaning both inside and outside the art object. The work appears self-contained but a closer look points to the dialogic relation between the architect and Daudelin; between art and architecture; as well as between materiality and technology.

Daudelin articulated a synthesis of arts on his own terms. His sculptures not only balance stylistic concerns across mediums but also took on a project's constraints as an integral component of his art. Using the surrounding architecture to determine the shape, size and the material of his sculptures, he explored new materials for expressive purpose alongside their practical application. It is this quality to his work that led Daudelin to see himself as “un artisan de la ville.”¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ Charles Daudelin, “Le sculpteur doit être intégré à l'équipe de la ville,” *Le Soleil*, May 11, 1974.

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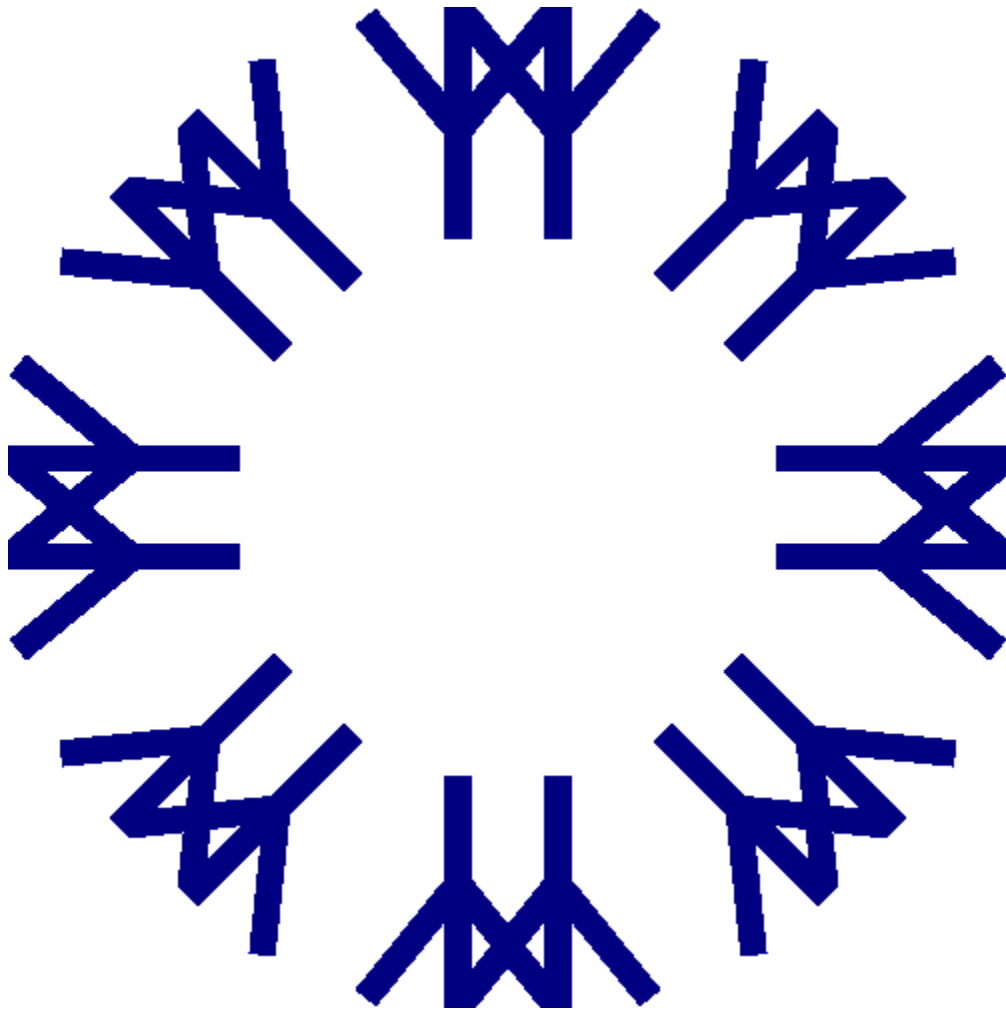
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Figures

Fig. 1



Expo 67 logo (1963)

Julien Hébert

Source: *Official Expo 1967 Guide Book*. Toronto: Maclean-Hunter Publishing Co. Ltd. 1967. p.29.

Fig. 2



La maison en béton (1961)

Jean-Louis Lalonde and Charles Daudelin

Jean-Guy K rouac. Photograph

Source: http://www.charlesdaudelin.org/www/PopOeuvres.php?locale=fr-CA&Auto_No=281. Accessed August 9, 2013.

Fig. 3



Fruits dans l'espace (1946)

Charles Daudelin

Jean-Guy K rouac. MNBAQ. Photograph

Source: http://www.charlesdaudelin.org/www/PopOeuvres.php?locale=fr-CA&Auto_No=239. Accessed August 9, 2013.

Fig. 4



32 joints verticales (1966)

Charles Daudelin

Matthew McLauchlin. Photograph.

Source: http://www.charlesdaudelin.org/www/PopOeuvres.php?locale=fr-CA&Auto_No=271. Accessed August 9, 2013.

Fig. 5



Nature morte à la pile d'assiettes (1920)

Charles-Édouard Jeanneret

Museum of Modern Art, New York, Van Gogh Purchase Fund, 1937

Source: <http://www.artaujourdhui.info/e9902-le-corbusier-before-le-corbusier-applied-arts-architecture-painting-and-photography-1907-1922.html>. Accessed August 9, 2013.

Fig. 6



Villa Savoye (1931)

Le Corbusier

82 Rue de Villiers, 78300 Poissy, France

Source: <http://apcostebelle.blogspot.ca/2011/10/la-villa-savoye-1928-1931-le-corbusier.html>. Accessed August 9, 2013.

Fig. 7



Seagram Building (1958)

Ludwig Mies van der Rohe

375 Park Ave, New York, NY 10152, États-Unis

Source: <http://www.chicagonow.com/real-estate-royalty/2011/10/the-beautiful-legacy-of-mies-van-der-rohe-and-kudos-to-soar/>. Accessed August 9, 2013.

Fig. 8



Place Ville-Marie (1962)

I.M. Pei

1 Place Ville Marie, Montréal, QC H3B 2E7

Source: <http://monde.ccdmd.qc.ca/ressource/?id=34583&demande=desc>. Accessed August 9, 2013.

Fig. 9



Esprit Nouveau Pavilion (1925)

Le Corbusier

International Exhibition of Decorative Arts in Paris

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Fig. 10



Poulia (1966)

Dimitri Dimakopoulos and Charles Daudelin

Archives Charles et Louise Daudelin

Source: http://www.charlesdaudelin.org/www/PopOeuvres.php?locale=fr-CA&Auto_No=280. Accessed August 9, 2013.

Fig. 11



Tilted Arc (1981)

Richard Serra

U.S. General Services Administration

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Tilted_arc_en.jpg. Accessed August 9, 2013.

Fig. 12



Mastodo (1984)

Charles Daudelin

Matthew McLauchlin. Photograph.

http://www.charlesdaudelin.org/www/PopOeuvres.php?locale=fr-CA&Auto_No=305.

Accessed August 9, 2013.

Fig. 13



Couteau dans le ciel, model (1965)

Charles Daudelin

Jean-Guy K rouac. Photograph.

Source: http://www.charlesdaudelin.org/www/PopOeuvres.php?locale=fr-CA&Auto_No=148. Accessed August 9, 2013.

Fig. 14



Forces (1985)

Claude Théberge

Square Viger

Source: <http://www.metrodemontreal.com/art/theberge/force.html>. Accessed August 9, 2013.

Fig. 15



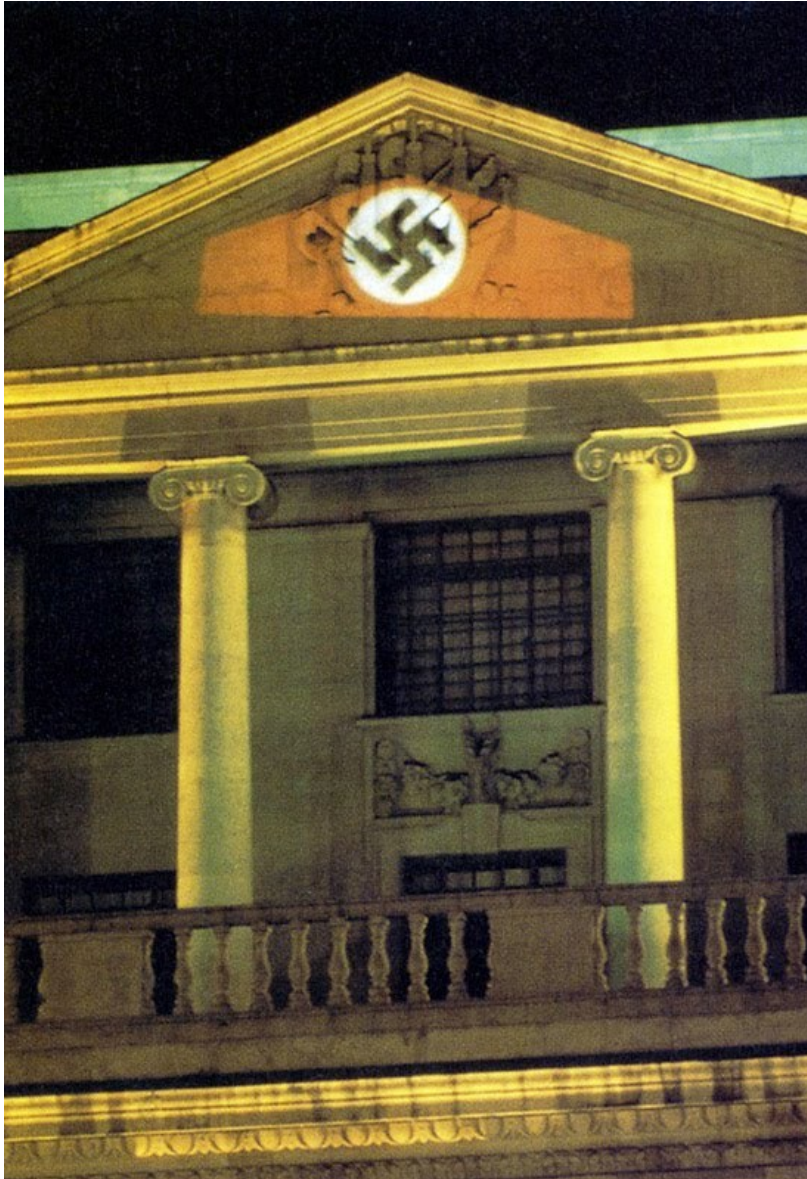
Jeux d'enfants (1984)

Peter Gnass

Square Viger

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Fig. 16



A swastika on to the South African embassy in London during Apartheid.

Krzysztof Wodiczko

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